We invite you to join us for an Open Space conversation about the future of puppetry and collaboration.

===============UPDATE TO THE INVITATION =============

On 23 June our world changed. Since the EU referendum result in favour of BREXIT the context in which we ask this question has now changed and continues to change.

Our invitation as originally written still stands – see below – and we would like to reiterate that as an Open Space meeting this is an opportunity for all those coming to bring their concerns and questions about puppetry and collaboration and the impact of the referendum result into the room for discussion.

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Puppet Place is a dedicated space for creative practitioners in the heart of Bristol offering fabrication, rehearsal, and office space – but we want it to be so much more than this. The building, and the people who work and play within it, are a fantastic source of innovation and insight. We think this means we can do more, be better and create conditions for puppetry to thrive – a Collaborative Hub.

We are working with a diverse group of creatives exploring this very topic using an overarching question: "Puppet Place – A Collaborative Hub?" We have only just started out on this journey and we want to ensure that we get different voices in the room before we go too far and are keen to test out our ideas with you!

We're finding that each conversation leads us to new areas, more questions and more ideas. We want to be provocative, and to push ourselves beyond our usual boundaries. The topic for this current phase of conversation is:

Does the future growth of puppetry lie outside the arts?

How do *we* currently define puppetry?

Puppetry is an artform that strides across boundaries and gets under your skin. It is a powerful tool for self-expression and reconciliation and a vibrant performing artform. Its origins are ancient, often enshrined in religious ritual, yet its tendrils reach into the latest robotics and AI research. All these forms also share the same basic principle of "bringing the inanimate to life".

We recognise these myriad forms in our work. This means we include stop-frame animation, filmed puppetry, object manipulation as well as bunraku-style, string and rod marionette, shadow puppetry, ventriloquism, glove puppetry, automata and robotics within the puppetry family.

Puppetry faces similar preconceptions as animation, "it's for kids" and creative robotics, "it's niche". It also faces the same challenges: lack of investment and lack of public platforms. We would like to start a conversation with the creative sector as a whole, the puppetry, animation and creative robotics communities, to explore how we can learn from each other, work together to develop public engagement and articulate the value of what we do in the world.

We very much hope you can join us to move the conversation on and start a purposeful exchange about collaboration.

We will use Open Space Technology (OST) for the meeting. OST is a format that allows people to collaborate around common questions and concerns, while giving individual participants the opportunity to propose specific topics or starting points for discussion.

Helen Featherstone will facilitate. Helen is a Public Engagement consultant and Head of Public Engagement at University of Bath.