Gathering Report

Monday 27th January 2020

Royal Liverpool Philharmonic, Hope Street L1 9BP

#AWAGathering

How do we do participatory arts better?



Outline of the day

1000	**Arrival, registration, coffee and tea.** ● Deal with fuddle food (unpack, layout, cool bags) ● Theme for initial sharing/introductions: ○ **One thing you are proud of.** ○ **One thing you are looking for...**	
1100	**Check In/Who is in the room**	
1115	**Introduction to Open Space** ● The theme: "How do we do participatory arts better? ● Four principles and one law ● Newsroom ● Marketplace	
1145	Open Space Session 1: **How can we do Participatory Arts better?**	4 groups*
1300	Lunch sharing	Fuddle
1330	Session 2: **What key messages should we share with others?**	3 groups*
1445	**Closing**	
1500	**Soft finish** ● Possibilities for a final 'session' ● Networking ● Report writing	
1600	**Finish finish and clear**	

Chatham House rule: "When a meeting, or part thereof, is held under the Chatham House Rule, participants are free to use the information received, but neither the identity nor the affiliation of the speaker(s), nor that of any other participant, may be revealed."

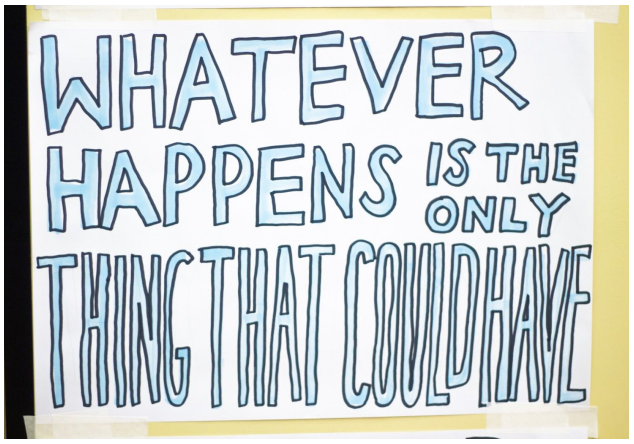
Arrival Photos:



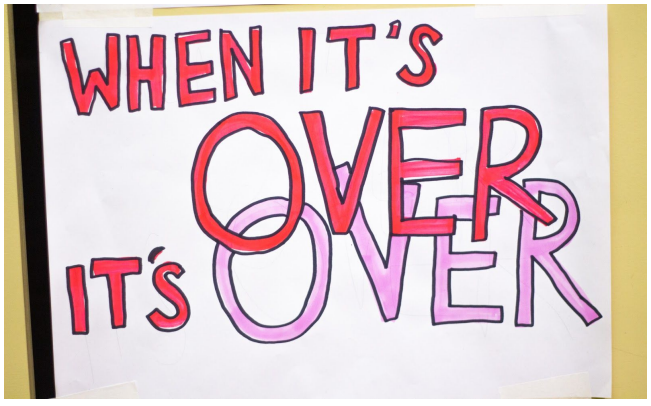


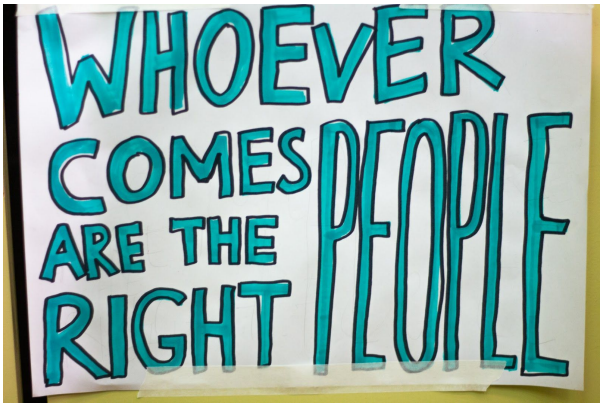


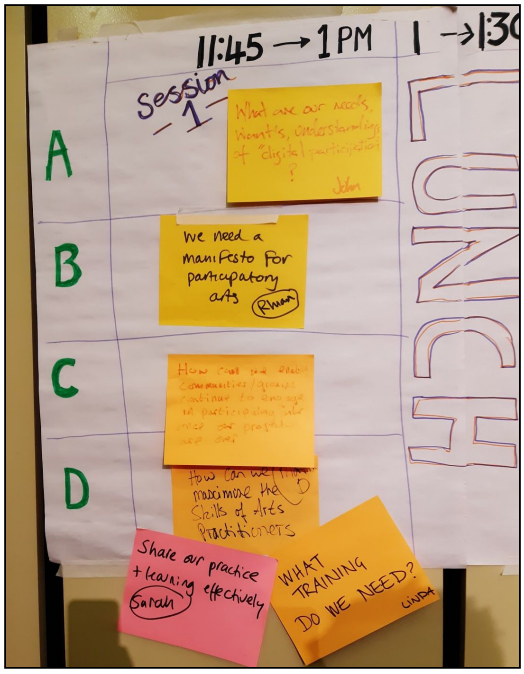


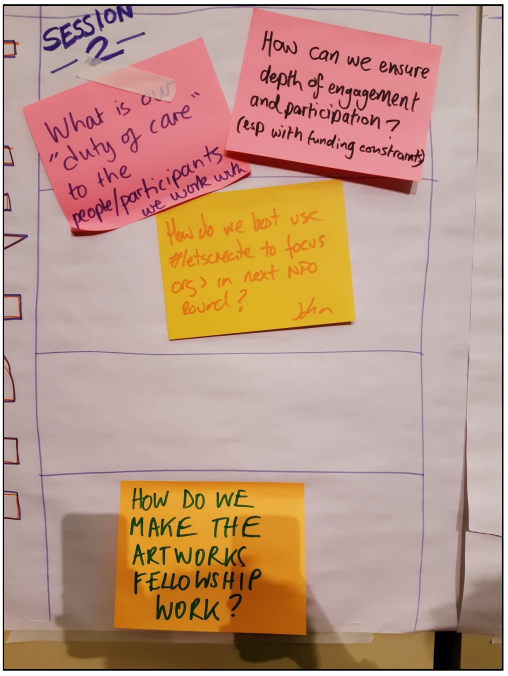












Using Open Space Technology, these are the different groupings that we decided to run during the morning and afternoon sessions:

*Session 1

A- What are our needs, wants and understanding of 'digital participation'?

B- We need a manifesto for participatory arts!

C- How can we enable communities/groups to engage in participatory arts once our projects are over?

D- How can we maximise the skills of arts practitioners, share our practise and learning effectively and what training do we need?

*Session 2

A- What is our "duty of care" to the people/participants we work with? And how can we ensure depth of engagement and participation (especially with funding constraints)?

B- How do we best use #letscreate to focus organisations in the next National Portfolio Organisation round?

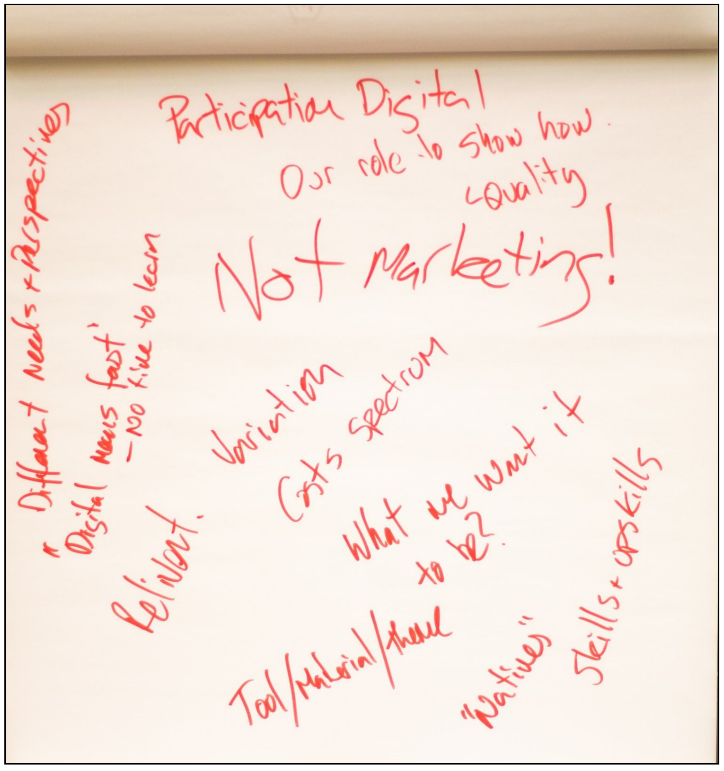
D- How do we make the artworks fellowship work?



Session 1A - What are our needs, wants and understanding of 'digital participation'?

Convenor/host: John





Discussion/recommendation notes:

- Established that “Digital Participation” is not marketing/social media (although this could be a device for digital participation). Example given was ‘MobFORMAT’ for the FORMAT International Photography Festival where participants contributed through Instagram, which was then printed and displayed for audiences (and artists) to physically engage with and relate back to the artist via Instagram.
- Initial discussion around where community practice informs venue/gallery engagement. What can we learn from it?
- Where digital is applied to socially engaged/participatory roles without understanding what that means.
- Digital participation should be about what we want it to be and not be directed by new technologies.
- Digital participation should take a participation first approach and relevant to the participants
- The nature of the exploration of what we mean by “digital participation” means gaining deeper and different understandings of what different organisations needs and perspectives are.
- “Digital” is a tool, material and a theme. Highlighting the importance of where digital could be a barrier to engagement and using it as a point of discussion and understanding.
- The variety of tools and technology makes it difficult to keep up to speed on what’s available. This led to discussions around where digital could be low cost, as well as have high cost implications relating to subscription software. It’s important for participants to be able to access cheap/free ways of continuing the learning from participatory engagements, but expensive software is sometimes needed to attract the right facilitator who would use an industry standard. Example, Adobe Cloud.
- Where participatory practice takes on the role of showing participants how to think creatively with digital devices etc they can freely access day-to-day.
- The other costs involved in digital: equipment, staff time, backend processes. How equipment costs are always changing and it’s hard to know when to ‘buy in’.
- Different tools that can demonstrate a way of working, but not give the participants a knowledge of the underlying process. The example given was around visual coding tool Mimo - https://getmimo.com/
- Digital having an automatic feel of high quality and how this relates to community arts aesthetic, which is generally seen as having a low quality output.



Session 1B - We need a manifesto for participatory arts

Led by - Rhian Hutchings, ArtWorks Cymru



Attended by - Adrian, Jane, Ruth, Annie, Russel, Chrissie, Tom, Catherine, Tamsin, Freya

Discussion:

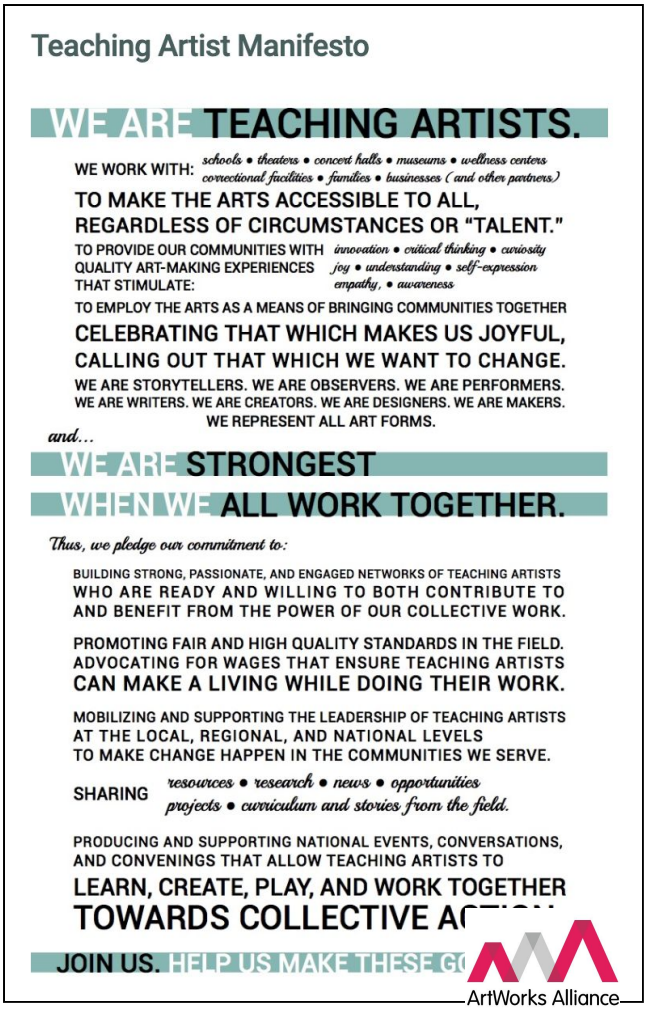
Discussion around the idea of a manifesto - not the right tool. What we are actually talking about is an advocacy campaign or a movement

What do we need it to do:

- We need to enable people to talk about the value of the work - could be the personal value of what it does for them
- We need to make the practice visible.
- We need to uncover the fact that we are a sector in our own right
- We need to clarify the practice
- We need to celebrate the artists

The movement or advocacy campaign.

- Create a Declaration of what we are / values / our commitment a bit like the Teaching Artists Manifesto or Culture Declares https://www.culturedeclares.org



- We need to decide who it's aimed at.
- Need a visual identity?
- Suggestions for the strapline - "better participatory arts" - although some people felt we shouldn't mentions participatory arts or creative
- Should really be backing up the aims of AWA
- AWA can support with evidence from reports
- Create messages for different audiences from the one campaign E.g. Sports England wants more people to play sports - its campaign is "This Girl Can"
- Use other campaigns & hijack them to spread our message - Health & Creativity Week / Get Creative / Childrens Art Week
- Make a hashtag
- Create a set of tools so that everyone can do it themselves

We need to work within our means.

We decided that the best place to start would be to celebrate artists and their work as this is the work that is hidden. So ask people to post artist stories - maybe #ourartists #participatoryartists ???

Rhian to convene a group to talk further.



Session 1C - How can we enable communities and/or groups to continue to engage with the arts or participatory arts when our projects are over?



Convenor/Host - Martin

Discussion notes/recommendations -

Available via podcast conversation:

- Are we wrong in the way that we go into communities?
- Could part of the funding of the project be used to ensure an artist continues work with the group?
- Funders can seem like an unattainable goal for communities - why community groups are scared of engaging with funding.
- Can there be a community officer who goes into community groups and helps them throughout the funding process? Someone from the Arts Council?
- Wouldn't it be better if the funders had a commitment to helping communities.
- Too much focus on evaluation and outcomes. We know participatory arts has good outcomes. Forget that there are good ways to appeal to funders - take it as a given that participatory arts has definite benefits.
- Let's focus on legacy - train a participant to become a facilitator to carry the project on. A model of internal/participant leadership development and mentorship.
- Long-term funding & legacy planning from the offset are two key takeaways.



Session 1D:

- **How do we share our practice & learning effectively?**
- **How can we maximise the skills of the Arts Practitioners?**
- **What training is needed in the sector?**



Note taker: Linda

TRAINING:
How do we pull together all the good practice out there? There's lots of Case studies to learn from etc. We need to use this to Advocate

Being a Freelancer is difficult - going to work somewhere else/on a placement would be really good for sharing and learning

We're all doing our own training in different ways. Is there an agent we could be using… perhaps built into Higher Education? There seems to be a mis-match in what training is offered at Higher Ed and the skills needed in the sector.

Maybe University sector is not the best place to deliver what we need = they are often not flexible enough / cannot secure the funding to make it viable...One organisation (from higher ed sector) said that they have developed a PGCert on working in Communities, but they still haven't been able to secure the funding to develop further.

Lots of us are doing placements. Exchange placements to other organisations is good learning.

As a Freelance artist - how do I share my skills? There are not enough mentoring or apprenticeship opportunities.

How do we support freelance artists if we are a participatory arts organisation? E.g. if you are an artist working with refugees, how can we ensure there is good support systems in place to look after that artist

Training needs to be diverse - not just graduates from university. Needs to include participants from council estates, minority communities…
There is a great need for training at all stages of careers - emerging and 'mid-career'

There should not be a distinction from 'artists' and 'co-ordinators/admin'. Training is needed in both. One way to do this could be an organised exchange programme or exchange network, creating opportunities to spend time working in other organisations, seeing and experiencing other ways of working, sharing our skills and experience with others, to refresh and renew.
This could be as a block of time, a month or longer or as 'day release' over six months for example. Artworks Alliance is in a great position to do this.

FUNDING:
We need funding to support this work. Perhaps ACE needs to look at a new model for funding - what would it look like if they gave artists/activists were given £25k/annum and set free in communities? They would be able to dig deeper into their communities and share their practice to other apprentices…

VALUES:
The values associated in Community/Participatory Arts need to be explicit. How do we make it a recognised profession? We need to recognise that there are many people out there doing incredible training in different ways. How do we capture that?
Peer learning should be valued.

We need space to Play - learn from each other (this means funding to allow us to do this)

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- **We should start with a Zoom meeting among those involved in training currently - to thrash out what our vision/expectations are**

- **A Mapping Exercise needs to be done**
  Co-ordinated through AWA? Towards a more joined up sector

- **Could we develop a Kitemark for the sector?**
  What would this look like/involve?

- **We need to advocate for the sector and for what quality participatory arts looks like…**

Session 2A - What is our “duty of care” to the people/participants we work with? And how can we ensure depth of engagement and participation (especially with funding constraints)?



Discussion

Why do we do participatory arts?
Hit and run projects.
What’s our duty of care to ourselves as practitioners and to the participants?
What’s your intention and what can the participants expect from us?
Does the depth of engagement matter?
All levels of engagement are good.
For more impact you need more training/expertise.
Duty of care extends to knowing when you’re not the right person.

- Older/younger response to change and the project ending. Discuss “this is how you’re going to feel after”. A set of tools is needed for post-project- expressing what’s gained and how to move forward.
  Who can provide this support? Is it too much to ask of the practitioner? Does this support need to be built into the organisation?
- A set of guidelines for partnership/support staff working to enable duty of care and best practise (for practitioners and orgs). Would also be useful for freelancers put in complex situations- could help with common feeling of imposter syndrome/lack of support.
- As a practitioner you can’t know everything. It’s OK to not know.
- How do I really take creative risks?
- Listening expert to find out what’s needed- CORRA foundation
- How do we navigate consultation with young people? How do young people know what those interventions look like?

Recommendations:

- “What if all the artists in the UK applied for funding then decide between themselves how to divide it up?”
- Annual meet up
- A set of guidelines for practitioners and organisations to enable duty of care
- Develop a set of tools for post-project support e.g. “this is how you will feel after and it’s okay”
- Telling funders from the offset that the project will need longevity e.g. yearly post-project meetups.

Session 2B - How do we best use #letscreate to focus organisations in the next National Portfolio Organisation round?



Convenor/host: John

Participants: Adrian, Tom, Tamsin, Sarah, plus a few others

Discussion/recommendations:

- The role of participatory arts in Arts Council England's new 10 year strategy.
- The lack of relationships between regional groups and the Arts Council - no relationship with them or know who to speak to.
- How do we develop those relationships? Do we do it regionally or approach it as the alliance?
- Now there is a 10 year strategy - how does the alliance help shape that strategy going forward? This is the time to tell the Arts Council the way to achieve their strategic aims.
- Give our feedback before the NPO funding - might not be able to shape.
- Do we need to write a response to the strategy? Who should do that? Mary? Or certain individuals from across the alliance? Focusing on pulling out the main points of the strategy.
- What does ACE mean by an "ecology" and how the individual organisations "specialisms" don't always fit in a one shoe fits all system.
- Investment in training doesn't appear present in the participatory arts sector.
- Where is the assessment of participatory processes? What's happening about the Quality Assessments and what's AWA's role? Should we be proactive?
- Action: AWA advocating participatory arts sector to ACE.
- That there is a social arts network internally at ACE but no-one knows who represents their regions or their ability to do so.
- To be an agenda point at the next partner meeting in June.

Session 2D - **How can we make the ArtWorks Fellowship work?**



Chrissie Ruckley and Catherine Rogers

participants - various

Can we run the Fellowship in a Collective leadership manner without a central co-ordinator?
The group thinks this is AMBITIOUS AND ADVENTUROUS.

How could we use the expertise in the Alliance when running a Fellowship?
A ‘we can offer’ sheet which is shared with those who are running a Fellowship.
New Fellowship co-ordinators could have a ‘buddy’ who has run a programme.

We could have an activity group made up of those running the Fellowship.
The group would offer support and guidance - in a peer to peer way.

The amount of time needed to coordinate a Fellowship (for each co-ordinating org) needs to be visible in guidance.

There is a ‘Who do you want to meet?’ model in Sunderland.

The alumni is threefold - organisations, staff and artists.

How can we continue to connect the alumni? In time effective ways.
This could be the responsibility of the activity group.
E.g. - alumni gathering

- Update of Alliance orgs can offer list (AWA members0
- Shadowing / swaps

SPACE hive -
Lets Talk Sunderland - is a good model (Sunderland Council)

Use Zoom/ Skype to connect people

Really consider how each Fellowship can connect, share and disseminate.
Could each Fellowship have a 'treasure chest' of blogs, evaluation, planning docs

Feels like there is energy behind it.
Sense that none of the current simillar stuff has a sole focus on participatory practice.

Not purely guidance - has to be about the people and orgs in Alliance.

Could other programmes like UNION connect with the Fellowship?
Overlapping opportunities at key moments.

Recommendations

- Create guidance
- Ensure co-ordination resource needed is clear and visible in guidance
- Create a buddy system (and a list of Alliance partners who can take Fellowship enquiries)
- Ensure ways to share it and make it visible
- Share mapping done
- Take a flexible approach
- Create trinities of learning (between orgs/ artists etc)
- Identify points of synergy with other programmes

ACTION POINTS

- Organise exchanges within the community arts sector and AWA organisations.
- Keep network between AWA members live and set up skills and information sharing.
- Read the Arts Council's new 10 year strategy.



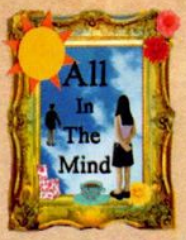
Afterwords…

(space to add words/thoughts post-event)

- Thanks to everyone for getting stuck in and making it work. Can't remember who said it in the final go-round or exactly how they put it, but it did feel like mosquitoes getting right to the heart of it! Adrian

POST CARD

This Space for communication



Be open minded, supportive, creative and brave.