

**“INTERACTIVE,
URBAN, GRITTY
AND RISK
TAKING WORK.”**



**ABANDON
NORMAL DEVICES**

1. Introduction

“I WAS VERY IMPRESSED AT THE INCORPORATION OF CROSS-DISCIPLINARY ARTS - IT SETS THIS FESTIVAL APART.”

AUDIENCE MEMBER

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Abandon Normal Devices (AND) is a catalyst for new approaches to cinema, digital culture and art that launched in 2009. Since its inception, AND has shaken the creative sector through radical, risk-taking projects, research and festivals that challenge conventional modes of participation, and stimulate new art forms and creative enquiry.

AND's mission is to attract the most innovative artists, from the worlds of cinema and art and grow audiences for digital culture. We work in collaboration with the UK's pioneering tech, science and film sectors, who contribute to an evolving artistic vision. This allows for a fresh, vibrant and culturally relevant programme which recognises the importance of art to inspire and ask big questions in relation to the way we live now.

This document maps out key points from the six years, whilst also referencing the past four festivals since 2009.

AND was founded by existing organisations FACT (Foundation for Art and Creative Technology), Cornerhouse and folly.



Image: Krzysztof Wodiczko, War Veteran Vehicle(2009) Photo: Brain Slater.

“FASCINATING”

WIRED, 11 SEPTEMBER 2012

**“NOT ONLY DOES
AND CHAMPION A
CERTAIN NOTION OF
EXPERIMENTAL ART
ITS VERY STRUCTURE
AIMS TO UPSET
RECEIVED NOTIONS
OF WHAT AN ART
AND FILM FESTIVAL
SHOULD BE.”**

SIGHT AND SOUND



Image: Eva and Franco Mattes, Plan C (2010) Photo: Paul Greenwood

2. Risk, commissioning and excellence across art, cinema and digital culture

Abandon Normal Devices has created a series of projects and festivals where audiences can find new work, discover first-time feature films and encounter emerging trends in an accessible and public context. Criticality and participation is central to the organisation. Through research projects we create a space for high-level industry-based knowledge exchange and wider public engagement, conversation and debate.

Our portfolio includes an annual programme of exhibitions, performance, screenings, public realm work, online projects, residencies and a roaming biennial festival.

The festival is a site for discovery and adventure, mapping new cultural and digital domains every two years. AND actively seeks re-definition of what a festival can be in the 21st Century.

New Cinema and Digital Culture are terms that work as concepts to be defined and questioned. As an organisation focused on ideas and reflection, they provide a framework for the content audiences can expect, whilst remaining open for further discussion.

AND invites artists to investigate the increasingly complex flows of information, both personal, corporate and national, which define our 'Digital Culture'; And with the mass adoption of digital content in film production and distribution, 'New Cinema' creates a context for showcasing and further exploring cinematic tools of the future and the potential of multiple platforms.

“AT AND, THEY DON'T PLAY IT SAFE... THEY DON'T TAKE GRATUITOUS RISKS, THEY ARE WILLING TO EXPERIMENT WITH THE PROCESS”

MARK AMERIKA, ARTIST



Images: Top: Daito Manabe, Face Visualiser (2010) Photo: Paul Greenwood. Bottom: Brody Condon, Level 5 (2011) Photo: Brian Slater.

2.1 Championing new work

Since 2009 AND has worked with over 748 contemporary artists from around the world and commissioned 80 new works over 6 festivals in six years. These include work from pioneers like Carolee Schneeman (USA) and Krzysztof Wodiczko (PL) as well as feature films from British filmmakers Andrew Kotting (UK) Turner prize winner Gillian Wearing (UK), and the Cannes award winning Thai filmmaker Apichatpong Weerasethakul (TH). The organisation continues to champion work for online, cross platform and outdoor spaces by embracing world class artists who embrace new technologies from Eva and Franco Mattes, Julian Oliver, UBERMORGEN.COM, Wafaa Bilal, Heath Bunting, The Yes Men, KMA and Chris O'Shea.

These works have toured internationally to Berlin, Shanghai, Italy, Sydney as well as across the north of England with installations shared between cities and regional venues. It is this touring structure that has enabled wider and more distributed audiences to experience the festival.



Highlights included major public realm commissions: amongst them, Watch the Skies: new AV commission for the radio telescope at Jodrell Bank, Empire Drive-In, a full-scale drive-in movie theatre made from wrecked cars and freight containers. Mobile Republic, a touring convoy of caravans which featured 6 bespoke commissions; The Humble Market, an experiment in theatre and real time engagement involving a series of exhibitions and performances in Liverpool, Derry and Bel Horizonte in Brazil.

Alongside this the film programme often captures cinema trends in sites outdoor, site specific and online. The feedback from artists and partners has been overwhelmingly positive, with many saying they valued the international quality and diversity of art forms. Where public realm interventions were programmed alongside gallery work, and established names alongside more emerging artists.

Images: This page: Oneohtrix Point Never, Watch the Skies! (2014).
Opposite page: Andrew Kotting, Swandown (2012).



“AND HAS ENABLED ME TO FURTHER EXPAND MY DIALOGUE WITH UK AND OTHER INTERNATIONAL ARTISTS AND CURATORS.”

ALEXIA MELLO, ARTIST

2.2 Creating a space for creative risk

“MUCH MORE CONTEMPORARY THAN SOME OF THE OLDER FESTIVALS IN THIS FIELD WHO STILL CLING TO A 90S TECH SENSIBILITY”

VISITOR



Creative risk is central to AND's commissioning ethos and this is recognised in the evaluation feedback as a key characteristic that sets the organisation apart from other contemporary arts organisations in the UK and abroad. Risk, is defined by the organisations ambitious approach, which allows for artists, curators and producers to think outside of the box and fully realise projects in an exciting and thought provoking way; For many this has allowed them to experiment, think bigger, be bold and explore more than they would otherwise.

Fundamental to this risk-taking is working with artists who embrace new technologies from working with data, the tools of life science, drones and wearables, we are finding imaginative ways to grow and attract audiences for this emergent practice. Artists also cite that working in unexpected locations has allowed them to engage and secure direct feedback from a wider cross-section of the public, something considered a rarity amongst arts organisations. This is echoed in the feedback from artists who explained that many festivals are hidden in places that are not welcoming to a more general public, or emphasise overly-slick work. AND was out in the city, welcoming anyone who might be interested, or didn't know they were interested, and included work that was process-oriented.

“THE BELIEF IN ARTISTS TAKING RISKS IS WHAT FUNDAMENTALLY SETS AND ASIDE FROM ALL OTHER FESTIVALS”

ZACHERY DENFIELD,
ARTIST

Image: Jeremy Bailey, Master Slave Invigilator (2012) Photo: Paul Greenwood.

3. Audience Impact

In 2012 an estimated 279,000 ambient audiences attended the festival, with active audiences of 80,066. This is an increase on previous years: AND delivered two festivals in 2010 with audiences collectively amounting to 75,000, and 40,000 attended in 2011. One in three of audience attendees in 2012 had attended the festival in previous years. Whilst the majority of these (76%) had attended events in Manchester before, a quarter had also attended AND elsewhere in the region.

Nonetheless, with two thirds of audiences engaging for the first time in 2012, it demonstrates AND's continued success in engaging new audiences. The festival took place a month earlier, in the Summer, coinciding with other (European and National festivals) and because of this AND focused on audiences in the Northwest, who made up the majority of the participants. In previous years (2011) 50% of audiences were from Liverpool, 25% outside of the Northwest and 25% the rest of the UK. In 2012 one in five had travelled to another part of the region (Preston, Whitehaven, Cumbria, Blackburn) to participate in AND, which highlights the festivals role in connecting audiences to venues and facilities.

Figures do not take into account the large number of residents who engaged with Mobile Republic on its tour of the region or All About Us which was a collaboration with Lets Go Global and AGMA which attracted a high proportion of families with children; non-typical arts attenders and people from the most deprived areas in the region. For many of these local residents and those engaging with AND's touring programme elsewhere in the region, AND has provided them with a unique route to interact with contemporary digital arts and culture. As one artist brought up in the area, Dave Lynch explains "the role of an artist in these places was of a more traditional approach, painter, sculptor etc. AND directly challenges this by presenting works, that make the wider public interact, think and reconsider the role of the artist in today's society... quite simply AND is redefining the role of contemporary art and its relevance in the northern towns it visits".

Images: This page: Top: Julian Oliver, Border Bumping (2012). Bottom: Mobile Republic (2012) Photo: Paul Greenwood. Opposite page: Eyesect, The Constitute, AND Fair (2013).



“AND EVENTS GIVE YOU A MORE HANDS ON OPPORTUNITY; MORE INTERACTIVE.”

AUDIENCE MEMBER

3.1 Online Participation

AND is one of a few arts organisations in the UK that commissions work for online audiences with bespoke artist led projects. Recently this has included Addie Wagenknecht, who created a visual investigation on the notion of surveillance and Longitude a theatre production using Google Hangout as a platform and simultaneously taking place in three locations in three countries around Greenwich Meridian with LIFT festival. Previous projects also include IOCOSE's Crowded Apocalypse, which used crowdsourcing to generate conspiracy theories; The Hearing Test by Ailís Ní Ríain which asked users to question their auditory

perception; an online museum made up of video, essays and animations dedicated to a fictional artist from net art pioneer Mark Amerika. The on-line audiences were mapped using google analytics and twitter data, but in 2014 we launch a new European project which will be evaluating how audiences and artists can use technologies as a powerful ally.

The world-wide audiences following this is extensive, with audiences engaging from as diverse localities as Bhutan, Iran, Georgia, Columbia, Greenland, Botswana, El Salvador, China, Pakistan, Russia and Jordan.



3.2 Audience Profile

The age profile for AND in the cities, Liverpool and Manchester is young with 90% of respondents below the age of 44 and 44% being under 25, this demographic shifts in the wider region with 46% attending with families. What this indicates is that through the model of delivering a festival at different locations in the region AND is successful in engaging diverse audiences and encouraging them to both experience and be challenged by the new work commissioned. The evaluations over the past three years show a significant rise in younger audiences, single attendees and year on year and increase in diversity with audiences from Black and minority ethnic (BME) backgrounds, this year making up 19% of audiences. It also demonstrates a growth in female attendance, which this year is over half of the audience and somewhat of a rarity of tech festivals.

The touring model has also allowed a proportion of families with children; non-typical arts attenders and people from the most deprived areas in the region to engage with the festival. They make up 25%, 17% and 23% of all audiences at events, in the respective touring locations. For many of these local residents AND has provided them with a unique route to interact with contemporary digital arts and culture. AND also continues to attract a high proportion of audiences who are involved in the arts in their everyday lives and who made up 65% of all audiences at events this year. These findings indicate AND's continued role in delivering cutting edge work, which commands the attention of academics and students as well as practitioners.



Image: *The Sound Before You Make It*, Jaki Middleton & David Lawrey (2009).

Audience group type



- Other groups (2%)
- Family & friends groups (8%)
- Family groups (14%)
- Adult couples (17%)
- Single adult (26%)
- Friends groups (33%)

Age



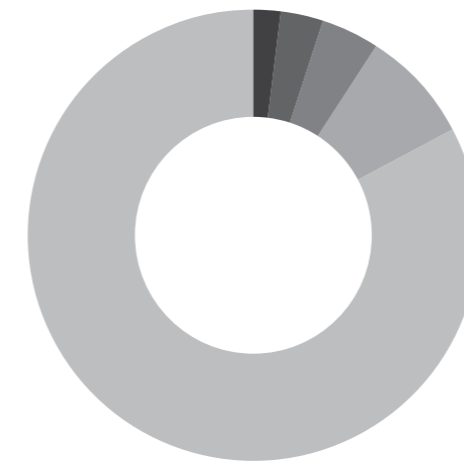
- Under 19 (5%)
- 19-25 (27%)
- 26-44 (48%)
- 45-64 (17%)
- 65+ (3%)

Gender



- Female (55%)
- Male (45%)

Ethnicity



- Black/Black British (2%)
- Other (3%)
- Asian/Asian British (4%)
- Mixed heritage (8%)
- White (81%)

Long term disability



- No (90%)
- Yes (10%)

3.3 Audience Reaction

AND regularly asks audiences to rate their enjoyment of events with 97% of audiences who rated it said it was either good or very good. Likewise 93% also rated the quality of the events as either good or very good. The opportunities that AND presents to participate continues to be reflected in the 75% of audiences who indicate they would attend more than one event at the festival. These findings continue to demonstrate both the depth of engagement and the range of participation that the festival encourages amongst audiences.



The originality that emerges from AND's approach to risk and experimentation is equally recognised and valued by audiences, 94% of who agreed that AND brings something new and different to arts in the North and 87% who agreed that AND encourages people to participate in innovative ways. A considerable majority of audiences also agreed that AND was made more interesting through its cross-disciplinary nature and recognised its focus on debate driven artwork. A further strength in the diversity of public involvement meant participants and audiences likened it to "a high tech folk festival" involving a public that extended beyond that related to the art world.

Images: Above: *Mobile Republic* (2012) Photo Paul Greenwood.
Below: *Strange Attractors (The Anatomy of Dr. Tulp), KMA* (2012).
Opposite: *Watch the Skies!* (2013).



“TURNING AUDIENCES MINDS INSIDE OUT LIKE NO OTHER FESTIVAL.”

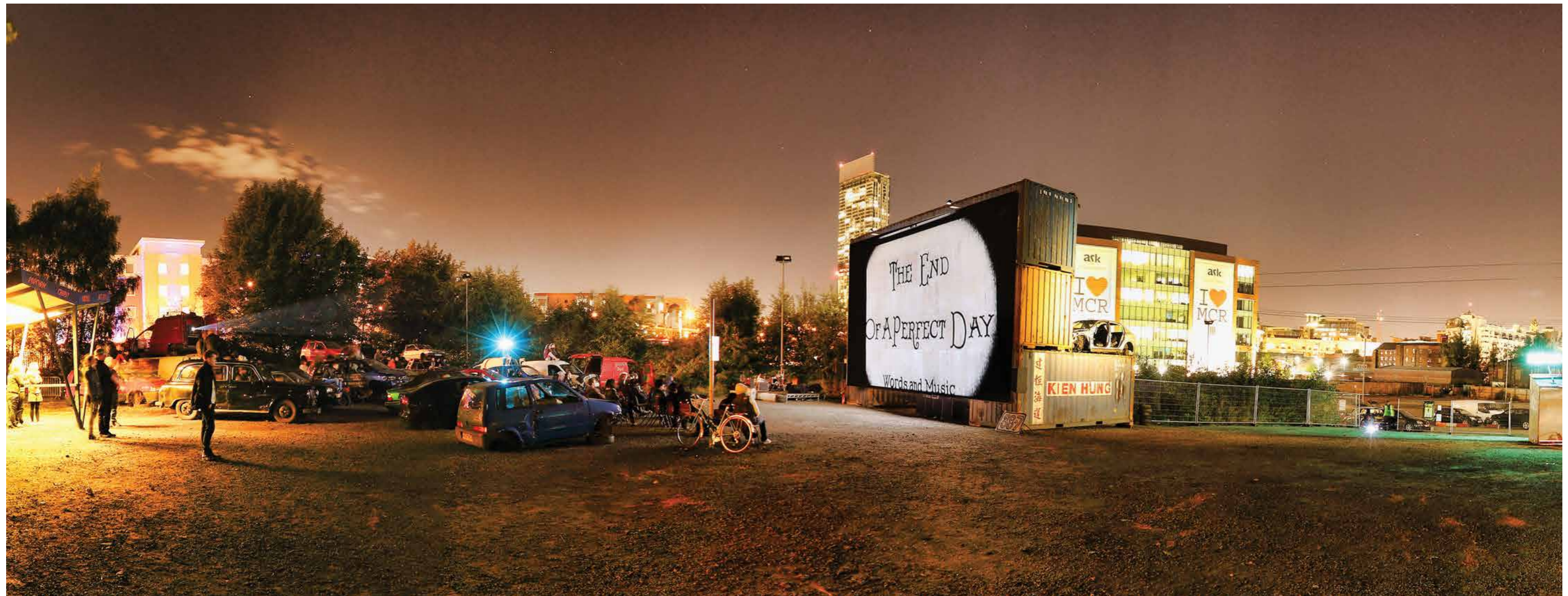
MANCHESTER'S FINEST



**“OTHER FESTIVALS AND
EVENTS OFTEN FEEL LIKE
THEY WANT SOMETHING
OUT OF A BOX - A FINISHED
PRODUCT; AND WANTS
TO HELP DEVELOP
SOMETHING NEW.”**

JEFF STARK, ARTIST

Image: Jeff Stark and Todd Chandler, Empire Drive In (2012) Photo Carl Sukonik.



4. Inspiring Creativity and Talent Development

“AND A MEMORABLE FOLLY TO IGNITE ONGOING THOUGHT AND DEBATE INTO THE PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE.”

A-N



Images: This page: Left: A Dream Came Through, Laniranco Aceti (2012) Photo: Paul Greenwood. Right: John O'Shea, Pigs Bladder Football (2012). Photo: Artist. Opposite page: DIN 19643, Haxan Cloak (2013).



AND has had a significant role in developing and retaining talent in the region, through the number of artists, volunteers and interns it supports annually.

We have worked with a total of 748 artists, who have participated in AND since it launched in 2009. Under half of these were under the age of 34 years and one in eight were based in the North West. Several have referred to how AND has helped them secure a focus or extended the scope and scale of their work. For many their involvement has encouraged them to take more hybrid approaches to new media or digital art; provoked re-thinking of work and their approaches to new technologies.

AND's approach also appears to place considerable emphasis on dialogue with artists working over timescales ranging from six months to two years depending on the project. Several artists refer to how they have been encouraged to develop work that responds to the characteristics of the North West region, its culture and/or landscapes. It has also resulted in their work taking on a different trajectory or emphasis they had not previously planned and has secured the output of original distinctive work whilst helping them to develop their skills, scope and focus of their work.

AND has always encouraged the cross fertilisation of local and international artists. Over the four years AND has commissioned local artists/collectives and continued to work with them on a long term basis. Regional artists are commissioned with equal budgets to international artists and they have been supported on their first funding bids and solo exhibitions or events. AND also established an "Artists at Work" strand in addition to the residencies where artists were mentoring other artists. This included in 2013 Jessie Darling and a group of live art performers and Darren O' Donnell with young people in the project Ask A Teenager. This helped the artists to develop new relationships, secure connections and access new networks: involving other artists, curators, venues and sponsors. AND has also helped artists to secure prospects of new work; it has opened up new revenue and sponsorship opportunities; and, it has helped many local artists to develop and tour further afield.

4.1 Volunteers and Interns



Image: Darren O' Donnell, Ask A Teenager. Photo Paul Greenwood.

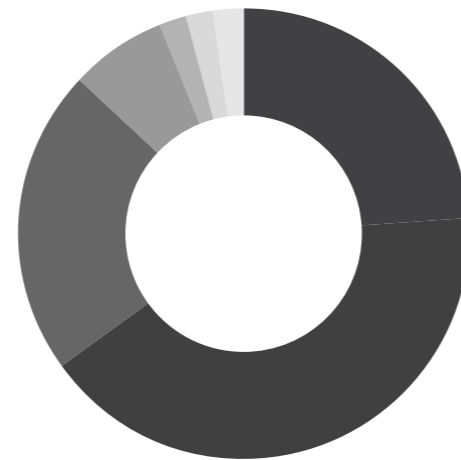
Further evidence of AND's role in developing capacity within the sector is in the number of volunteers and interns supported by the festival. In 2012, 90 volunteers and two interns were employed to help deliver the programme. Adding these to the numbers employed in previous years, this amounts to more than 300 volunteers and 12 interns involved since its launch and whose contribution is valued at more than £172,000. The significant majority of volunteers were local young people: students, young artists and those at the start of their careers seeking experience in the sector to enhance their prospects. For many, the prospect of becoming involved in a dynamic, cross disciplinary festival with a focus on digital culture was a key draw. Others referred to the opportunity to better connect with the area.

Many volunteers were inspired by the opportunity to meet and work with a broad range of artists and curators and several had attended AND in previous years and wanted to become more involved and gain greater insights into its delivery. The outcomes for volunteers and interns have been wide ranging. They have developed a wide range of creative, administrative and transferrable skills. Many had been inspired by the artists and curators they had worked closely with, whilst some had felt it had shaped and informed their understanding of digital culture and given them an appreciation of diversity of Manchester and collaborative working practice; others spoke about the focus and/or confidence they had gained to apply for roles within the arts sector, to further progress their studies and to take on more volunteering activities.

“I THINK AND OPENED MY EYES TO WHAT ‘ART’ REALLY WAS/COULD BE, WHICH I DIDN'T GET ON MY DEGREE”

VOLUNTEER

Volunteer age



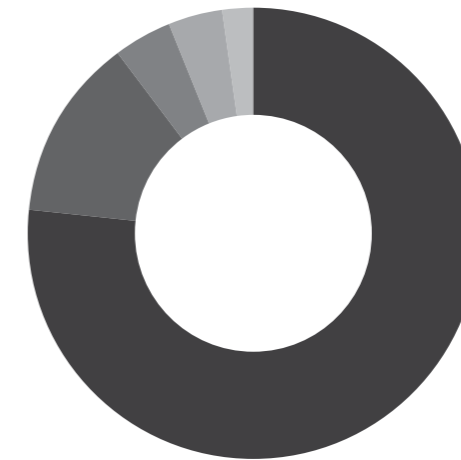
- 16-19 (24%)
- 20-24 (41%)
- 25-29 (22%)
- 30-34 (7%)
- 35-39 (2%)
- 40-44 (2%)
- 45-49 (2%)

Gender



- Female (65%)
- Male (35%)

Ethnicity



- White British (76%)
- White other (13%)
- Mixed heritage (4%)
- Black/black British (4%)
- Prefer not to say (2%)

Origin



- Elsewhere in UK (10%)
- Greater Manchester (71%)
- Lancashire (10%)
- Merseyside (5%)
- Cumbria (5%)

**“AND BROADENED
OUR HYPOTHESIS
AND PROVIDED
SOME IDEAS
TO EXPLORE
THE ‘BLUE SKY’
POTENTIAL OF
OUR RESEARCH
PARADIGMS”**

PARTNER



Image: HeHe, M:Blem (2012) Photo credit HeHe.

5. Cross Sector Working and Partnership Building

A major strength of AND is the number of partnerships, the organisation has nurtured across the arts, heritage, science, technology, and film sector. These have engendered and increased connectivity across the North as evidenced not only through the learning between organisations like FACT (Foundation for Art and Creative Technology) and Cornerhouse but through the learning between smaller and larger partners.

These partnerships are beginning to be seen as model for other regions, as they maximise resources and stimulate best practice. So far, the organisation has worked with over 60 organisations. These partnerships have enabled AND to deliver projects much greater than its level of resource would otherwise permit. With events taking place in Cumbria, Lancashire, Merseyside and Greater Manchester. This strategy opens up opportunities to engage and participate amongst a broad range of people. It is clear from the feedback from artists and partners that working in partnership with AND has enabled them to introduce contemporary work to many who would not otherwise have been exposed to such cutting edge activities. It has opened up new channels of delivery that would not otherwise have been considered or possible and it has facilitated more meaningful and productive dialogue between partners, curators, artists and audiences.

Other partners have mentioned the increased confidence, capacity and capability they have secured through working with AND that has led to lasting legacies in terms of adopted new approaches, new relationships and funding opportunities. This is evident in the partnership with Copeland Borough Council, which has enabled them to explore digital arts and access artists and organisations they would not otherwise have had opportunity to bring to the area.

The motivations for collaborating with AND extended well beyond accessing new networks, audiences and/or work, and partners saw considerable benefit in being aligned to AND's profile, approach, creativity, curiosity and ethos. Several partners have referred to the strength of collaboration, not limited to predetermined roles, and the opportunities they had to develop, learn and experiment through collaboration with a respected and recognised partner.

There are many other legacies emerging from AND's partnership approach, not least the quality and creative outputs for art-making that cross disciplinary partnerships enable. Working closely with British Waterways and the Forestry Commission artists have been able to greater consider different context and audiences. Academic partners also provide access to unique resources as was the case with collaboration with the University of Liverpool and the Clinical Engineering department, who partnered on the Pigs Bladder Football project and the University of Manchester who partnered on the live cinema event 'Watch the Skies'.

These partnerships are of considerable value to the region's wider arts and cultural sector over the longer term.

And partnerships



- Regional (62%)
- National (33%)
- International (5%)

- Within sector (73%)
- Cross-sector (27%)

- Funding (20%)
- Co-producing (29%)
- Presenting (16%)
- Commissioning (20%)
- Local business (11%)
- Other (4%)



Image: How to make art in a toxic environment, Adam Brown (2013).

5.1 A major attraction to work, live, visit and invest

It is clear from audiences that AND continues to impact positively on their perceptions of place, with over 70% of visitors from outside the North West agreeing they feel more positive about the region. 94% of those attending events in also agreed that AND delivers something new and different to the region.

A number of common themes emerged from audiences responses to being asked how AND compared with other arts events. These included the accessibility of AND, which is perceived to engage young and old, and is more enjoyable because of its less tech driven approach. Audiences also referred to AND being different, unique, original and fresh and much more interactive than other festivals. AND's ability to encourage discourse and debate, to enlighten, provoke and challenge are also clear characteristics that set it apart for audiences, many of who refer to this in the context of other contemporary and digital arts festivals in the region and beyond.

Image: Wafaa Bilal, Meme Junkyard (2012) Photo: Paul Greenwood.



“THE PARTNERSHIP HAS HELPED US TO DEVELOP A CLEARER STRATEGY FOR TOURING COMMISSIONED WORK OUTSIDE OUR USUAL SITES AND SUGGESTED EFFECTIVE WAYS WE CAN PARTNER WITH LARGER EVENTS AND FESTIVALS IN THE FUTURE.”

PARTNER

5.2 Economic Impacts

The increased audience expenditure that AND generates within the regional economy also adds considerable value. In 2012, this is estimated to have accounted for over £1.18 million in additional visitor expenditure and the equivalent of an additional 18 FTE jobs.

**“THE DIGITAL
ELEMENT OF
OUR PROJECT
COULD NOT
HAVE BEEN
DELIVERED
WITH ANYONE
ELSE BUT AND”**

PARTNER

Audience breakdown	
Staying visitors	6%
Day visitors	13%
Local to even	82%
Total audiences to events attributable to AND	
Audiences at AND festival events	54579
Audiences at WE PLAY Expo	25000
Audience expenditure (estimated from regional STEAM data)	
Average staying visitor expenditure (direct & induced)	£189
Average day visitor expenditure (direct & induced)	£34
Expenditure impacts	
Expenditure impacts of staying visitors	£849,056.59
Expenditure impacts of day visitors	£338,210.75
Total additional expenditure attributable to AND	£1,187,267.34

Image: Experiment Perilous (2013) Photo: Chris Foster.



5.3 Profile and international reputation

AND's growing standing as an international platform for new cinema and digital culture is no less apparent in the media attention the festival has attracted from broadcast, specialist and public press as well as local, regional, national and international publications. Coverage included articles published in the regional and specialist press in Guardian, Design Week, Dazed, Empire, BBC Radio 6, attitude, arts news, Dazed digital, Manchester Evening News. Features & previews in the New Scientist, Metro and French national newspaper La Liberation. Broadcast highlights comprised coverage on BBC Breakfast, BBC North West Tonight, BBC Radio Manchester (three different programmes), BBC 6 Music, Gaydio and French Radio London.

This coverage portrays AND is true to its ambitions as an edgy, quirky, surreal, original, bizarre, brilliant, provoking, ground-breaking and challenging festival, heralding its position at the forefront of contemporary interdisciplinary arts festivals within the UK and internationally. The methodology used to undertake the evaluations up to 2014 was drawn from a wide range of stakeholders and sources the full copy is available of request. The mixed methods adopted have included quantitative interviewer led surveys conducted with a cross section of audiences at events, structured surveys amongst volunteers and partners and a mix of open ended questions posed to artists via depth interview and email. Data has also been sourced on social media following, website analytics and from the box office and online booking systems.

“AND IS ONE OF THE MOST INTRIGUING ARTS EVENTS. LEAVING AN INTRINSIC IMPACT LONG AFTER ONE HAS LEFT THE FESTIVAL”

AUDIENCE MEMBER

Founded by:

CORNERHOUSE
ARTFILMBOOKSFOODDRINK


F A C T


folly

Major Funders

 Legacy Trust UK
LOTTERY FUNDED

 ARTS COUNCIL ENGLAND
LOTTERY FUNDED

 Film Forever

“I WAS AMAZED AT THE OPPORTUNITIES AVAILABLE TO BE SO HANDS ON WITH THE EXHIBITIONS AND EVENTS AND THE PERSONAL ENGAGEMENT WITH THE AUDIENCE. I NEVER EXPECTED TO MEET SO MANY WONDERFUL PEOPLE BOTH FROM THE ACTUAL FESTIVAL AND VISITORS”

VOLUNTEER