



This report has been generated in response to the multi- sensory professional development experience produced by Entelechy, supported by ArtWorks London on September 13 2013

Unless stated otherwise feedback from delegates are in italics.

How can we support the artist to be present and engaged with people in a variety of places and spaces, whatever the setting? Entelechy question

The aim of the day was to experience Entelechy's approach to artistic CPD. Beginning with multi -sensory practical activity, followed by presentations and discussion, delegates experienced how Entelechy's guiding values and principles (*appendix 1*) cultivates an ecology where the artists own creative identity engages equally with that of the participants, in the unique context in which the work takes place. This enables the artist to have courage in an evolving practice, where the work is responsive to its context.

Between Worlds: "We believe that some of the most exciting and challenging art is forged from the collision of different worlds and life experiences" *Entelechy core belief*



This training was led by a cross-disciplinary ensemble of artists across ages and abilities, making use of 'weaving' as a practical, creative, theoretical and metaphorical framework through which the guiding principle of co-production in participatory settings was explored.

Key learning

Between Worlds became an opportunity to further refine, develop and open up an on-going enquiry into how elements of Ambient Jam – an Entelechy-curated space which brings together artists who are sensory skilled through their own practise and people with profound disabilities who are often sensory skilled through necessity – can contribute to cultural practice, and to the design of continuing professional development programmes for artists

1. **Migrations:** *Forging new designs by being in new spaces; to have debate in different ways; developing new skills to do deliver this:*

ArtWorks London gave Entelechy the opportunity to open up a protected practice into the 'outside' world (the central civic space of the Barbican's Pit theatre), sharing work with interdisciplinary artists working in different contexts. It created a new 'collision of different worlds'.

"Didn't know that much about the company before, but it's made me want to know more, not just about this company but about this work. It is really inspiring."

"These kinds of companies are hidden away."

Migrating our work into a new context meant we re-worked and scrutinised our practice in order to juxtapose non-verbal immersive sensory landscapes with intellectual debate, suggesting equality between them. This included an examination in how to design other ways of holding seminars; how to form a bridge between non-verbal experiential communication and more classically accepted verbal ways of communicating.



It was an ambitious challenge both logistically and in design to suggest that there can be alternative approaches to delivering CPD. That these experiences can be co-led by those who are experts through lived experience, like Carol Greenslade, who happens to be deaf/blind and learning disabled, or an emerging older artist, or the wife of someone who is a resident in a nursing home. This exchange, arising from the margins, enhanced the interactions and contributed to the intellectual discourse. Designing a seminar of this kind was more inclusive and therefore widened the debate.

"The earlier part made more of an impression on me and I will probably take more of that away with me in terms of sensory memory and just the feeling of being in a different kind of space to what I normally am. "; "Talking is great but I do it every day, not every day do I close my eyes and really explore someone's hand or a pen "

As any authentic enquiry is vulnerable to external positive and negative viewpoints, we had to ensure strong 'containment' structures. This came through bass player Ben Hazelton's live responsive music and Sculptor Shane Waltener's 'moving scenes of textural media' that held, altered and grounded the space.

2. Including the sensory expertise of a leader who is deaf/blind

“Contemporary art most excludes those people with profound disabilities and perceptual impairments” (Adams, 2010).



As this seminar began from an experiential sensory place, it meant it could be genuinely co-led and directly inspired by emerging artists normally excluded from these debates. We immediately witnessed how this approach impacted on participants' engagement.

Carol Greenslade's presence highlighted the fragility of what we were attempting to do. Her presence extended the possibilities of the space

and the interactions and understanding between participants. Ben, the musician, allowed his double bass to be hugged whilst playing it (a new way of him experiencing his own music as vibration, shape, and sound) where many of us were able to move straight into the intimacy of finger- tip movement and touch, allowing concepts of followers and leaders, dependency and care to be thrown up in the air and land very differently. Carol's presence allowed the creative leader to be bolder. Her excitement and authority on being there could not to be discounted or ignored. Her support worker said, *“You can see she is so happy to be here, in the big space, she can really move around, and meeting so many new people”*.

For a few delegates this different way of communication brought up inevitable awkwardness. *“Realm of touch is difficult....but becomes vital if you have dual impairment or you are frail and isolated;” “I found it difficult when we were told to go and touch Carol to say good bye. I felt very uncomfortable with that, because I don't know if Carol wants us all to come and touch her.”*

Starting a seminar in this way through the senses and embodied work contributed to the quality of debate in the following round table discussions. Participants were able to let go of assumptions, be more relaxed and risk thinking outside the box: *“Moments when we closed our eyes were special, was clearer with eyes closed. I seemed to see things clearer. Strips away the information; you become more sensitive.”*

3. Negative Capability

We are acutely aware that emerging alternative artistic processes in participatory arts can be easily misunderstood in an outcome driven world and by the very contexts in which participatory arts take place. It is therefore vulnerable to scrutiny that de-values it.

“Not only does the language of Negative Capability have low status, the experiences it describes may be difficult in themselves and lack the immediate appeal that attaches to the skills and competences of management and leadership. The capacity for waiting, for example, is central to creative activity, and yet, ‘Waiting can be the most intense and poignant of all human experiences - the experience which, above all others, strips us of affectation and self-deception and reveals to us the reality of our needs, our values and ourselves.’ (Vanstone, 1982: 83.)” Robert French and Peter Simpson. Negative Capability: The key to creative leadership

With invaluable support from ArtWorks London to take risks, we further developed our ability to advocate for the value of leadership skills that employ negative capability. It forced us to be more transparent and sophisticated about how we introduce this skill and how it can support authenticity and co-authorship in practise-

-“Feeling reassured that not knowing is a good place to be.”

We re-learned how this approach can stimulate co-authorship, agency and leadership in emerging artists or participants. Consequently in the seminar, delegates and Entelechy participants often unexpectedly took leadership role which enhanced the quality of the work and debate:

“Establishing a relational practise means that we can’t arrive with prescription, but have to create structures to hold and draw out the unpredictable and allow agency and ideas to emerge from different quarters.” “I don’t know what to do next- openness – joint ownership”; “Not leading from the front – different role – watching over others – drawing out leadership”; “Not directional more drawing out containing listening responsive role.”

The informal sensory approach together with improvisation meant that delegates were able to connect with others in a more open less defensive way, which in turn may have opened up thinking later on; *“You can trust the situation despite the fact of not knowing people”; “Was good not having to wear badges”; “No person that you’ve created”; “Everyone is on an equal plane”; “We can all leave behind the inhibitions we have about this kind of work.”*

4. Difference

Participatory arts produce different approaches and models of practise. We work within different artistic disciplines, with different groups of people within different contexts. Artists work in contexts where they are required to engage with difference.

Between Worlds further developed our ability to engage with difference, whether this was within the contrasting artistic disciplines present in the space, different ages, or difference of opinion.

When practically designing the seminar, we learnt that a sculptor and a poet’ approach the transition from a non-verbal sensory landscape to verbal interaction in different ways. When it came to the seminar itself, we had therefore learnt to create structures that let people connect in contrasting unique ways, different speeds and using different art forms. As a consequence this further uncovered the potential in collaborating across art forms, how different mediums can enhance the process, support difference, and innovate the final artistic product. How poetry becomes sculptural and sensory; space is transformed and owned by voice, smell and sculpture.

The diversity of the Entelechy team also was in itself an important lesson: *“The memory of such a rich range of different types of people”*

Although there was an overriding positive engagement in the sensory aspect of the work by delegates, one person found the multi-sensory non-verbal work challenging and overwhelming; and found it hard that so many people seemed to know what they were doing. This was the first time they had encountered CPD before: *“To be honest, I wasn’t sure what we were supposed to do and again that’s to do with me.”*

As participatory artists working in a range of contexts, we forget how familiar the world of non-verbal sensory communication is, through decades of training and collaborations with artists like Carol in ambient jam, to elders with dementia, to events at Siobhán Davies Dance studios. Entelechy is so used to interacting with people who don't use words to communicate their experience that we are often shocked when we are confronted with people who aren't. *"I felt we weren't all in the same situation and therefore we were unequal and if that was the point then that was a good point to make..."*

Consequently we learnt about breaking down the transition into sensory work into smaller steps and being more alert to the gulf created if there are participants with varying experience of this type of practice. We learnt that CPD can provoke in any seasoned leaders, feelings of being a beginner, with the ensuing vulnerability that accompanies this. We learnt about engaging with multiple truths about the same experience. This includes enough time to talk things over on a one to one basis (which we did).

"It's amazing the confidence you gain by simply closing your eyes. You gain smells, light and shade."

5. Similarity

Improvisation and mindfulness are important aspects of creative engagement. In Entelechy's practise these multi-sensory non-verbal approaches contribute to building safe contexts for the support of vulnerability. This enables people in unfamiliar and transitional states to transcend and revise their contexts through the process of negative capability. Ways into thinking that are embodied is universal and enables us to come into the present, be mindful and let go of assumptions. *"We live in a verbal, visual world. We under estimate how much people know in their bodies."* (Matarroso, F., 2011).

"I'm reminded the power of tactile sensual work"; "I was surprised that I could navigate the space through smell"; "The nuances of touch, letting things go enough to listen to be responsive to touch"; "So much to be known and to be experienced that we often forget"; "Enabling someone to see someone in a completely different light"; "Leaving self-consciousness behind"; "Space morphed into a different space"; "The space transformed"; "Seeing the space differently"; "Knowing people through touch."



train you're there to experience it."

In keeping with our values, Entelechy was clear from the start that the seminar wasn't about methodology that you copy. Instead it emphasised the giving up initially of what you know, and created an environment where you learnt through letting go. This illustrated a design of frameworks that allow for a 'no agenda' approach to stimulate agency, inter-subjectivity and the process of co-authorship, which in turn stimulates learning.

"I'm drama school trained and we did this stuff all the time but this time it was different maybe because you're not there to learn or

Other participants verbalised that the multi-sensory aspect of the improvisation was deeply nourishing because it brought participants back in touch with themselves as artists and people, helping to reconnect with identity, promoting feelings of confidence when returning to work.

“You do learn a lot about yourself when you’re up against something you don’t know.”

We are all on the same page in that we are able to gain something from an experience that is different.

6. Incorporating use of talk machines for delegates with Cerebral Palsy in round table discussions



In the round table discussions we were able to successfully road test ways in which one Entelechy member, who uses a talk machine, could be part of the debate. The challenge was how to keep the pace of the debate for others whilst being mindful of the time delay when using a machine. To begin with it was difficult to hold two speeds, but by the end with support from two of our dancers, our member was very much part of the group in an equal way, without the group feeling they had to compromise.

7. The Seminar forged new questions and improved our articulation of old questions

How do we support and integrate value with authenticity of practise, especially when something is valued because it conforms to other values that are mainstream, and when it arises from spaces and human experience that society marginalises?

What skills are needed to create bridges between the margins and the centre within ourselves, society and our practise so that we can integrate both those locations?

Why is this important in relation to value, quality and excellence, aims and authenticity?
What skills and resources are needed for this to be effective?

How do we protect the heart of the work, whilst remaining economically viable, replicable, and evidence based?

“What happens when we bring people out into the open who get normally shut away?”

These questions were stimulated by the Monday rehearsal in the Pit:

Q: How do you negotiate the relationship between what you know and what you don’t know?

Q: What do you bring into the room as an artist?

Q: Riff on Value, visibility and invisibility?

Q: Why art? Is that the only response?

Q: Why are we doing this art in participatory settings?

Q: How can imagination be at the service of the people?

Appendix

1. The aim was to use and share some of Entelechy's own guiding principles in the design of seminar and as a way into learning:

- Our work is developed with and not for others: shared leadership and equal ownership are central to the development of our practice;
- Our practice listens to the unheard, draws attention to the unseen and gives value to each person's contribution;
- Our work is nourished by a creative curiosity and openness to unexpected possibilities;
- Our practice is underpinned by the idea of membership and belonging. Relationships develop across boundaries of race, age, class, profession and ability as a result of identifying shared goals and ambitions;
- Our work values mindfulness, paying attention to the reality and possibilities of the present moment: art is created in everyday living;
- Our practice values the incomplete form; our process is as important as our products;
- Our work aims for delight through authenticity

