



DIY “Trust me, I’m an artist” Toolkit

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Introducing the DIY “Trust Me, I’m an Artist” Toolkit

With this toolkit you can create your own DIY “Trust me, I’m an artist” event based on our successful format for investigating, revealing and debating the ethical issues that arise through the process of collaborations between art and bioscience.

Trust me I’m an artist

The aim of this DIY “Trust me, I’m an artist” Toolkit is to enable artists, curators and arts organisations to investigate how to engage deeply with biotechnology and biomedicine, in order to drive innovation in artistic production, ways of presenting artworks, and developing new audiences. It can be used to gain feedback on a new artistic project, to move an existing project forward, or highlight a particular issue alongside an exhibition programme.

Artists tend to work at the forefront of innovation and push boundaries, whilst engaging in ethical and philosophical challenges that resonate through society around new technologies, but problems may arise when artists attempt to create work embedded within scientific institutions or laboratory settings, and in particular when their projects fall under the consideration of institutional ethics committees.

Our goal is not to censor, but to share understanding and provide artists, cultural institutions and audiences with the skills to understand the ethical issues that arise in the creation and exhibition of artworks made in collaboration with bioscience so that those works are enabled as far as possible. To judge art in exactly the same way as one would judge science can never be fully effective and may lead to dangerous forms of censorship, especially when the ‘value’ of an unrealised work is unclear, and it usually is!

Specifically “Trust me, I’m an artist” is an investigation of the role of artists working within bioscience. Looking at their place in the institutions they work within and their place in the wider community, their place in the art world, and consider whether new ethical frameworks need to be developed to cope with the increasingly interdisciplinary, and even transdisciplinary practices taking place in scientific research settings today.

DIY “Trust Me, I’m an Artist” Toolkit



The toolkit is based on our major series of events where a selected artist proposed an ethically complex artwork to a specially formed ethics committee (following the rules and procedures typical for the host country/institution).

Trust me I'm an artist and this DIY toolkit that enables others to organise Trust me I'm an artist themselves follows a format that can be applied as strictly as desired, but can also be used in a more open way. It is advised that if you set-up a Trust me I'm an artist event for the first time to apply the format in a strict and formal manner as if it were a court case. It is our experience that if you do this it will reveal most of the ethical complexities that occur in both biotechnology/biomedicine and bio art to the audience.

Trust me I'm an artist as a format identifies an artist that works with biotechnology and biomedicine or related science or technology that reveal ethical implications, complexities and ambiguities that are similar to those found in science and technology development itself. The artist is asked to fill out the forms that normally are used by researchers to be filled out addressing all identified ethical issues around bio safety, data protection, medical safety and so on. An ethics committee is brought together preferably with ethicists knowledgeable of the field of ethics the artwork deals with, a legal expert and a 'lay' art expert. The artist is asked at the start of the event to present the artwork and explain the ethical issues that may arise from the artwork and when done the artist is sent out of the room. The ethics committee then debates the proposed artwork and comes to a decision, after which the artist is asked to re-enter the room and is then informed of the ethics committee's decision. After this a moderated discussion happens wherein first the artist is asked for a reaction and then the audience is invited to enter into a discussion about the result.

Below you find a detailed description how to organise Trust me I'm an artist yourself.

Selecting the artist and the art project

Choosing the artist and art Project

It is important to select an artist and project that genuinely has ethical implications or arouses concerns. The most interesting debates occur when the artist has commenced a project but is seeking genuine advice on how to progress with their work, and it is particularly interesting if the project has somehow been prevented or halted by institutional ethics of some kind.

When an artist agrees to participate in a DIY "Trust Me, I'm an Artist" event they are laying themselves completely bare to scrutiny and criticism, therefore it is best to select an artist who can cope well with such an experience and will find it beneficial.



It's an intense task to put together a DIY "Trust Me, I'm an Artist" event so you should ensure that the artist is reliable (will reply in a timely fashion about organisational queries) and fully committed to participating in the event.

How to invite the artist?

Be polite and respectful in inviting the artist. This can be done either in person at a face-to-face or online meeting, via email or even telephone or letter. You should provide the artist with information about your proposed event, be clear about funding/fees/expenses, what is required from them and your interest in their work/project.

Should you pay the artist?

We always recommend that freelance artists are paid for their participation in the event.

What support does the artist need?

This can vary but it might range from advice about the event, curatorial advice about the context within which the artwork will be presented, to financial support in order to undertake the event. Take the lead from the artist, and ask how best you can support them.

Respecting the artists work and ideas

The process of revealing ones work in a DIY "Trust Me, I'm an Artist" context is a very intense undertaking for any artist. They will have certain ideas about how they feel their work should be portrayed to the audience, on social media and websites or in press releases. You must always allow the artist to proof read and approve any texts you create about the event and give permission for the use of their images (provide credit information in any PR you send out).

Arranging the venue

Suitable locations and facilities needed

It's ideal to find a partner venue that will help promote your event. For instance this may be a lecture theatre in a university, an events space in an arts centre, as part of a festival, or working with an arts organisation.

You'll need a space for the artist to present, a screen for their presentation, a long table for the committee to sit at and seating for the audience. The event capacity is of course dependent on your publicity campaign and the reputation of your artist and committee.



It's good to have a bar/refreshments at the event as we recommend a break between the ethics committee's deliberation and the announcement of the recommendations.

Negotiating costs

You may need to hire the space or to organise a partnership event. It's likely that you can find a venue at little or no cost, but this may of course take some entrepreneurship.

As venues have limited capacity usually (although some may be very large) you might want to ticket the event. There are many free online ticketing applications so these can be good to use.

You may decide to charge a nominal fee for tickets. The benefit of this is that it will encourage people who have bought a ticket to actually attend the event. Sometimes there is a drop off of people who book a free event and then do not feel committed to attend.

A fee can also be used to offset other costs such as artist/committee fees/expenses, or organisational and publicity costs.

The ethics committee

Who needs to be on the committee?

The ethics committee needs to resemble the type of committee that the artist would normally face in whatever situation/location they are based. It is recommended that the artist does not know (or know well) anyone on the committee.

Five committee members is usually a good number.

It is important to have a good committee chairperson. Ideally they should be experienced in chairing ethics committees, or at least chairing panel discussions. In preparation to the event they should pick out a range of issues to raise with the committee to help them make their decisions and ensure that all committee members' voices are heard equally, or as equally as possible.

The rest of the committee is made up of a range of experts and a layperson. For instance, if the artwork involves infectious diseases/bio-containment then at least one microbiologist will be useful. If technologies such as 3D printing tissue, or gene editing are involved then experts from those fields will be needed. If human consent is involved then an expert in law may be useful and in fact it is often very interesting to have a legal perspective on the panel. It's worth involving one professional ethicist or moral philosopher. Without such experts the rest of the committee may not be able to understand the true implications of the various aspects of the project proposal.



For the layperson (the non-scientific person) an artist, curator, or art historian is recommended as this can give voice to the context of the work in the wider context of the arts.

How to invite the committee

There are numerous strategies for sourcing suitable committee members. The best way is through existing networks or contacts who can make introductions for you. Searching online for experts with suitable skills can also work and you need to ensure that they are provided with suitable background on the project and also on the aims of “Trust Me, I’m an artist”. It is worth providing them with a website link and a link to the artist’s work.

It is advised to either meet or speak to the invited committee members in person to get a mutual understanding of the contest and the event.

What information you need from the committee

A one paragraph biography and a website link should be sourced from each committee member. You may also wish to source an image, such as a headshot, from each committee member.

It also might be worth speaking to each committee member prior to the event to ensure they have fully understand what is involved and what is expected from them.

What information you need to provide them with?

Provide them with the date and time they need to arrive at the event. It is best to ask them to arrive in advance of the start time in order to meet and be briefed on the structure of the event by the organisers.

Send them the artist’s completed ethics application and any appendices they have provided.

See exemplary appendices of ethics application forms originating from Great Britain, Annica, Netherlands, Germany.

Send them the biographies of their fellow committee members.

Should you pay the committee fees and or/expenses?

We recommend that, where possible all the committee members out of pocket expenses are reimbursed. In the case of full time academics their time may be funded by their institutions, but for those who are not funded for their time, for example freelance artist committee members, then we recommend paying them for their time if possible.



The ethics application form

Completing the form

The artist should ideally complete an ethics application form and any other required documentation, for instance any appendices, such as consent forms, should be included. It is best, for the sake of realism, to use slightly edited versions of actual ethics application forms for the actual institution/organisation or type of institution involved. Names and contact details of the actual institutions should be removed as well as any particularly irrelevant questions. Apart from that the forms should be as close as possible to being realistic representations of the process. The forms are, for the most part, clearly NOT suitable for the evaluation of artistic projects but nevertheless they are the hoops that need to be jumped through in the real world and can provide some quite entertaining situations where square pegs are forced into round holes. In fact such forms often prove problematic for scientists themselves.

The normal process is usually for a proposer (the artist in this case) to complete the necessary paperwork for the ethical approval of their research, submit it directly to the committee and more frequently than not they will not meet. However it is not unheard of for a proposer to be invited to explain difficult work to an ethics committee and for “Trust me, I’m an artist” we have taken artistic license with the process and included this aspect in all the events.

The artist should prepare a presentation of not longer than 20 minutes aimed at conveying their work, background and proposal to the committee. The audience are able to watch this process.

Sourcing the ethics application form

This sometimes takes some ingenuity. You might search on a university website for their ethics application form, look to the organisation that the artist is working with, or look to higher bodies such as national ethical committees. This depends where the event will take place as national ethical structures differ widely and this is part of the excitement of the project, to reveal how attitudes to ethics change across the globe and are subject to a wide range of influences across religion and culture.

Please consult the Trust me I’m an Artist partners if you have trouble finding the needed forms.

The ethics application form

Artists will use a range of strategies to complete the form. Some may turn the form into a work of art in its own right, simply ‘try their best’, or they may seek advice from scientists or even co-author the form with a science collaborator. Although the latter strategy sounds like the safer option it does not always help – just working with an artist can raise concerns.



The way artists approach the ethics application form must be regarded artistically part of the event and its preparation.

Publicising the event

We recommend you set up a webpage to publicise your event as well as creating a Facebook event and posting on Twitter, as well as any other social media strategies work for you.

Our Facebook page is <https://www.facebook.com/tmiaaa>
Please tweet your event to us @TrustMeEurope

It is also good to publicise your events via online art/science lists such as:

ASCI <http://www.asci.org/>
Yasmin <http://www2.media.uoa.gr/yasmin/>
Leonardo <http://www.leonardo.info/>

It is also good to publicise your events through the websites and channels of the original Trust me I'm an Artists partners and have it on the Trust me I'm an Artist website.

The event format

- Audience arrives
- Artist and ethics committee take their positions
- Introductions by host/moderator or event curator (and other brief introductions as appropriate)
- Artist give 20 minute presentation outlining their artwork and ethical issue, giving the committee all the information they need to deliberate as well as background on their work/project as appropriate
- Artist is thanked and sent out of the room by the ethics committee chair person
- Ethics committee deliberate the questions, a good committee chair will lead on this and select the salient points for debate and engage the whole committee in those questions, allow 40-45 minutes
- Ethics committee finalise their decision
- Break with refreshments, artist returns but audience are asked not to tell the artist of the decision, allow 15 minutes
- Everyone (artist, committee and audience) takes their positions again
- Ethics committee chair addresses the artist to inform them of their decision (it is not binding as this is a performative/research exercise), allow 5 minutes
- The artist has a right to reply, allow 5 minutes
- The ethics committee have a right to reply, allow 5 minutes



- The audience join the discussion and the host chairs a debate, allow up to 30 minutes
- Conclusions and refreshments

Information to provide the audience

You should provide them with all the information they need to run the event in advance of the event and on the day/evening it is useful to provide the audience with a handout detailing the format, the artist's, curators (if applicable) and ethics committees' biographies. You may also wish to make several copies (or more depending on budget) of the actual ethics application form completed by the artist available to the audience as a handout too.

Documentation

Everyone using this toolkit to create an event is asked to share the results such as videos, audio recordings, blog posts or reports with our website to enable wider understanding and knowledge dissemination within our community.

You will potentially want to consider getting microphones/PA system for the event depending on the venues acoustics.

Budgeting

It's important to carefully budget your event and think about all the costs involved, as well as your time. Costs may include: artist's fees/expenses, ethics committee's fees/expenses, venue costs, refreshments, organiser's time, admin costs, publicity/PR costs, videoing the event, other documentation, photography, website costs and costs specific to your event.

Disseminating the event

We recommend you achieve the greatest legacy for your event by disseminating the results of your event as widely as possible. Please video your event and upload it to Youtube or Vimeo. We would also like to share your video via our social media and website. It's also worth ensuring the greatest reach for your event by writing up the event for press, academic publications (such as Leonardo), or blogs.

Please notify the original Trust me I'm an Artist partners so they can disseminate your event and documentation thereof.



Tips on making the video

If you have limited resources then one fixed camera on a tripod, trained on the committee and artist is a good method to document the event. If you have more resources then one fixed camera and one roaming camera is good, but be warned this will take much more editing.

You can use a separate sound recorder positioned by the committee and artist to ensure better sound quality and a full PA system with microphones may allow you to record directly. Make sure the speakers and audience (if recording the debate) speak into microphones at all times.

Setting up a linked programme, such as an exhibition, talks event or workshop

It's very worthwhile setting up a wider programme around your DIY "Trust me, I'm an artist" event, or linking the event to a wider programme you are running. Remember to carefully budget for any additional venue costs or fees etc and include the additional event, which could take the form of a practical workshop with the artist for instance.

Additional Background Information on the "Trust Me, I'm an Artist" series

This toolkit is funded as part of "Trust Me, I'm an Artist: Developing Ethical Frameworks for Artists, Cultural Institutions and Audiences Engaged in the Challenges of Creating and Experiencing New Art Forms in Biotechnology and Biomedicine in Europe" which itself built on on a pilot project *Trust me, I'm an artist: towards an ethics of art science collaboration* led by artist Anna Dumitriu and Professor Bobbie Farsides (Brighton and Sussex Medical School) in collaboration with Lucas Evers at Waag Society.

The previous project comprised of a series of performative public events, considered artworks in their own right, hosted in international settings: London, UK (at The Arts Catalyst), Paris, France (at École Normale Supérieure), Dublin, Eire (at The Science Gallery), and Amsterdam in the Netherlands (Waag Society). These events aimed to investigate the ethical issues arising from art and science collaboration and consider the roles and responsibilities of the artists, scientists and institutions involved in order to develop a shared understanding and unpack the issues at play when artists wish to create ethically challenging work, by which we mean work that raises either moral, professional or health and safety issues. At each event an artist proposed an idea for an artwork they wished to create to an ethics committee following the rules and



procedures typical for the host country. The committee debated whether the project should be, in their view, allowed. The artist was informed of the ethics committee's decision and, alongside the audience, was able to enter into a discussion about the result.

The artworks investigated in the events were chosen (by Dumitriu, Farsides and Waag Society in collaboration) because they raise interesting questions for science ethics committees, such as the role of self-experimentation, the use of genetic modification in art and facilitating public access to potentially hazardous materials. The projects were genuine projects and the ethics committees were made of real scientists, ethicists, lawyers and lay people as would be typical for an institution where the artist was working or trying to work, who judged the work just as they would in a genuine ethics committee for a scientific institution in the country they were based in. The artists were made to complete full ethics applications forms (which the audience were given copies of) and were not present at the deliberation, though the audience observed the whole event and a video was put online on the project website. This model has become known as the "Trust me, I'm an artist" event format.

In London the artist Neal White described Yves Klein's famous Paris exhibition *Le Vide* (The Void). Crowds thronged as Yves opened his highly controversial exhibition – that featured a seemingly empty white gallery space. "But those lucky enough to gain access, were in for an unexpected treat", explained White. "Special blue cocktails were served: a mixture of gin, Cointreau and methylene blue (a scientific stain) prepared for Klein by La Coupole, the famous brasserie. As Klein intended, the cocktails caused the urine of drinkers to turn blue for about a week, roughly the planned run of the show." However since this event took place in 1959, Methylene blue has been established as toxic, nevertheless it is also a component in several medications, for instance to reduce symptoms of cystitis.

White, the artist, proposed to re-create the event as an experiment to establish what are the safest, or least toxic dosages of methylene blue in an alcoholic cocktail required to turn urine blue, if only for a limited period. The effect of this will be monitored, and the dosage will be controlled during the trial. The setting of the trial was gallery where the visitor becomes a consensual participant - an informed *Self-Experimenter*. In a managed process of consensual participation, the visitor is faced with a choice to consume an artwork that contains the ingredients of methylene – with only the clinical information. Or to keep the artwork they are given as an intact form, signed by the artist. The experiment was proposed on the one hand as a rational and logical approach to create a cultural experiment on the basis of a clinical trial under closely monitored conditions. On the other hand it was proposed as a challenge to the limits and practices of ethics as articulated across art and science practice - in its engagement with the politics of consent, belief and institutions themselves.

As the committee struggled to deal with this proposal the event helped to reveal the mechanisms that drive process that normally takes place behind closed



doors. They debated whether it was ethical for art to have any risk whatsoever, whether as an ethics committee they had the right to rule on an artwork, attempted to define art, criticised the artists approach to form filling and their unusual consent form and generally struggled with this recontextualisation of art that intervenes directly within the scientific process.

The project was very well attended throughout and is those attending stated that participating in such an event had affected their views and their understanding of art/science collaboration and the ethics of emerging technologies.

Resources

Websites

The original official programme of events and research, called “Trust Me, I’m an Artist: Towards an Ethics of Art and Science Collaboration”

www.artscienceethics.com

With links to all videos of events, ethics applications and all other documentation under this programme.

The second official programme of events and research, called “Trust Me, I’m an Artist: Developing Ethical Frameworks for Artists, Cultural Institutions and Audiences Engaged in the Challenges of Creating and Experiencing New Art Forms in Biotechnology and Biomedicine in Europe”

www.trustmeimanartist.eu

With links to all videos of events, workshops, publications and all other documentation under this programme.

Book

You can purchase the book about the concept, the first series of events and the issues that arose in either e-book, iBook, paperback or hardback here:
<http://artscienceethics.tumblr.com/book>

Logo

You should use the “Trust Me, I’m an Artist” logo on all documentation relating to your event, download it here:
<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/dwzxdbyb8pi0g5d/AADfbUUZc34AuLJDOzxPZXYUa?dl=0>

Facebook



<https://www.facebook.com/tmiaaa>

Twitter

@TrustMeEurope

In case you want to organise a DIY Trust me I'm an Artist and want help and or advise please contact us via www.trustmeimanartist.eu