

# To Paula Ridley

29 September 2014



tenantspin/FACT, 2013

Paula Ridley  
Liverpool, UK

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Dear Paula

Thanks for your presence today at **The Resident**. Thanks especially for your remarks on the politics of housing — and not just the politics, but the emotional psychology of housing. Somehow, the distance between your past role as chair of Housing Action Trust in Liverpool and your present role as chair of the Liverpool Biennial seems both small and vast. It's hard to measure. In a way, in these first couple of days of **The Resident**, we're all trying to feel our way towards an understanding of how, if at all, the Liverpool Biennial can touch the city's present housing crisis — building, of course, on the work of Homebaked.

Thanks for bringing up the Tenantspin project from some years ago; that's a valuable point of reference. I'd love to understand better the role of the artists, Superflex, in that case, as well as the methodologies of community engagement that were employed, and the role of Arena Housing. Clearly, Tenantspin was marked by a responsiveness to the needs and interests of the residents.

Are there lessons for the Liverpool Biennial today and in the future? We heard the questions today. Does the Biennial have the expertise and capacities to be involved in housing in a sustained way? Should it assume a responsibility for supporting community spaces? What should be the role of an arts organisation in urban regeneration, or what we could call urban defence? Is it even the role of the Liverpool Biennial to have a political agency?

Let's see whether, tomorrow, the group feels that the needs of the housing crisis would either: 1. nourish a vision for the role of the Biennial in the city; 2. trap it in a set of responsibilities that are impossible to fulfill; or 3. become something we touch at a tangent. Is there a fourth option?

Did you also work with culture and housing in Pittsburgh? I'd be interested to know if there are lessons for us from that city or others like it.

Best wishes

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