

Posts published on 02/10/2026, from artworksalliance.uk. Printed on 02/10/2026 using Print My Blog

New leader for participatory arts

By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/new-leader-for-participatory-arts/>

September 25, 2016

Categories: News



ArtWorks Alliance has announced that Kathryn Deane is to be its new Consultant Director.

The head of the development agency for community music is to become the leader of ArtWorks Alliance for the period up to July 2017.

“There was strong competition for the appointment of our first Director,” says ArtWorks Alliance member Chris Stenton of People Dancing “but in choosing Kathryn we know that we have someone with a wealth of experience, and an enviable overview and depth of understanding of participatory arts. Kathryn will provide ArtWorks Alliance with the leadership we need”.

Kathryn Deane says “I was thrilled to be offered this appointment. I have been involved in ArtWorks Alliance since its inception in 2008 and I am pleased and proud to be taking forward this very important work.

“Among ArtWorks Alliance’s unique endeavours is that it works across all artforms. Where

practices are similar we will be able to avoid duplication and so get more out of what will continue to be limited resources. Where practices are very different across artforms, we will be able to learn even more from each other.”

Kathryn Deane ran large scale community music projects in the 1980s and 90s before becoming director of Sound Sense, the professional association for community music and musicians, in 1995; a post she holds until her retirement in December 2016.

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Quality frameworks launched

By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/quality-frameworks-launched/>

October 25, 2016

Categories: News



Frameworks for the quality of participatory arts have recently been launched by ArtWorks Alliance members ArtWorks Cymru and Creative Scotland.

Quality frameworks are developing in different ways to serve different purposes. That is the main finding from an ArtWorks Alliance action group which is exploring the development and use of generalist frameworks across the participatory arts sector.

The group, led by Rhian Hutchings of ArtWorks Cymru and Chrissie Ruckley, of Creative Scotland, group is exploring the potential for collaboration between quality frameworks in Scotland and Wales, and potentially elsewhere. Learning to date is that quality frameworks have been developing in different ways to match the requirements of the sponsor. The focus for the framework for Scotland has been the needs of a funder; that of the Wales framework on the support of individual artists.

The two frameworks are published online by ArtWorks Cymru [here](#) and by Creative Scotland [here](#)

Older people's dance activities – first UK survey published

By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/older-peoples-dance-activities-first-uk-survey-published/>

November 24, 2016

Categories: News



A new research report into current practice in older people's dance, published by ArtWorks Alliance member People Dancing and co-commissioned by Aesop, was launched at the House of Lords on 7 November 2016.

This new research report provides a snapshot of current practice in older people's dance.

The research sought expert views from those working in the field to identify the characteristics of the practice and the conditions required for success. The report describes a picture of practice based on the research gathered and an analysis of that data.

The report is intended to be of practical use. It provides reassurance and reference points for artists and organisations working on the ground that what they do all contributes to a greater body of practice. For those supporting activities, it provides reassurance that when the conditions for success are met then dance really can deliver.

It also offers some more compelling evidence about the 'value-added' contribution that participation in dance and dancing – in whatever way is right for you – can make to the 'health and wellbeing' of people and their communities, not just in older age but throughout life.

You can read and download the report here

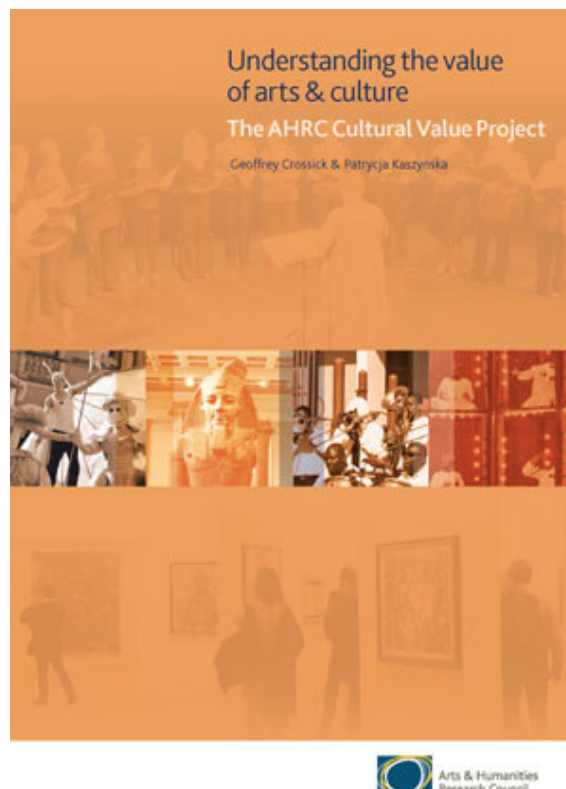
What's the point? Kathryn Deane is exploring culture value

By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/whats-the-point-kathryn-deane-is-exploring-culture-value/>

November 25, 2016

Categories: News



Why do we do participatory arts? Let's not try an answer here: it's all in the fascinating report of the three-year Arts & Humanities Research Council Cultural Value Project.

What the report highlights is that wishing for benefits from participatory arts isn't enough: the evidence is often unconvincing and approaches are not sufficiently rigorous. On the other hand, we're overlooking some areas where real benefits are to be found. Part of the problem lies in our tendency to confuse evidence with short-term advocacy.

There are key issues here for us to grapple with, so it's with excitement that I welcome the news that ArtWorks Alliance funders Paul Hamlyn Foundation, together with AHRC, King's College London and Arts Council England, are undertaking a scoping project to explore how research, evaluation, evidence-building and analysis into cultural value might best be supported in the future.

I've already had a meeting with the project's researcher, Patrycja Kaszynska, who is consulting across the UK with practitioners in the cultural and creative sectors, researchers, and policy-makers and funders. Several themes seem important – including making current research more widely accessible; and finding ways to make future research genuinely helpful to all. And, above

all, keeping the conversations alive and ongoing.

But you will have your own ideas, which I am keen to feed into those conversations. Please, let me know your views at kathryn@artworksalliance.wpcomstaging.com

Understanding the value of arts & culture: The AHRC Cultural Value Project.

Geoffrey Crossick & Patrycja Kaszynska, 2016. Download at

<http://www.ahrc.ac.uk/documents/publications/cultural-value-project-final-report/>

Quality: getting better at what you do

By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/quality-getting-better-at-what-you-do/>

January 25, 2017

Categories: News



ArtWorks Alliance is committed to improving the quality of participatory arts. How are members going about doing that? From Kathryn Deane...

Oh to be a widget maker. Everything about what distinguishes the truly excellent widget from the merely passable is known, measurable and codified. More: every widget maker and widget user agrees on those metrics, and they're all set down in the official Book.

Oh to be working in participatory arts. Distinguishing the best work from lesser work is complicated, convoluted, contingent. And a compromise. Get four or five participatory arts workers together – and you'll have a dozen different views on what constitutes quality, where it resides, and how it might be measured. Instead of the one Little Book of Widget Quality, we have Quality Frameworks. Dozens of them, all slightly different, totalling maybe 1,400 separate metrics.

We tried tying them all together, but learned the truth of a wise saying that "if you have 27 frameworks for something and you try to tie them all together, all you'll get is 28 frameworks." We tried tying just two together, but to no better effect.

No-one wants uniformity – it wouldn't suit the art, the artist or above all the unique and individual

participant at all well. But there are, it has to be said, drawbacks to this pluralism. Is one quality framework of, er, better quality than another? What if a funder or commissioner demanded all their artists followed Framework A, when Framework B would be far more appropriate for some activities? What if artist C was trained by an organisation using Framework D, and later moved to E, where they all used F?

Actually, chance would be a fine thing. The only thing worse than having too many frameworks to follow is not following any of them. And by and large the use of quality frameworks is not great which is a pity. Because any quality guide is (probably) better than no quality guide, if it gets you thinking about quality, what constitutes it, how it can be improved, who benefits. If you regularly use a quality guide – whether an artist, organisation, commissioner, funder, researcher – give yourself a pat on the back.

If you don't, it's time to think why not? Don't you know what guides are available? Maybe it's not clear how you'd use one. Or perhaps you're concerned you'd end up playing Scrabble Quality as above? Or you don't like any of the frameworks, or it's just one more burden, or they're all useless anyhow and no-one would take any notice, Or any of a hundred more reasons.

That's why the work of the quality action group in ArtWorks Alliance is so important. They've developed two frameworks for use by artists and funders – as have others. But critically, this is just the starting point for the group's work. Now, they are looking at how to roll these frameworks out, how to encourage artists, commissioners, funders and others to actually use them. And, how to work with other organisations developing and using frameworks to make the most of the plurality that exists. ArtWorks Alliance, working across artforms, countries and settings, is uniquely placed to do this job.

What's in it for me?

By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/whats-in-it-for-me/>

February 25, 2017

Categories: News



ArtWorks Alliance members have mantras: 'We only do what only we can do.' 'It's not what we take, it's what we bring.' True – but worthy: be honest, you want to know WIIFM?

Kathryn Deane, Consultant Director, shares what members are saying about the real rewards...

Even in the collegiate, collaborative world of participatory arts, there's only so much altruism one can afford. If you're thinking of joining the network, it's quite reasonable to expect it to be rewarding. I've been talking to members about what they think those rewards might be. They've told me:

'I can network with people I'd otherwise not get to meet'

We're wide-ranging: different countries of the UK, different artforms and sectors, doing different jobs. Discussions in our regular forum meetings will bring you fresh ideas, new voices, and important contacts – just one afternoon's work could save you (in time and travel) a dozen or more individual trips. Bonds forged at forum meetings make it easier to do business between meetings.

'I get to be a serious influencer'

We're senior, well-respected voices in participatory arts from across the UK, between us representing tens of thousands of participatory artists.. As a third-tier network we can claim rightly to being 'the national conversation about participatory arts.' Feel that ArtWorks Alliance conversations ignore you? Easy to remedy: just join us and have your say!

'We're the go-to place'

We're becoming known as the place where participatory arts is at: the people who want to talk to us are the people we want to talk to. The work we do – for example on quality – is better shared because our values and voices are recognised as leaders.

'I get to make progress on the really difficult issues'

Our work in developing participatory arts is carried out in action groups: a number of us getting together to solve a problem that none of us can do on our own. Importantly, those issues are the ones we want to explore, and we deal with them as we decide is most appropriate.

'I'm more efficient in my work'

Networking, influencing, recognition, and action – we each do all of this every day. By doing it through and with ArtWorks Alliance issues of importance to us get sorted more efficiently and comprehensively than we could do on our own. Working in ArtWorks Alliance doesn't get in the way of our day-jobs; it makes your day-job more efficient.

'The more the better'

The more we each do through ArtWorks Alliance, the more the benefits stack up. More members means more stuff happening – and that means more activity, more networking, more issues sorted, and a more go-to place.

Sounds convincing to me. Can I convince you in turn?

Email me on kathryn@artworksalliance.wpcomstaging.com and let me try.

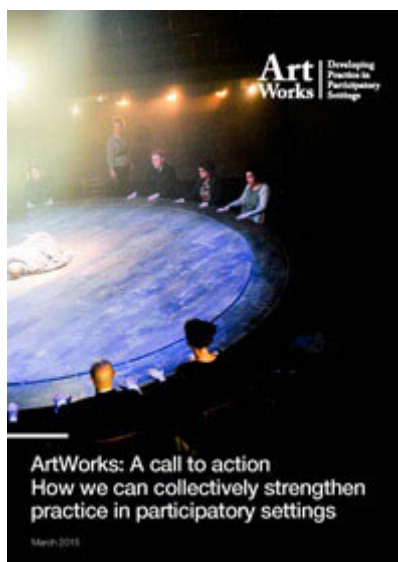
Making connections, solving problems

By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/making-connections-solving-problems/>

March 25, 2017

Categories: News



The initial ArtWorks Paul Hamlyn Foundation special initiative finished with A Call to Action to work collectively to strengthen practice in participatory settings.

This month ArtWorks Alliance Consultant Director Kathryn Deane has been out and about doing just that...

The best bit about my job at ArtWorks Alliance is meeting the movers and shakers who are key to the strategic development of participatory arts. Alliance members are top of the list, of course. But this month I've also been to Preston, London, Leicester, Worcester and elsewhere to listen to others and to share important issues for participatory arts.

In London, a theatre above a pub saw a season of plays from Synergy, whose theatre in prisons work is groundbreaking. Synergy is part of an infrastructure group called Sharing the Stage with a remit to widen participation especially among vulnerable and underserved communities. Before the play, I listened to the group's evaluator describing the rewards and difficulties of developing this kind of group, much of it a direct parallel to our experiences in ArtWorks Alliance.

To Leicester to share the work of the East Midlands Participatory Arts Forum. The region is rich in community arts organisations, many with venerable histories, and it was great to witness how well the forum's light-touch approach to their meetings suited the tradition of participatory arts. And yes, the topics are familiar: how can community arts diversify income streams? how can the hot topic of digital participation lead to real creativity? how can we develop really meaningful metrics for participatory work? And how can the messages of local participatory arts be heard nationally?

Income diversification is particularly tricky in a market where the beneficiaries are largely different from the payers – but useful work has been done in this area. For truly creative digital work look no further than many participatory arts organisations. For a national voice, EMPAF (and other such regional organisations) need look no further than ArtWorks Alliance. And for metrics? Cue my other two meetings.

Academics, researchers, infrastructure organisations, local participatory organisations, and others – we all met in Preston, as part of the Cultural Value Project to consider questions of impact particularly to smaller organisations, such as making current research and the existing evidence base more widely accessible to them (see the Scoping project). By the end of a hardworking day one thing was clear: there's no danger of uniformity in the participatory arts world! Bringing together disparate views and allowing them all air-time is another key challenge for ArtWorks Alliance.

And finally on the theme of value: how do we know participatory arts works? Researchers I talk to are highly concerned with this sort of question; the answers of course being highly dependent on what you mean by 'know', 'participatory arts', and 'works'. So before my researcher colleague at Worcester can address the methodological challenges we talked about, we have to sort out the definitional difficulties.

Some things never change.

Because we're worth more

By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/because-were-worth-more/>

April 25, 2017

Categories: News



Why is participatory arts better than the aerospace industry? Because it's worth more – however you measure it.

Kathryn Deane reflects on how the power of participatory arts to make change is describable in so many ways...

You return four times the GVA of the automotive industry and nearly 10 times that of aerospace. You drive growth and innovation in other sectors, such as manufacturing. You are fast-growing, highly productive, innovative and world-renowned, with enormous potential to deliver more.

Recognise yourself? You will if you think you are part of the creative industries, and especially if you are the Creative Industries Federation responding to the government consultation Building our Industrial Strategy. It's much harder to think in these terms when your work is, say, helping people with Parkinson's Disease move more easily, or bringing a disparate community together with a textile project, or using music technology with disaffected young people and helping them back into school. Which of your funders is likely to be swayed by the proposition that the industrial strategy aims to improve economic growth by increasing productivity? How can we – how dare we – monetise a music session for people with dementia in our care homes?

And haven't we been here before: hands up those who remember Myerscough's work in 1988 on

the economic importance of the arts, and other attempts to prove that, far from being a drain on the Treasury, publicly-funded arts pays back in tax contributions five times what it takes out (hey! a really easy way of eliminating the deficit: instead of a measly £2.35bn return to the Treasury just increase arts funding tenfold, and return £23.5bn).

But, as CIF's A blueprint for growth frequently alludes to (though never quite gets to grips with), participatory arts is a key driver in innovation, community development, healthcare reforms, social mobility and much more. Punch Records in Birmingham 'helps young people at a grassroots level to see their potential'; the National Autistic Society uses creative technology for public health campaigns. And, closer to home, ArtWorks Alliance partner University of Sunderland's ground-breaking work linking with local creative industries including the National Glass Centre and community radio station Spark FM.

And if we believe participatory arts is about making change for the better, measuring that change in financial terms (better outcomes for patients saves NHS money, young people helped into work improves their own wealth) is a key way of describing our value, not only to commissioners and funders but also to strategists and governments.

The marvellous thing about participatory arts is that its power to make change is describable in many ways: social capital, community cohesion, lower crime rates, better health, fun, learning, insightfulness. And money, too. All we need do to make our case is to deploy the right argument to the appropriate audience, whether that's Gross Value Added to the Creative Industries Federation, or shorter hospital stays to your local Clinical Commissioning Group.

And that's what ArtWorks Alliance partners, working together, are well placed to do.

Strategic means...

By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/strategic-means/>

May 25, 2017

Categories: News



What does ArtWorks Alliance as a strategic UK-wide network actually do?

Kathryn Deane shares her take on what strategic means... and the strategic means by which we support more and better participatory arts.

Strategic means never having to say you've fixed it. And always being able to say you're learning more and more about how to fix it.

You know, people often stop me in the street and ask: 'What does ArtWorks Alliance actually do?' And I say to them: 'Great question, easy answer. It does whatever its partners want to do – and want to do so much that they will make it happen themselves.'

And these button-holing people will then say: 'So who are the partners in ArtWorks Alliance, and how do I become one?' And I will reply: 'Well, you're making me late for my meeting, but it's more important I answer your question. The partners in ArtWorks Alliance are anyone who wants to join – and wants to join so much that they will spend their time and energy making things happen.'

So, to cut a long story short (as it usually starts raining about now, and passers-by keep bumping

into us, so we head for the nearest coffee shop) the answers I give to my interlocutors boil down pretty much to:

- ArtWorks Alliance is a network, not an organisation. In a very real sense it only exists when its partners come together in joint enterprise aimed at making participatory arts ‘more and better’.
- As a national network, the best contribution its partners can make to ‘more and better’ is to aid the strategic development of participatory arts. So its partners are those with strategic interests in participatory arts. (It’s not that we’d throw anyone else out – it’s just that they probably wouldn’t get any value out of being a partner.)
- In turn, the network makes a contribution to the partners’ work – specifically, it enables people to come together to work on problems that could not be solved by any one partner working alone; and it allows partners to join forces to exploit opportunities in ways that would be richer than working separately.

And now the sun is shining again and my quizzier heads for the door (leaving me to pick up the tab) throwing me a final question: ‘So are you proud that ArtWorks Alliance was recently described as “vague but rewarding”?’ And I shout at the retreating back: ‘Why yes I am. I’m really pleased that Alliance is rewarding to those taking part in it. There is absolutely no point in having the Alliance if it doesn’t return reward to its partners – and every reason to have it if it does.

‘And I’d much rather be vague than specific. Vagueness is a state of being which allows for a wide range of possible courses of action; in this case, the ability to be reactive to whatever’s going on in participatory arts, or proactive to whatever you want to be happening. Whereas specific implies a closed mind, not open to possibilities for change.

‘And not being open to change is the very antithesis of good participatory practice.’

By now, everyone in the coffee shop is staring at me. So I pay the bill, leaving a generous donation to the Participatory Artists’ Benevolent Fund, and hurry out just in time to catch up with my Boswellian straight-person and press a card into her hand, with the ArtWorks Alliance Partner logo on one side and this tantalising message on the other:

If you want to make participatory arts more and better –

ask kathryn.deane@btinternet.com

how to become a partner in ArtWorks Alliance

Never blagged a coffee off Kathryn? Wouldn’t know her in the street even if her entourage was

bigger than Corbyn's and May's rolled into one? You can still ask kathryn.deane@btinternet.com how to become a partner in ArtWorks Alliance.

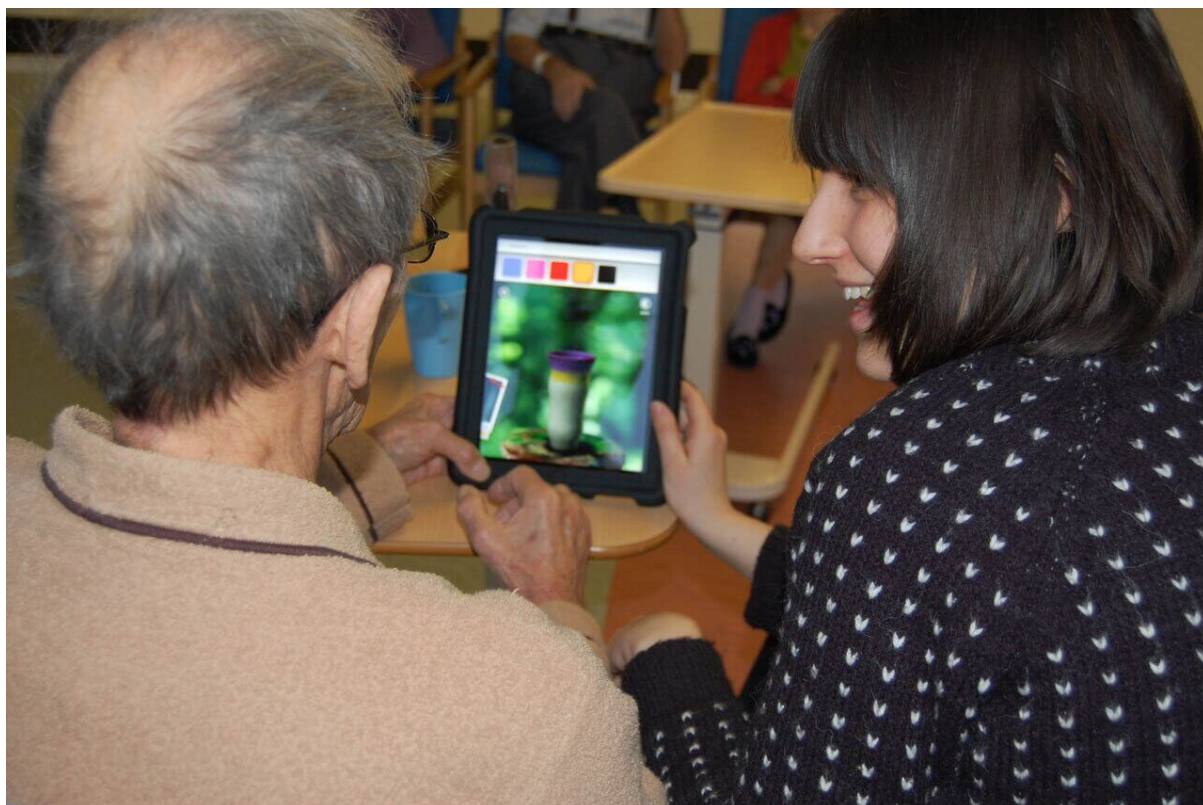
Meaningfully digital, properly participatory

By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/meaningfully-digital-properly-participatory/>

June 25, 2017

Categories: News



Kathryn Deane, ArtWorks Alliance Consultant Director, is not a techno-Luddite but does want to reclaim what's participatory when we talk digital...

I'm not a techno-Luddite (I was programming IBM computers 40 years ago*). But some things pass me by in my bid to get some sleep now and then. 'Digital' has been one of them. But with our latest partner being a *Digital Participation Curator*, I thought it time I updated my RAM and rebooted my learning.

Learning one: 'digital' is nowadays more noun than adjective. It's OK to say 'ArtWorks Alliance works largely through digital.' Try it, it's very handy.

Learning two: 'participation' is being subject to a land-grab. This may be tolerable when talking about digital participation in non-arts fields. It is not acceptable in the arts, where 'participation' has a specific meaning. So, one study segmented museum audiences according to their level of participation, the lowest level being using the web to read about a museum. This is palpable nonsense: the opposite of digital is analogue; and the analogue equivalent of reading about a museum on the web is reading about it in a paper brochure. I don't recall anyone ever calling this 'analogue participation'. We need to guard against this annexation, it devalues the currency of arts

participation – as Sophie McGrath brilliantly pointed out in our last Forum meeting, merely by asking the question ‘Yes, but is it participatory?’

Learning three: ‘digital’ is used for Orwellian purposes, especially by those who don’t understand the technology: digital new and good, non-digital (though most would be hard-pressed to define that term) old-hat and bad. But my IBM computers were digital; your telephone exchange went digital years before smartphones appeared. Certainly, there is an order of magnitude between what analogue electronics could do and what digital electronics allows of – but no more different than with the invention of the steam or jet engines. And no-one says Airbus A-380 good, pedal bike bad.

Learning four: it’s not difficult to describe digital participation in a meaningful way. ‘Participation’ has its normal meaning in participatory arts: people making art for themselves. ‘Digital’ implies this making has an element of modern electronic technology involved. It’s not difficult to identify a ‘really brilliant’ digital participation project: for me, it would use digital to extend the boundaries of a participant’s capabilities in participating in arts activities. Noise Solution works with some very vulnerable young people in Suffolk through music technology doing just that. In another project, care home residents are shown how to manipulate digital pictures of themselves so they present the image the resident, rather than the photographer, wants to be known by.

For new ArtWorks Alliance partner John Whall of Derby QUAD, digital is both a tool and a material; and his blog describes more really brilliant projects.

There is still work to be done on helping people understand this message and in ensuring that more projects are meaningfully digital and properly participatory. And John will be leading a group of ArtWorks Alliance partners interested in doing just that.

(*It was an IBM 360/67, programmed in PL/1 using punched cards for I/O, and we were very proud of its unique virtual memory architecture.)

Doing participatory arts better

By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/doing-participatory-arts-better/>

July 25, 2017

Categories: News



Alliance Communications Manager Mary Schwarz explores what the participatory arts sector can learn from a book about individual altruism...

My colleague Sue Kay and I were working recently for social enterprise The Arts Development Company (TADC) and Dorset Arts Together, consulting on how to develop a truly owned, dynamic and connected approach to delivering the Dorset Cultural Strategy. TADC CEO Mike Hoskin recommended a book to us, which greatly helped inform our proposals for collaborative ‘huddles’ in a refocused people-based structure. Since then, the book has also been a live reference point for me whenever involved in planning projects.

‘Doing Good Better: Effective Altruism and a Radical New Way to Make a Difference’ by William MacAskill is – as its full title suggests – an exploration of how you as an individual can make informed choices to make the best and biggest difference. With chapter headings such as ‘Why You Shouldn’t Give to Disaster Relief’, ‘The Best Person Who Ever Lived is an Unknown Ukrainian Man’ and ‘Don’t “Follow Your Passion”’, you can tell it’s a book that turns conventional thinking upside down. MacAskill shows that despite best intentions to ‘do good’, our actions may be ineffective and at worst, do harm.

It’s a fascinating and salutary read that will change how you think about choosing a charity, a cause and a career if you’re interested in increasing your impact in all areas of your life. What’s also so enlightening is how relevant the five questions it poses are to what we do in participatory

arts, from a single project to a strategic network, like ArtWorks Alliance. Sounding simple, the questions deserve more thought (and research) than you may first expect when planning what to do:

How many people benefit, and by how much?

Is this the most effective thing you can do?

Is this area neglected?

What would have happened otherwise?

What are the chances of success, and how good would success be?

To these, I would add two more – thinking about learning and development as well as accountability:

How will you know you've achieved success?

How will you know *how* you've achieved success?

ArtWorks Alliance brings together willing partners who want, at a strategic level, to develop participatory arts – by working together on problems that cannot be solved by any one of the partners working on their own and by exploiting opportunities in ways that are richer than working separately. The Action Groups are the on-the-ground collaborative manifestation of that ambition.

As the Alliance plans for the next two years, MacAskill's questions will be at the back of our minds as we determine the collective version of those 'charity, cause and career' choices. Hopefully the questions also resonate helpfully with you, your organisations and other networks across the participatory arts sector. As MacAskill says, 'It's the size of the drop that matters, not the size of the bucket, and, if we choose, we can create an enormous splash'. Doing participatory arts better. Together.

Feel the width

By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/feel-the-width/>

August 25, 2017

Categories: News



Changing the Conversation: A Provocation

We've spent a lot of time over the past decade in ArtWorks and ArtWorks Alliance on the quality of our participatory arts. It's time we looked at how much of it we do, says Kathryn Deane.

If, as we believe, participatory arts is an important part of an artist's practice – why wouldn't we want all artists to be able to engage with it? If, as many of us believe, participatory arts is beneficial to participants for social, communal, or personal reasons – why wouldn't we want everyone to have the opportunity to experience it? But it's clear that not every artist, not every citizen does get the opportunity to engage with participatory arts, and that must be a loss. What should be done about it?

Very largely, what we have done about it is to enhance quality. As Pauline Tambling explained: 'In the skills policy world there is an assumption that investment in skills and training within formal education will lead to economic growth.' In other words, more jobs. I don't necessarily buy this, having watched the careers of several senior community musicians go down the pan once funding dried up. We've built a better mousetrap, and people are not beating a path to our door.

We've got a supply, perhaps an over-supply, of participatory artists, but we haven't got a big

enough or stable enough demand for their services. Some might find the idea of framing the art of participatory arts in such transactional terms distasteful. Others might point out that classical, Keynesian economics of supply and demand isn't up to the job of analysing the complex relationships and multiple agendas of all those involved in what's ultimately a transaction between an artist and someone hiring their services. That's probably true, but I think it's a useful jumping-off point.

So, classical economics says that as demand decreases prices (ie practitioner fees) would also decrease (that seems to be happening). Then the supply of practitioners would decrease, as they chose more lucrative jobs (thus rebalancing supply with demand). But there are indications that suggest that the supply of practitioners is increasing.

What's going on? Were practitioners overpaid in the past and reduction in fees a necessary rebalancing? Is supply completely inelastic? (ie, practitioners can't get other jobs?) Are training establishments being economical with the truth about employment (yes, to at least some extent: see Pauline Tambling as above)? Are practitioners entirely altruistic, and don't care what they get paid (again, yes to some extent)? Or is the demand side distorted by cross-subsidy, either within themselves (practitioner in the evening, City banker by day) or within the family unit (one partner the artist, the other university vice chancellor)?

None of these issues is sustainable. Most of them add unnecessary complication to the underlying transaction between artist and hirer. All of them distort the market. If Sky, or Amazon, or Easy Jet can create markets for products no-one thought they needed, how much more of a legitimate right do we have to expand the market for the public good that is participatory arts. Yet of the 22,000 care homes in the UK, the 22,000 primary schools – to take just two examples – only a small percentage regularly engage with participatory artists.

We need a plan to grow the market for participatory arts substantially – a hundred-fold, perhaps a thousand-fold. We need to know how to 'take the work to scale' (Tambling again). And we're going to develop one. A study day in September is to look at the issues raised in this blog (along with others) and propose plans for what ArtWorks Alliance should do to grow the market for participatory arts.

If you have specific knowledge, understanding or experience of growing (or attempting to grow) the market for participatory arts and would like to contribute to the study day, get in touch with me right away at kathryn.deane@btinternet.com.

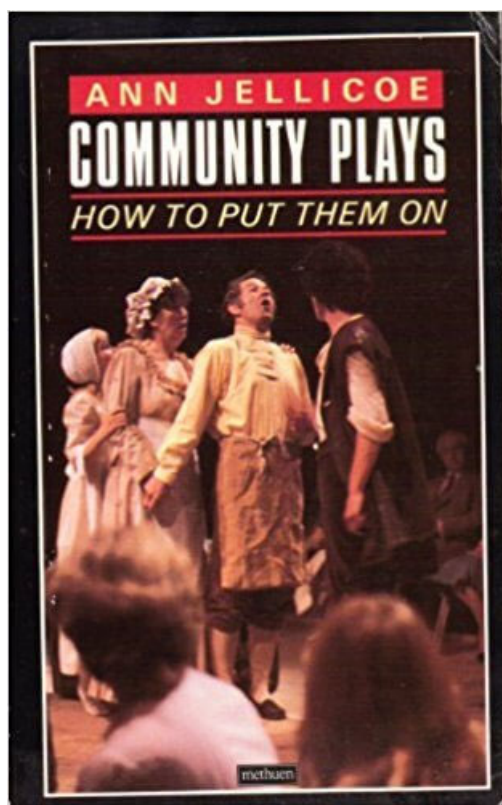
Then and now, beauty and use...

By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/then-and-now-beauty-and-use/>

September 25, 2017

Categories: News



Participatory arts: what's it for? Prompted by the recent death of community play pioneer Ann Jellicoe, Kathryn Deane revisits practice purposes...

Ann Jellicoe has just died. Hands up those to whom that means anything? She was, on the one hand, a corner stone of the Royal Court, perhaps most famous for writing *The Knack* (1962, starring Rita Tushingham). And on the other hand, the founder (probably) of the large-scale community play movement.

Settling in Dorset, she created the Colway Theatre Trust in 1979 (by the way, she was already in her early 50s) to develop community plays; and by 1987, had written *Community Plays: how to put them on* – still one of few how to do it manuals not only in community theatre, but in community arts.

There was certainly a model to Jellicoe's way of working. Professional playwrights – including David Edgar, Howard Barker, Fay Weldon, Nick Darke – wrote about historical subjects: the Monmouth Rebellion, social unrest after the Napoleonic wars. Professional actors took lead parts; multiple short scenes accommodated some locals; and to cope with the hundreds who wanted a place on the stage there was usually *The Mob*, or *The Congregation*; and to cope with the

superfluity of women, there were few scenes that couldn't handle a crowd of local shoppers in mob caps: 'I call them my basket ladies,' said Jellicoe. And the harking back to history? Jellicoe reckoned that contemporary happenings were too dodgy to portray on stage, and that universal truths of power and ownership could best be portrayed through a historical lens.

Shortly after in Mansfield, East Midlands, with the miners' strike still raw in the town, we had a different take on community theatre, with *Deckchair Tales*. Kevin Fegan wasn't there to write a play, but to help local people say what they needed to say. 'Write what you feel,' he urged his team, 'the truth will out.' And they did and it did, and Fegan's skilful crafting wove it together into a meaningful whole with authentic ownership and genuine themes tackled honestly. Pete Moser's score did likewise (the programme book listed 21 names as 'Composer').

Whither such politics now? Alive and well in the theatre – check out *Cosmic Scallies* (Graeae and Royal Exchange) as just one example. But maybe not so much in participatory arts. Certainly not in community music, where the history is one of radical politics giving way to social and civic policies – a great loss, says Ben Higham and others in *Whatever Happened to Community Music*. Or just an example of community music adapting to the job that needs to be done, says Deane (*Community Music in the United Kingdom: politics or policies?* Oxford Handbook of Community Music – in press).

For art is utilitarian, and participatory art especially so. We don't need to worry whether community music 'ought' to be political, or whether Fegan and Moser's techniques were 'better' than Jellicoe and Edgar's. We don't need lengthy expositions on definitions. We just need to know what purpose a piece of work is attempting to serve, and how good it is at serving that purpose.

For me, participatory arts is used for the following:

- for policy ends: promoting social inclusion, improving health
- for communities' ends: in England, think Creative People and Places for example
- for individuals' ends: enhancing self-worth or resilience
- for political ends. Yes, still, sometimes
- to make art. But not just any old art, but something that is meaningful and genuine to the maker.

William Morris was not ambitious enough: you can have things in your house that you both believe to be beautiful, *and* know to be useful.

Confidently selling our value

By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/confidently-selling-our-value/>

October 25, 2017

Categories: News



In her last blog as Alliance Consultant Director, Kathryn Deane tackles market issues...

I'm in hot water again. This time for using the term 'market' to describe the relationship between a participatory artist and a hirer of their services. The argument appears to be that it's distasteful, somehow, to talk about a market in the vulnerable people or those in challenging circumstances who are mostly our participants in participatory arts.

Sensitivity is a large part of being a good, empathetic participatory artist. But in this case that sensitivity is misplaced, and is doing harm to the work, its artists – and most of all to its participants.

The sensitivity is misplaced because it's a misunderstanding of the term market. It's a kind of category error: the marketplace here being described is not a market in vulnerable people – I am very happy to make it clear that I'm not advocating increasing the number of vulnerable people – but the market in support for vulnerable people. And if, as I never tire of saying, participatory arts is beneficial to participants for social, communal, and personal reasons – why wouldn't we want more people to have the opportunity to experience the support it can give? Thus, just as we need to grow the market in doctors, nurses, and those uber-heroes the paramedics, we need to grow

the market in the work of participatory artists.

It is particularly important that we talk directly in these terms because the market for participatory arts is rather complicated. The purchasers of artists' services are usually not the consumers of those services; the reasons a purchaser wants your services may be different from the reasons the consumer likes your services; and the purposes you see in your practice may be only tangentially similar to the policy issues that the purchaser is looking for you to address. To sell participatory arts work into this complex market we must (as community musician and one-time chair of Social Enterprise East of England Ben Higham described some eight years ago) 'confidently sell our particular value; particularly as this value is what attracts our customers. We need to understand and interpret our purpose and ideology in a robust way that satisfies our own expectations of the usefulness of our work, and hopefully those of our users, while managing to deliver results through unfamiliar mechanisms.'

Many of those unfamiliar mechanisms have become much more familiar over the last decade. Community Interest Companies (CICs) mix the rules of running a successful commercial company with the ethos of community work (my volunteer-run village community shop is a CIC). Marketing is now not solely synonymous with financial gain – that would now need to be described as “commercial marketing,” to distinguish it from social marketing which has the primary aim of social good. Social investment, social enterprise, social justice – more innovations which show that “market” is a term with wider connotations than commercialism.

Participatory arts has value, both social and financial. Those values are increasingly understood and appreciated by many of those working in social care, education, criminal justice, and other public sector areas; and recognised in policy terms. But participatory arts is only one voice among many claiming to offer social, community, or personal benefits in various ways; and the specific value of art-making, the alternative experiences it offers and the revolutionary sheen it can deliver, can be complicated enough to explain and sell.

Purchasers of our offers are comfortable with social marketing language. Let us not put barriers in their way or ours by declining to use clear and direct marketing approaches in our pitches. In particular, let us be clear that the arena in which we explain what we do, why, and what that might result in; and in which we listen to what potential purchasers tell us they want to achieve; and where appropriate we try to match the former with the latter to the mutual benefit of us, them and most of all the participants is a market. And if we enable that market to grow we will have more purchasers, more sellers, more participants, more public good (and, whisper it, perhaps even the chance of more diversity though I doubt it).

If we don't recognise the market for what it is, then we risk losing the attention of potential purchasers – and worse, losing their gigs, as they contemplate easier investments elsewhere or even nowhere at all. And we would end up with more poorly-explained participatory arts, fewer

opportunities for artists, and worst of all, less support for participants.

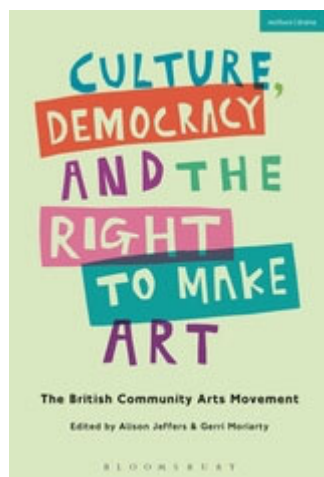
Dandelions and dissent

By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/dandelions-and-dissent/>

November 25, 2017

Categories: News



Newsletter subscriber Stephen Pritchard reviews *Culture, Democracy and the Right to Make Art: The British Community Arts Movement* edited by Alison Jeffers and Gerri Moriarty.

Community arts has always been ignored and derided by the art establishment. It was always a weed. Yet its influences on participatory arts, socially engaged art and a myriad of other cultural regeneration and development initiatives is undeniable, if sometimes un- or under-said.

Culture, Democracy and the Right to Make Art aims to redress this relative lack of accessible thinking and writing about the practice; a timely intervention that is particularly relevant to our precarious ways of living and practising art today. Its editors, Alison Jeffers and Gerri Moriarty, have brought together a range of interesting authors who themselves invoke many voices from the heyday of Community Arts to the present.

The intention of *Culture, Democracy and the Right to Make Art* is to map the trajectory of community arts and its various progeny from the 1968 protests to identify how they have influenced contemporary social art practices and cultural policy. The editors argue that community arts was a 'movement' built upon loosely defined notions of art, politics and relationships which began in 1968 and ended in 1986.

But rather than adopting a strictly chronological approach, the book examines several connected themes collected in two parts. The first part looks at notions of experimentation and growth within the community arts movement; the second explores ideas and practices sometimes loosely, sometimes closely connected to cultural democracy.

All the chapter authors offer a unique perspective and the range of differing perspectives about the movement and its aftermath becomes apparent as one reads the book. Yet the book is also structured in such a way that readers can read chapters in any order and still be rewarded.

There is, however, an argument that develops as the book progresses. Quoting Raymond Williams, Alison Jeffers suggests that community arts, in reflecting working-class culture, democracy, trade unions, cooperatives, and politics, was a revolutionary attempt to liberate 'the idea of culture' from the grasp of fine art.

Gerri Moriarty isn't sure that community arts was a movement with a shared philosophical position or goals but she is certain that community artists wanted 'to change the established order'. She reveals that when she began her career, she didn't realise how easily the arts establishment would appropriate community arts practice.

For Moriarty, many arts engagement projects today may derive in some way from community arts but in a diluted form that, whilst enjoyable, do not encourage collective making 'through a sharing of professional and non-professional expertise' and, rather than challenging the status quo, they may disempower and marginalise participants. The sense that community arts was appropriated by the institution of art a long time ago is one which permeates this text.

The chapters are diverse in scope and, whilst the obvious attraction to romanticise the movement is mostly avoided, there are exceptions. For example, it is interesting to read Andrew Crummy's account of the work of the Craigmillar Festival Society. Yet it does not acknowledge how the organisation was destroyed by Edinburgh council as part of its demolition and subsequent gentrification of the area.

Other chapters adopt a positive position that will jar with many participatory and socially engaged artists practising today. For instance, Janet Hetherington and Mark Webster's chapter about training and educating 'community artists' today attempts to advocate professionalisation of the field of practice. A position that is still fiercely resisted by many artists today. Indeed, its inclusion in the book seems at odds with the editors' general argument.

Meanwhile, the chapter by Owen Kelly on his recent thinking about cultural democracy in the twenty-first century reveals a shift in tone from 'storming the citadels' via radical monopolies, technological advancements and the internet, to 'dividuality' – a term that suggests our humanity comes through interaction with others, and that is what is at the heart of community arts. This perspective deserves attention beyond that available in this review.

Nevertheless, many contributors to *Culture, Democracy and the Right to Make Art* rightly lament the shift from community arts as part of actions which, as Nick Clements argues, sought to dismantle 'the establishment and their repressive society'. Although, for Clements, this shift to a

position of serving people and communities and helping to build their self-confidence and communities is, in some senses, positive.

Reflecting on community arts 'then and now', Alison Jeffers tracks a more familiar and less positive path through periods of fragmentation, the 'economic turn', cultural industries, the creative city, lottery funding, social exclusion and inclusion, to arrive at the role for participation in the arts as part of today's Creative Industries.

Sophie Hope drives this process of ever-increasing instrumentalisation home in her chapter in which she explains how today's short-term socially engaged art commissions reflect a very different power dynamic now at play: one that is dominated by private and public funding. She reveals how this process has not only depoliticised socially engaged art, separating it from its community arts heritage in so doing, but that it has led to many projects becoming little more than spectacles of 'positivity, celebration, and plenty of happy faces'.

The book concludes in a manner that is at once strong, yet simultaneously rather weak and limited in scope for radical potential development. The editors offer the interesting interpretation of the original community artists as being dissenters rather than revolutionaries. Indeed, they argue that dissent is essential to keeping 'ideas of cultural democracy' alive. Examples of interventions by community artists such as the showing of placards with 'Never Mind the Roses' on one side and 'Fund the dandelions' on the other outside the Arts Council headquarters in London, and, similarly, 'God Save the Queen' transformed into 'God Save Telford's 1 in 5 jobless' reveal a spirit of dissent that was common within community arts and which has all but vanished in participatory art and socially engaged arts today.

Yet, having explained their research indicated that, for many practitioners, participatory arts seemed to be aligned with democratising culture whereas community arts had attempted to bring about cultural democracy, the editors identify a number of 'new spaces for dissent'. Their list is, however, a little limited. It includes Battersea Arts Centre, Fun Palaces and Turner Prize winners Assemble.

Whilst the work of these three organisations is interesting and undoubtedly about engaging people in some form, to propose them as examples of new voices of 'dissent' seems to offer a sense of defeat rather than hope. These organisations surely reflect instrumentalisation and depoliticisation. They do not appear to offer, as the editors suggest, alternatives to our current neoliberal status quo, but instead they reinforce it. Their projects are very different from the two acts of dissent undertaken by community artists and discussed above.

Nonetheless, *Culture, Democracy and the Right to Make Art* is an essential read for artists, arts professionals, academics and anyone else interested in better understanding the legacy of the community arts movements and its subsequent appropriation and instrumentalisation at the hands

of the establishment.

The book is a satisfying read that not only sheds new light on community arts and its offspring, participatory arts and socially engaged art, but that also offers new insights that are at times deeply personal and at other times more academic and theoretical. It may even encourage some artists and organisations to self-organise in new forms of community arts practices that offer real dissent.

We dandelions will always regenerate. This book offers new seeds of inspiration. Now is the time to plant and nurture our seeds of dissent.

...

Stephen Pritchard is a post-PhD researcher, art historian, writer, activist and community artist. His practice and research is interdisciplinary and is founded on the belief that art is socially produced. His work spans community art, social practice, placemaking, activist art, regeneration, gentrification, social capital and artwashing. www.colouringinculture.org

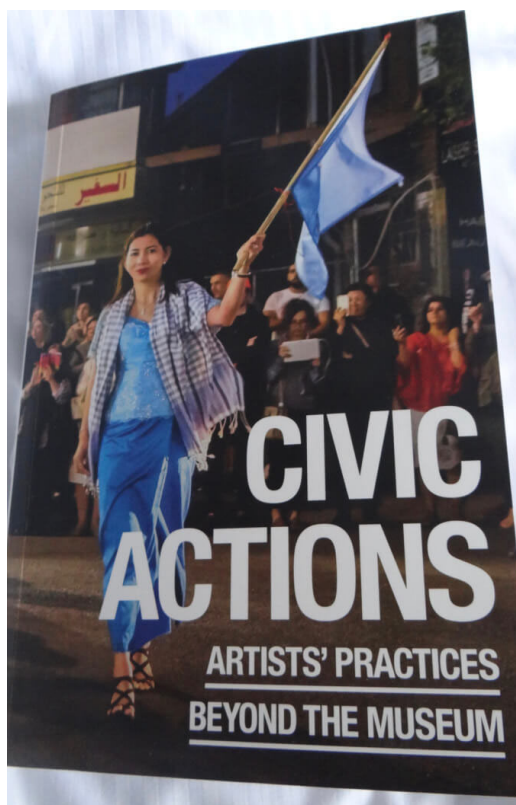
‘Solopreneurship’, sustainability and system change

By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/solopreneurship-sustainability-and-system-change/>

December 25, 2017

Categories: News



Following her work as Paul Hamlyn Foundation ArtWorks initiative Project Director and Advisor (2010-17), Susanne Burns was awarded a Churchill Fellowship to visit the USA and Australia, exploring solutions to support artists working in participatory settings. She reflects on her enquiry, learning through different lenses and where synthesis leads...

I wanted to make connections with key leaders and practitioners engaged in developing and supporting artists with a participatory arts practice. I wanted to explore business models, institutional models of support and other structures from which we in the UK could learn.

My trip started in mid-September in New York: I then travelled to Boston, San Francisco and Los Angeles. From there I moved on to Australia, visiting Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane before returning to the UK in mid-November. It was an incredible journey and one that will take some time to process and reflect upon. I have visited places and seen sights that will stay with me forever and, most importantly, I have learned a lot about my field, my practice and myself. Across the seven cities, I met a total of 90 people face to face.

Using different lenses to examine the field – artist, institution, educator/ trainer, funder and policy maker – meant the learning was rich. I met some extraordinary people and visited some amazing

organisations that are breaking paradigms in so many different ways. I found both similarities and differences. There were issues in common around short term and declining funding, political change, agency and differential power. There were differences in scale and resources, that made my eyes water, and in the value placed on arts in education, funding systems and the cultures of collaboration and partnership working. While the USA and Australian funding systems are totally different from ours, with the former dependent on private philanthropy and the latter with stronger public federal and state support, the similarities in the issues and challenges we in the UK are facing was striking.

As my trip progressed, the field of enquiry widened as I realised I could not separate the needs of artists working in participatory settings from those of all artists – and indeed the institutions with and for which they work. I realised notions of sustainability, system change and ‘solopreneurship’ sat at the heart of the questions I was asking about how we as a field can ensure artists are better supported. Without system change, will we be able to create sustainable programmes, sustainable organisations and sustainable, thriving artists’ careers? Can our sector be sustainable if our organisations are dependent on a pool of self-employed/ freelance/ contract artists whose careers are not sustainable and who are surviving, but not thriving?

As one Australian interviewee put it: ‘Our industry is being propped up by independent artists who are not being properly paid, who have no security, no superannuation plans and whose health and wellbeing are suffering.’

We are living in times when the role of the artist in civil society is perhaps more important than ever before. A recurring theme was the responsibility of the artist in social contexts. This makes it imperative we find ways to render their working lives more sustainable, stable and supported. But, for artists to thrive, we also need our organisations to thrive and be sustainable. It seems to me the key to this will sit in the area of overlap: where the interests of the two coalesce, where organisational and individual motivation focussed on social impact and the needs of the participant align. I believe that long term commitments to programmes that embed artists and organisations within the communities they serve have important lessons to offer. Dreamyard in the Bronx, New York and HOLA in the Ramparts area of LA are great examples of this.

We also need our organisations to take responsibility for the pool of artists on whom they depend, ensuring that duty of care is taken, professional development is available and accessible and, rather than emphasising ‘self-care’, we adopt an approach to ‘shared care’ that is sector wide.

‘Industry impact is key. We need collective conversations about the workforce. Competition is the key mode because of funding but we have to move beyond this. Artists are struggling in Australia and they don’t just work for one organisation but across organisations. We are underfunded and potentially set up to fail because of our dependency as a sector on public subsidy which breeds competition and not collaboration.’

I concluded we need to generate significant system and 'field' change. This will require the generation of traction and leverage created through a 'movement': bottom up action and field wide partnership working, communality, collaboration and collective action.

The role of tertiary education will be critical; the role of independent artists and those that support them in many different ways will be crucial; and our employers and commissioners, as well as our funders and policy makers, will also have important roles to play.

I found organisations making deep commitments to their artists in supporting training, providing health insurance and part time contracts providing security and retainers, such as Lincoln Centre in New York, Footscray in Melbourne and Metro Arts in Brisbane. I met funders who are questioning established approaches to funding in the sector and academics whose work is located in the field and are seeking to effect the change it needs.

I came across models that were artist-led, where artists have taken solutions into their own hands, working collectively. 'We are the agents of change that we need and we need to start valuing ourselves more.'

I was stimulated by activists and those engaged in developing movements including the highly successful Teaching Artists movement which has gained great traction and appears to have supported increased value being placed on the work.

Underpinning all this, it is clear that new business models are needed. The 'not for profit' company model appears to be broken. Individual entrepreneurial or 'solopreneurial' approaches, social enterprises, non-transactional and collaborative developments seem to be the way forward. I found social enterprises that challenged traditional business models in the sector whilst delivering services or social benefit, such as Fractured Atlas and Public Matters Group in LA. I came across 'loose' organisations, porous and able to scale up quickly for project delivery.

The wonderful thing about the Fellowship was that it gave me licence to ask questions, take time out, really listen and delve. This was a different kind of questioning and listening – more open ended, with no predetermined output or end result. As a consultant, I am used to framing questions and listening, but such 'active listening' is usually directed to a specific purpose. This experience was very different. I took the time to slow down, focus on an area of enquiry, process the inputs, views and perspectives of others, truly absorb, listen – and most importantly hear – patterns, threads and connections.

The journey was fundamentally one of questions and synthesis. Synthesis literally means composition: putting different things together in one place and making something new from them. It may not be about new discoveries, but it is about being open to possibility, seeking the underlying potential in something and remaining open to stories, tensions and themes and then

extracting insights to create frameworks.

That is now my challenge. I have a great sense of excitement in taking this learning forward, helping to sustain what is the start of an international community of practice moving into the future.

www.supportingartists.blog.wordpress.com

Owning the L word...

By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/owning-the-l-word/>

January 25, 2018

Categories: News



Extend cultural leadership programme evaluator Mary Schwarz shares some reflections on why people working in education and learning roles make such great leaders...and how leadership can be practised in all sorts of ways and by all sorts of people – not just ‘the boss’.

Back in 2006, the then Chancellor of the Exchequer the Rt Hon Gordon Brown MP invested £12 million in the Cultural Leadership Programme ‘to promote excellence in management and leadership within the cultural sector’. CLP prompted and promoted a raft of exciting and innovative professional development and publication initiatives, secured further funding beyond its original phase and left a legacy that continues many years after it closed in 2011.

Part of that legacy is the Extend cultural leadership programme for education and learning practitioners. First running in 2009/10, Extend represented a response to an identified leadership need and opportunity:

- to raise the profile and value of education and learning as core to the mission of cultural organisations, including by increasing the number of leaders with experience and expertise in this area

- to explore whether the attributes of education and learning specialists – and their approach to practice – were transferable to, and could influence, leadership more widely in the cultural sector

As the application to the Cultural Leadership Programme stated:

The Extend pilot programme will test out how the egalitarian methodologies used by learning teams in cultural organisations can contribute to the management and leadership styles employed within cultural organisations.

A group of five partners – Arnolfini, Engage (the National Association for Gallery Education), English National Ballet, Creative Partnerships Sussex and Surrey and the Sainsbury Centre for Visual Arts, University of East Anglia – coalesced around these two imperatives, working together to devise the pilot.

Following its successful delivery, every year from 2011/12 onwards, Engage (which joined ArtWorks Alliance as a founding partner) has continued to run – and develop – the programme. It attracts people in all sorts of education, learning and participatory roles, from across the arts and cultural sector and from across the UK.

Extend's imperatives remain current and with nearly 100 alumni, many of whom are now in significant positions of influence (formally by post or informally by practice) as follow-up contact with them shows, there are signs of change across organisations and workplaces.

The 2017/18 cohort is now reflecting on learning from their second residential, completing their group enquiry projects and planning next steps with the support of their mentor. It's a great time to share a sense of what happens when people who often first enter the room seeing leadership and leaders as a 'top of a hierarchy, someone else, not me' situation begin to own the L word... And with applications for the 2018/19 programme opening, beware what follows comes with a spoiler alert warning!

As a bespoke leadership development programme, Extend embraces and delivers on the values and practices of the work in which its participants are involved – just as the original Paul Hamlyn Foundation ArtWorks initiative which showed that the processes for participatory artists' training and development needed to be congruent with participatory arts principles and practices (see ArtWorks: Learning from the research Working Paper 1 by Sue Kay). In other words, an isomorphic perspective is required.

This means in Extend there's plenty of discussion and discovery with peers, consultation about and co-production of sessions. There's also listening to the learning journeys of others and hearing about budgetless leadership, quiet leadership and accidental leadership. These probably don't arise in even the most forward thinking of other leadership programmes, where at least the concepts of distributed leadership, leadership beyond or without authority and leadership from behind or the middle might be explored. If collaboration is the 21st Century currency, then we know standing at the top of a hill and yelling 'Charge!' just won't do anymore, and that authentic leadership supports the development of confidence, as a key 'take away' from the programme.

So what about this authenticity, this being yourself, in the context of being an education, learning or participatory practitioner, whether artist or manager? What does this mean about being a leader and what does this mean about leadership?

Participants on Extend have the supported opportunity to 'lean in' to themselves and each other and take time to work these things through...and this is the sort of thing they find out:

'Sometimes it feels like working in education and learning should be considered as a masterclass in leadership and being a good leader requires that really practical ability to talk and connect with people. In my experience, leadership fails when this connection is missing.'

'Education and learning people lead all the time: they work with ideas and vision; they network; they engage in partnership working; they create learning communities; they develop people, taking them on transformational journeys.'

These are pretty persuasive statements and reflect what so many Extend participants say, in terms *'a host of skills and experiences which come from working in a learning context which nurture the ability to be a good leader.'*

At the last ArtWorks Alliance Forum, partners held a discussion about leadership – the need to be agile, responsive to the sector, making and taking the case for participatory arts where it needed to go, influencing and effecting change. Partners also set up a Leadership Group to ensure 'the business of the business' of the Alliance gets done. It's a group that doesn't make decisions.

Decision-less leadership...? You may well wonder about that one. But working in a collaborative context, where authority comes from a collective permission to be authoritative and do something – that is, *participating* in leadership – that's not just owning the L word, it's also sharing the L word...

Prepositions and propositions...

By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/prepositions-and-propositions/>

February 25, 2018

Categories: News



Prepositions may be small words, but they tell big stories...

Alliance secretariat Mary Schwarz reflects on the recent desire expressed by Sir Nicholas Serota, Chair of Arts Council England, for greater ‘access **to** what the arts have to offer’ alongside Charles Leadbeater’s call for ‘the art of **with**’... and wonders whether it’s actually the little boy who said he felt ‘A puppet show **in** my stomach’ who’s on to something truly radical.

Talking with a colleague the other day who, like me, has been working in the sector for over three decades, I shared that ‘back in the day’, my understanding of cultural democracy and the democratisation of culture had been informed by a diagram and a cartoon.

The diagram was Sherry Arnstein’s A Ladder of Citizen Participation published in the Journal of the American Planning Association in 1969. This was a typology of eight ‘rungs’ relating to participation, from the lowest ‘manipulation’ of non-participation to the highest ‘citizen control’ of citizen power.

The cartoon showed a grey, balding, besuited, male local councillor shouting at a woman who was holding a piece of paper titled ‘Community Group Proposals’ and accompanied by a diverse group

of people. The words he was shouting? 'You've given me your vote, now it's mine!'

With these in mind, I refined (or rather simplified, to be honest) an explanation about my work around a continuum of practices – and therefore a difference between 'community arts' and 'arts in the community' (terms so loosely and widely interchanged at the time). I just kept asking 'Whose art?' and never, ever accepted 'Their eyes lit up' as a mark of quality participation.

The 'Whose art?' question still resonated for me when I read Sir Nicholas Serota's Culture Opinion piece in The Guardian with its references to Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisations who will 'serve audiences right on their doorsteps, bringing life-changing experiences **to** people of all ages'.

It also reminded me about Charles Leadbeater's 2009 essay The Art of With. This discusses the need for the arts to move from the world of '**to** and **for**' to that of '**with**', offering perspectives on the 'enjoy, talk and do' mix of cultural experiences that people are after.

However, is '**with**' enough? Not everyone thinks so. One of the themes at the New Perspectives on Participatory Arts conference in May is 'Moving beyond "**with** not **for**": changing ideas about collaboration between diverse individuals, groups and organisations'. No doubt similar debates will also arise the month before at the Cultural Democracy –yesterday, today and tomorrow symposium.

While Sir Nicholas argues rightly, I think, that 'the arts provide a place where ideas can be debated, explored and developed and new propositions can be put forward', I'd argue they're a place for new prepositions as well.

This thought was prompted by another recent conversation, this time with puppeteer Tony Gee, co-founder of Creation Myth Puppets. Tony was sharing a case study from a school project and what one boy explained he felt, when asked about his emotions: 'A puppet show **in** my stomach'.

So while the arts comprise **both** 'arts made by others' **and** 'arts made by ourselves', if we're honestly seeking the transformative power **of** the arts, we have to tackle the transformation of power **in** the arts.

This requires a proper understanding and valuing of the intentions and integrity of great participatory art, alongside hearing directly the experiences of those making that great participatory art. Then we can appreciate its impact – which is, as another boy reflected, 'Far more than happy'.

If culture is digital, what's digital participation?

By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/if-culture-is-digital-whats-digital-participation/>

March 25, 2018

Categories: News



Derby QUAD's John Whall, our ArtWorks Alliance digital participation activity group champion, takes a look at what the DCMS Culture is Digital and Nesta Digital Culture 2017 reports have to offer (or not...) for participatory arts.

The recent **Culture is Digital** report is a shining example of how arts and culture are driving forward great practice, R&D and the structural integrity of digital in the UK. It makes strong cases for digital and its advantages in enabling audiences to access artists, art works and venues, as well as highlighting the need to help arts organisations succeed in a digital-by-default society.

What the report doesn't do is give an indication of what meaningful engagement means in relation to digital participation.

It *does* highlight how technology improves access for audiences to engage with culture; it *does* identify the profound effect technology has on younger generations and how it enables co-creation; it *does* explore the tools and devices now used by organisations to allow audiences to interact and engage with culture; and it *does* bring to light how digital technology enhances the experience of disabled people.

All these things can be embraced and moulded by organisations to provide participatory and community arts practice that speaks to audiences in a meaningful way.

However, also highlighted in the report is the skills and capability deficit in digital that characterises many organisations.

So, where the report brings out the best the arts has to offer digitally, it also identifies the big pitfall in my view: *'I don't understand that, so how can I know how to use it?'*

The knowledge and skill of arts and culture staff, facilitation artists and those crossing over from the tech world into arts engagement is what helps us to directly engage people in digital participation.

Without this understanding and without investment, I feel that the sector will continue to commission and achieve great passive experiences, but just lack that meaningful engagement we know we can achieve if digital wasn't part of the picture.

While Culture is Digital and Digital Culture 2017 reports give us a lot of data and examples of digital practice by arts and cultural organisations, I'm interested in where what we do digitally has a meaningful impact on participatory and community arts.

Where are the examples of good practice, the point where digital provided that spark of interest and engagement in the arts... and wasn't just a *'flashy come hither'*. What does digital participation look like as an art form in its own right? We can identify a physical community arts project in a physical community arts setting, but what does it look like digitally?

As champion for the ArtWorks Alliance digital participation activity group, I'm hoping to discover and explore approaches in digital participation. The aim is to categorise and define each approach to start to form an overview of styles, themes and outcomes that we can call 'digital participation'.

Over the next 18 months, I want to investigate the terms, devices and approaches that audiences, artists and organisations use that can be categorised as digital **and** participatory. The East Midlands Participatory Arts Forum (EMPAF) will be exploring this through a series of expeditions around participants, organisations and artists. This work will be extended to the rest of the network and include the sharing of best practice, collated to become a defined and identifiable category in participatory arts.

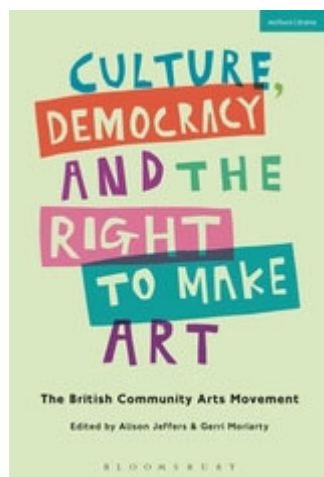
Let's hear it for cultural democracy...

By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/lets-hear-it-for-cultural-democracy/>

April 25, 2018

Categories: News



Adrian Sinclair from ArtWorks Alliance partner Heads Together Productions shares some thoughts from the Cultural Democracy: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow symposium held on 5 April 2018.

I was very much looking forward to attending this symposium at Manchester University, organised by Alison Jeffers and Gerri Moriarty alongside the launch of their recent publication about the British Community Arts Movement *Culture, Democracy and the Right to Make Art*.

The book has been reviewed recently by Stephen Pritchard for Artworks Alliance; the symposium brought together some of the contributors to the book and others to discuss the history of the Movement particularly with respect to the concept of Cultural Democracy; the current state of play (with Cultural Democracy rearing its head again); and ostensibly what next for us as possible cultural democrats.

And that's what drew me to take a day out to go to the symposium. As someone who has been involved in a community arts organisation in Leeds since 1986 (coincidentally the year that the Movement apparently ended!) there often hasn't been enough time (or maybe inclination) to take a step back and consider what and why we are doing the things we do; and what structures beyond our own little empires might help to make a sea-change in the work. It is certainly true that we have been operating in a defensive mode without any feeling of 'movement' for a decade, although I do have hopes for an effective ArtWorks Alliance.

But I am also looking to the future: my company, Heads Together Productions, has recently been awarded Explore and Test funding from Paul Hamlyn Fund to pilot a Community Arts Academy: a sector-based coaching programme for emerging community artists and social activists across the

north of England. It's an initiative that has come directly from our involvement with the original Artworks programme and one that excites me greatly.

To work effectively with the next generation of community artists, I think it is key to support the energy and desire that they have but also to give the work context; to make young artists feel part of something as opposed to just the latest set of pioneers. Obviously the aim of the Academy idea is to bring young workers in the sector together. Peer support and learning in a time of overt individualism where every artist is encouraged to be an entrepreneur (social or otherwise) and to take the responsibility and the precarity that can entail. Let's face it we pioneered the 'gig economy' long before Uber came on the scene! But I attended the Symposium specifically considering whether there is a way that we can promote a longitudinal alliance between the Community Arts Movement of the 60s, 70s and 80s; the Participatory Arts story (yet to be written) of the 90s and 00s; and whatever comes out of this exciting and terrifying time of political and social change that we are currently experiencing.

The participants on the day were a fairly mixed bunch in terms of place and to a certain extent in terms of background; but the day was led (unsurprisingly) by academics and researchers. Let me state now I say that without disdain – some of my best friends are now working in higher education (when they are not on strike!). I found the day stimulating in terms of both ideas and analysis; everything from the Great British Class Survey to a focus on capabilities rather than the deficit model to grant addiction to individualism (no spelling mistake there – one to look up!).

But back to the key focus for me – what were the key themes, the clear learning to take forward? I asked the question of one of the panels. The only real answer I received was from Gerri Moriarty in the audience. In a way that wasn't so surprising. When I spoke to her about writing the book, she didn't express any great joy in doing it, but had embarked on the project rather because she saw there was a gap and she could see the importance of learning from what had happened.

She suggested three key learning points:

- That we have been bad at alliances historically (and I take that to mean not just within our own sector)
- That we need to be constantly aware of the ability of the system to hijack ideas
- The crucial importance of both agency and action

So – let's hear it for Cultural Democracy? I think so. Interestingly there is a Movement again – one which has come out of The World Transformed conference running alongside the Labour Party conference in Brighton last year and is specifically promoting Cultural Democracy. I've been looking through the Manifesto and there's plenty of good words and ideas there. But as Bert Mulder once challenged me many years ago, talking not about the arts specifically (he was once the IT advisor to the Dutch Parliament): why is it that whenever we take good ideas or even good

practice and try to make strategies from them, the whole thing dies before our eyes?

So for me the Symposium was a day of ideas and making sense of current practice from a better understanding and analysis of what went before. The session towards the end of the day on 'the next steps' went all participatory, with small groups creating a series of haikus.

Of course we will probably need more than 17 syllables but I came away with a brain swimming in ideas and thoughts, a desire to make sure our history keeps being recorded and argued over, and a belief that working in alliance at this point is key to forging new directions, within and without of our sector and as part of a forward-facing historical movement.

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Bright and shiny, or sustained engagement?

By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/bright-and-shiny-or-sustained-engagement/>

May 25, 2018

Categories: News



Briar Monro, Arts Practice Director, Community and Youth at Creative New Zealand reflects on participatory arts in Aotearoa/New Zealand and the UK – and looks ahead to a slow spiral of development that honours the process and shared intentions of the work itself.

I'm writing this having just been to a panel discussion at Te Papa Tongarewa – New Zealand's national museum and art gallery. The discussion was on arts and wellbeing and included a wide range (panel and audience) of participatory artists, arts therapists, arts educators, funders, health workers, policy makers, programmers and others.

When talking about the challenges facing the arts and wellbeing sector in New Zealand, the panellists lamented the differences between here and the UK.

One panellist is going to have to travel to London to study, as there's no post-graduate training in New Zealand dedicated towards social practice. Another noted the lack of infrastructure, resources and recognition to support art therapy.

And had we more time, they might have also commented on the level of discourse in the UK, the impact that dedicated philanthropic bodies such as the Paul Hamlyn Foundation can make, the

levels of thinking that can produce reports like the All Party Parliamentary Group Report on Arts, Health and Wellbeing, and the embedded knowledge and support that sits within local and central government and arts councils. These things have been honed by years of sustained practice, by trial and error and success, by academic research and by a critical mass of need.

With a population 1/14th of the UK over roughly the same land mass, our services, infrastructure, populations and practitioners are spread comparatively thinly.

Participatory arts practice (in the European tradition) has, as a result, been sporadic in its development. We lack the historical context of the art therapy movement as well as the sustained development of key organisations that have provided a back bone for community arts development in the UK. Our portfolio of recurrently funded arts organisations provides very little infrastructure for this area of practice (although this is shifting) and artists are often having to reinvent the wheel of resources, relationships and processes. And there is an unresolved complexity in the conversation around who should be funding what outcomes.

While at a gut level many understand the importance and value of participatory arts, there is a lack of critical understanding, recognition and discourse around cultural democracy and the artists' role in this as a valid area of arts practice.

Conversations are not joined up.

Aware of all of this and wanting to understand more about what is working elsewhere in the world and what lessons we could learn, I spent five days in the UK in April meeting with a handful of practitioners in Glasgow, Edinburgh and Cardiff, having conversations with Artworks Alliance through the secretariat and partner Artworks Cymru and picking the brains of staff at Creative Scotland (also an ArtWorks Alliance partner through the work of ArtWorks Scotland), Arts Council Wales and Arts Council England (South West). It was a whirlwind trip – as ever trying to cram too much in.

And, of course, being in the business of arts development (with a background as a participatory artist), as I spoke with this broad community of dedicated people I was sifting and searching for the things that I could translate back to our context.

Would it be about building stronger conversations and more integrated approaches between partners to better co-ordinate funding and resources (Allan Farmer, ex-WHALE Arts and now at the Corra Foundation)? Would it be about front-footing the renewed conversation about cultural democracy and a deep commitment to empowerment of the community (Jed Milroy at Tinderbox, Iain Shaw at Media Education and the amazing team at Platform)? Would it be more aligned with the work that Artworks Cymru and Artworks Scotland are doing to help artists and organisations to identify and support quality in their practice? Maybe the smart agency around building a

knowledge bank of resources or supporting professional development (the Artworks Alliance partnership network)? A strategy for youth arts with leadership and decision-making by youth (Creative Scotland)? Illuminating the needs, the programmes, agendas and needs of potential commissioners (Arts Council England)? Or taking a stand with partners and insisting that their engagement embodies the co-learning principles of the project (Sparc – Valleys Kids Youth Arts project)?

What could I take back to NZ? What would be the best fit? What might be the things that would, in their perfect combination, springboard the development of our community arts sector into a better resourced, more recognised and more effective place? And at the same time, what would be so virtuosic, so breathtakingly simple and so innovative in its bright new shininess that it would excite and galvanise the decision makers into active support?

But back to Te Papa and our panellists.

Having lamented the gaps, they then turned to the advantages of being a small island in the South Pacific.

On these islands is an indigenous culture that has sharpened and articulated its value in the face of colonisation and that continues to express these values through a community-based arts and cultural practice which is integrated with daily existence. And who have, in the face of this and supported by their underpinning values, continued to show generosity towards the partnership formed by the Treaty of Waitangi between Maori and non-Maori.

Also here is a great diversity of immigrant populations primarily from Europe, from across the Pacific, and, most recently, from Asia who have arrived over the last 200 years and, because of our scale, we have to interact – to rub up against each other.

We have an accessibility to politicians and other decision makers.

And we have an emerging climate of change and partnership that should be able to make a difference to the sector and the people we serve, and the panellists spoke about the leadership role that this area of practice has to play in creating a space for better cross -sector collaboration.

As I listened, it struck me that the panel were articulating and following a community development model – appreciating what we have here, in our community and growing from that place. And it was a timely, and personal, reminder that we also need to maintain this within our work as development agencies.

As funders and people involved in arts development, we would love to find that illuminating something that will frame up an irrefutable argument for increased investment, infrastructure and CPD for practitioners. And it is very easy to rush towards the bright and shiny and new ideas,

wanting change to be immediate, to have impact and to be sustained.

But, like most participatory projects there is complexity. It is most likely that we will, collectively, take three steps forward and two back. This is a slow spiral of development which needs to be based on shared intentions, recognising and valuing diversity, incremental growth and sustained engagement. And we need to remember that the process is the art work and that how we conduct ourselves, in this potential sea change, is as important as the outcome.

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Image: 'Fly Me Up To Where You Are' – an ongoing collaborative project between social practice artist, Tiffany Singh, and year 5 & 6 students from Decile 1 & 2 schools across New Zealand.*

**Schools from communities where the average household income is at the bottom of the range.*

In your opinion, what is the ideal complexion for a cow?

By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/in-your-opinion-what-is-the-ideal-complexion-for-a-cow/>

June 25, 2018

Categories: News



Prompted by re-reading Padgett Powell's *'The Interrogative Mood'* and attending a recent European Academy of Participation course, Adrian Sinclair, Chapel FM Centre Director for Heads Together Productions, takes a questioning approach to what he's doing in participatory arts...

This month I attended the European Academy of Participation 8-day course in Amsterdam. It was a week of questions and there were many answers, but maybe I found the questions more interesting! I should explain the cow thing. I am currently re-reading a book by Padgett Powell *'The Interrogative Mood'*. It's a work of genius although I am not sure I can explain why – every sentence in the book is a question...and that somewhat framed my time in the Netherlands.

It was the name that enticed me in – European Academy of Participation (EAP) – as we work towards setting up our own Academy: a sector-based coaching programme for emerging community artists and social activists across the north of England. Having spent a lot of time in recent months talking about the idea to organisations and individuals across the north of England, it felt a good idea to go and discuss with key people from other European organisations.

And don't worry, I hadn't heard about EAP either. It was just some post shared by another European project (TANDEM). But the name drew me in and before I knew it I was heading off to Amsterdam!

EAP (I found out) is an Erasmus-funded European project spanning academic and arts institutions from England, Ireland, France, the Netherlands, Germany, Portugal, Romania and Spain. The lead

organisation in the UK is Central St Martins and it is a closed group of organisations (don't ask me how I got onto the course, particularly considering it was aimed at folks with at least a Masters level of education – I don't have a degree of any kind!).

But hey, I do have a bit of experience and I have to say I was welcomed and encouraged and I hope I had something to contribute. The EAP is in its final year of existence so I was looking forward to coming in for the conclusions, but I am not sure I found many. But, as I said, sometimes questions are more interesting.

I keep going back to European work. I was even attending a TANDEM meeting in Brussels on the day of the Brexit referendum – think about having to explain that to your European colleagues the next morning! To be honest, my abiding thought about European projects is that, however long the project and the number of partners, as the work comes to an end the participants come to realise that they just don't really understand what each other is talking about.

Even these days when translators are no longer used and the 'working' language is English (or rather a kind of simplified Euro-English where I find myself constructing sentences differently because I know that it will be better understood), cultural and experiential differences mean that when people feel that they have a common understanding, sometimes they just don't.

People keep asking me if I had a good time and I suppose I did, although at times I found the processes frustrating. And I worry that those courses (and this isn't particularly a European thing) become quite inward-looking and it's all about the group of people that are there and for me, I'm not particularly interested in the bonding experience.

But I am interested in what I can take away with me, how it helps me to reflect on what I am doing in my own work. And so yes, spending some serious time talking around a bowl of sourdough that a colleague had brought from Ireland did inspire many thoughts and many questions. We talked of hosting and hospitality, of affinity and proximity, of being lazy and lying a little.

But maybe, inspired by Padgett Powell, I should say that I came away with a few of my own questions from the week (as well as finding out about a beautiful Dutch striped, or belted, cow called the Lakenvelder.)

Do you prefer to teach or to learn? Would you prefer to travel at the pace of a snail or would that seem too fast? Do you need to know the exact direction you are going before you begin? Can you let go? Is it more important to know what to do or how to do it? Is it more usual for you to comply or resist? Which space do you prefer to work in and who would you like to be there with you (if anyone at all)? Are structures needed?

Do you prefer to learn from people, from place, or from a book? Can you learn anything from

someone who speaks to you in a language you don't understand?

Do you see me as an art worker or an art wanker? Do you know exactly how much you own (and I really don't mean the financial value) and do you think people who know you might agree with your answer? In your opinion, what is your ideal complexion for a cow? And what about a participatory arts project? Could you make bread from just flour and water? Would you want to?

Do you know what I don't understand?

Can I be the perfect host if I have neither tea nor coffee? Can I participate without knowing that I am? Do your projects get better the further you are away from them, or simply more distant? Do you believe your own stories? Do you prefer being a hero, a villain, or some other character? Is good enough ever good enough? Are we just talking or do we have dialogue?

Do you know what to do next?

Turning up the heat

By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/turning-up-the-heat/>

July 25, 2018

Categories: News



Catherine Rogers from ArtWorks Alliance partner Creative Leicestershire, and a member of the Alliance's leadership group, reflects on two hot days for weather and ideas.

I recently attended Nesta's FutureFest in London's Tobacco Dock, held over two sweltering days in this hot dry July. In his welcome, Geoff Mulgan, Nesta's Chief Exec told us not to get comfortable, which was not difficult given the increasing temperature and lack of effective air con in the venue.

Despite the heat and an important football match taking place on the Saturday, people did appear to hang in there with this un-comfortability for the entire two days. I'm sure this was down to Nesta's excellent programming. No one could have forecast that the venue would essentially act as a greenhouse, but maybe it was all part of Nesta's masterplan to encourage a growth of ideas that would later bear fruit.

Nesta says it is all about innovation, backing new ideas to tackle the big challenges of our time. They are jargon averse and much of the two days was spent discussing and championing ways to democratise access to tools that innovate. There was a lot of looking ahead and the call to action was very much to come up with ways that we can collectively 'occupy the future'.

The event itself was a good mix of panels, discussions and installations and I managed to get to see as much variety as I could in the programme including staying right to the very end to be entertained by comedians Steve Cross, Alex Lathbridge, Lydia Nicholas and Bec Hill.

Over the two days the FutureFest curators (Celia Hannon, Pat Kane and Ghislaine Boddington)

invited us to select from three different strands of programming:

Alternative Visions – which asked how can we start to reimagine our society, economy, cities and democracies and what should our systems and institutions of tomorrow look like?

Alternative You – questioning how we are reinventing and editing our own identities? What kind of relationships will we form with intelligent machines, nation states and each other? And where will we go to escape, to belong and to connect?

Making Alternatives – asking what are the practical tools and technologies we need to build the future we want? And what can we learn from those who are working today to experiment with new models and mobilise movements?

I manage a programme that support artists and creative enterprises in the East Midlands to be entrepreneurial and we have a range of services that help with this. One of these is our WebinArt package which is looking at how we can create accessible online programmes that help people with the essentials of running a creative business at the same time as promoting some of the excellent practices we see in the artists we work with through live streamed interviews. I try and prioritise attending at least one national event a year in order to meet people doing similar things in different ways, to see what common issues people are tackling and how they are tackling them. This was my first Future Fest and I was intrigued to hear from the speakers and also to chat to who else was there. I certainly wasn't disappointed with either of my missions.

I got quite good at placing myself strategically in front of the fans when there was a panel in one of the hottest parts of the 'greenhouse' and in doing so these were my most refreshing highlights:

Nicola Sturgeon – expressing realism, optimism and open-mindedness in how the Scottish Government are using innovation to tackle social issues and for future wellbeing. They are investing in design to not just benefit big business but wider society with an emphasis on wellbeing. Working for the public sector I was happy to hear someone speaking of public sector procurement being used properly to solve big societal changes and to make sure the benefits of innovations are shared across society.

Ruby Wax – encouraging us to first fix ourselves, and then save the world. As a comedian she oozed 'funny' and her poignant wisdom on how to survive in a stressful world where we are constantly wondering about what will 'nix us next' was a beautiful lesson on how to be human.

On the same theme of humans only having so much 'bandwidth' with which to survive, Julia Hobsbawm told us we are in an era of overload with a triple revolution of internet, social media and mobile. I geeked out when Julia told us the importance of the following numbers: 150 being the proven number of relationships we can have; 200 is the number of functional democracies and

recognised countries in the world and 168 is the number of hours in the week! The two women were obviously resonating with the crowd as both Ruby's and Julia's books completely sold out after their panel.

Rachel Caldicott chairing 'Women Inventing the Future' with a reading from Molly Flatt – deploring the shocking figures that at our current rate we will achieve gender parity in tech by 2136, the lack of role models who are women in computer science and the lack of support for women from the sector itself. I came away with the following take-aways that 'If we fight for diversity we will be more successful'; 'If you're all likeminded someone isn't thinking'; 'Embrace the uncomfortable moment'; 'Pay attention' and 'Speak to someone from a completely different background'.

The place I was most challenged was the session Escape to Reality, produced and developed by Guerilla Science, where the audience were shown two films identical in what we could see on screen but very different in that they were narrated by two men out for a run experiencing two very different mindsets and perceptions of reality. The session was about our conscious self and what makes us who we are. The post film discussion was led by a neuroscientist and I hadn't realised we were still so in the dark about what 'consciousness' is which was both exciting and terrifying.

My favourite installation and an absolute haven over the two days was The Garden produced by London Glades. This was a phenomenal planting achievement in the underbelly of the Tobacco Dock building where the garden designers had brought to life a wild urban underworld complete with an atmospheric rising and setting sun.

They had used light, sound and planting including trees, grass, wild flowers, as well as installing benches, bus signs and graffitied up old oil drums to explore the relationship between people and the natural world. The two designers Jon Davies and Steve Williams gave talks about their work and how they are interested in breaking down the ever growing divide between the two.

They had succeeded in creating a beautiful and dynamic space for reflection, promoting the role of nature with humanity as essential to our joint future. For me they encapsulated the essence of what was important about the two-day event and I left encouraged with a quiet resilience to re-evaluate relationships and the challenges we (as humans) face by better connecting with each other and our environment, fuelling a deep strength by turning up the heat from the inside. Perhaps this was what Nesta meant by 'occupy the future'.

Artist as instigator...it's time to speak out

By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/artist-as-instigator-its-time-to-speak-out/>

September 25, 2018

Categories: News



Rhian Hutchings, Partnership Manager at ArtWorks Cymru, shares key provocations and practices from the Fourth International Teaching Artist Conference (ITAC4) held recently in New York City.

ITAC4 brought together teaching artists/participatory artists and arts organisations from across the world to spend three joyful days in New York City hosted by Carnegie Hall, the Lincoln Centre and Dream Yard. The conference theme was 'artist as instigator' – the role, responsibility and impact of artists in global communities.

It's extremely hard to sum up the experience of this conference in one blog post. There were so many presentations, keynotes, experiences and amazing people to meet across the event. Everything was worth attending and everyone had something to say that I wanted to hear.

The three keynote speakers sat at the heart of the conference, rooting it to the theme. On day one, Aaron Huey, National Geographic photographer, told us about the Pine Ridge Community Storytelling project which started life as just another assignment and then grew into a personal relationship with a community. Aaron found a way to hand over control to community members and enable them to tell their own stories at the heart of the National Geographic website. This inspired him further to create a way for artists to speak out via graphic design/posters about their

responses to the USA elections, and his non-profit amplifier.org is growing.

On day two, we heard from Marc Bamuthi Joseph – poet, playwright, dancer, activist and currently Chief of Program and Pedagogy at the Yerba Buena Center for the Arts in San Francisco. His words were powerful and arresting. He asked us to name and claim our teachers and our students. He asked us what sustains life in our community. He asked us if we could choreograph social justice and design freedom. He asked us what Black joy looks like. He gave examples of his work across youth justice, community empowerment and the arts.

On day three, we experienced the joy of listening to Liz Lerman talk about making the vertical horizontal – describing how we are educated in hierarchies and how these lead to lazy ideas of excellence. She spoke about her experience of making work in a care home and in a theatre for a tour: these demanded the same from her practice but also demanded an exploration of what excellence meant in each context. She urged us to be critical, to have standards, to understand how we create value and to be ethical about this. I was struck by her irrepressible curiosity and powerful questioning nature which had a gentle power to it.

The keynotes and performances put forward a strong impression of the focus on social justice that exists in the States at the moment. Many conference presenters referenced the Trump administration and the sense of inequality they felt. For the American delegates, the political side of ‘artist as instigator’ is a current and urgent debate.

I was one of the presenters at the conference, speaking as part of a panel discussion chaired by Paul Hamlyn Foundation and exploring the British context. My fellow ArtWorks Alliance panellists were Mary Schwarz, Sean Gregory (Barbican Guildhall) and Patrick Fox (Heart of Glass). We explored the different roles that artists are taking in the UK, why it’s important to work collectively to advocate participatory practice and what we could learn from international exchange. The issues we touched on resonated with the American context, although we are more restrained in our language and approach. I think this is something we need to address. It’s time to start speaking out.

You could accuse ITAC of just preaching to the converted, as everyone who attended certainly ‘got it’ and there were no policy makers or dissenters in the room. However, I felt this international gathering was a very important step for participatory arts. It was clear to see how widespread, diverse and valuable the practice is. I heard stories about artists working with trauma victims to help them heal, artists creating installations with families separated by the immigration system, artists inspiring young people to explore their past in a new way, artists connecting men in prisons to their family in the community, artists helping communities to shape themselves and speak out, and artists using music to change society.

Telling these stories to ourselves gave us strength and showed us how powerful we are, even

when it seems what we do is a small drop in the ocean. So I'm bringing back the power of our international community to Wales as a gift. Let's use that power to make changes.

Rhian Hutchings

Partnership Manager for ArtWorks Cymru @artworkscymru

Creative Director for Operasonic @operasonic

Chair of RESEO

The ITAC4 archived livestream is available on the ArtWorks Alliance Knowledge Bank Fourth International Teaching Artist Conference page.

See ITAC for more information.

Becoming trauma informed is a journey

By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/becoming-trauma-informed-is-a-journey/>

October 25, 2018

Categories: News



Our 'blog swap' arrangement with the US Bartol Foundation starts with their interview with the artist Mindy A. Early about trauma informed practice.

The Bartol Foundation is piloting a new series of trauma-informed training workshops for teaching (participatory) artists. Mindy A. Early is the lead designer and facilitator for this series. She is also Director for Education and Program Services at Philadelphia Young Playwrights, where she manages in-class residences, out-of-school programs and special projects, and productions.

How did you become aware of the impact of trauma on the students you were working with?

There's a twofold answer to that question. The first, which may be the more obvious one, is that my teaching artists and myself would go into classrooms and use playwriting and monologue writing as a vehicle to encourage students to use and express their voices. As an organization, Young Playwrights never censors students, so they are allowed to write about whatever they would like, from completely fictional all the way through biographical. So, as you can imagine, many of our students take that opportunity to write about things that touch their lives directly, and some of those topics suggested that they had intersected with some trauma in their lives.

The secondary reason is that, for a long time, my teaching artists and I have believed that some of the behaviors encountered in classrooms that would be labeled as “unwanted” or “challenging” aren’t coming from a place of the students rebelling against the artist who’s in the classroom. A lot of these responses are coming from a different place. We were looking towards trying to find a model that could reframe our views of that behavior, and also equip us better to meet students where they were and to help them rather than discipline them.

What does it mean for teaching artists to be trauma-informed, and how were you trained in these practices?

The majority of my training comes through the Lakeside Global Institute. They have a three-part, 72-hour training for people who work with potentially trauma-impacted populations. I took those three courses in addition to some other readings and professional development sessions that I’ve attended.

Being a trauma-informed teaching artist is a process. The first step is realizing what trauma is, its causes, and its effect on the brain, body, and behavior. And then what its potential impact is on a person’s ability to forge positive relationships, to trust, or to be able to comfortably learn because of where they’re at in their brain state.

The second part is being able to recognize the signs and symptoms of trauma based on exhibited behaviors. This involves looking at how they interact, how they forge relationships, and how they’re responding physically, emotionally, and socially.

The final part is responding by fully applying knowledge about trauma into workshop practices and student encounters and, by so doing, seeking to actively resist re-traumatization. In other words, choosing responses that, rather than discipline or punish the individual, actually help to calm them and give them tools to heal, to build resiliency, and to learn how to develop positive relationships and other things that can help them through the impact of their trauma.

As the lead facilitator for the Bartol Foundation’s new training in trauma-informed practice for teaching artists, can you tell us about this training and what you hope it will achieve?

This training is interdisciplinary—artists of any art form can take this training and find the information valuable and directly applicable to their work.

The training will start in trauma theory—looking at what causes trauma and how it affects the brain, behavior, and ability to learn. You can’t talk about trauma without talking about the theories and getting a little scientific, so you really understand what it’s doing to the brain and body.

The training will then segue into how we can shift our practices as teaching artists. So, looking at what the considerations are as we plan our lessons, give directions, facilitate the classroom and

transitions, and give students assignments and guideposts. As we're teaching this portion of the workshop, we're also teaching class facilitation practices—how to deal with students one-on-one and as a group.

We're hoping to close out the sessions by looking at vicarious trauma and how to integrate self-care even in your busiest moments. Teaching artists who are working with trauma-impacted students on a daily basis are having a lot of heavy conversations, which can be a lot to take on. This has been coming up frequently as I'm in trauma-informed spaces as a teaching artist.

Anything else you'd like to add?

The act of becoming trauma-informed is definitely a journey and a process. In order to be truly trauma-informed, you have to be willing to dig into a lot of theory and reading. And then as you apply it to your practices, you have to be willing to dig into yourself—your biases, habits, strengths, and weaknesses—and really commit yourself to a bit of a paradigm shift and maybe letting some things go that have been part of your practice for many years. So, it is hard work and rigorous work, but it's really important work. And it's really rewarding when you have a workshop or a one-on-one interaction when you see that these principles make a huge difference and impact.

For more Bartol Foundation blogs, including reflections and takeaways from the trauma informed training sessions, see [here](#).

Crisis – Place & People

By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/crisis-place-people/>

November 1, 2018

Categories: News



Catherine Rogers, Alliance partner Creative Leicestershire Manager and also Junction Arts Chair and Advantage Creative Associate, writes about her first day on a recent British Council funded partnership development visit to Brazil.

Junction Arts and Advantage Creative recently successfully applied for a British Council Scoping Grant from the DICE(Developing Inclusive and Creative Economies) Fund for intermediary organisations supporting the development of creative and social enterprises. The Fund focuses on enterprises that empower women and girls; foster youth employment; and promote disabled people's and other marginalised groups' inclusion and economic empowerment. I travelled to Brazil to seek out partner organisations to collaborate with.

...

Part 1

I was last in the country in May and before that, two years ago in November 2016, just before the local elections which brought a new right-wing mayor to the city. This visit I'm arriving two days after the national election which has seen the ultra-right wing, ex-military leader elected, after a poisonous pre-election campaign and his words of destruction and hate.

I know the people I'll be with for the next week are feeling heart broken, scared and insecure about what the next year will bring. It's a strange time to be visiting Brazil to engage in an enthusiasm for developing their creative economy – but this intervention is needed more than ever.

I'm off straight away to Santos with two video makers, Gabriela and Tobias of *Bela Baderna*, friends of the director Georgia whom I have met only by email and WhatsApp. When I arrive at the Procomum Institute, what a place it is! My visit falls on a big day for them, with the final performance that evening of one of the resident artists, Val Souza.

I get a tour and history of the building from the charming journalist and Communications Officer, Victor Sousa. He tells me the directors rent the amazing 1500 square metre building along with its garden, indoor and outdoor performance spaces, artist studios, kitchen, office and bedrooms for the resident artists, at a peppercorn rate from the family who built it with church money in the 1920s to provide food through a soup kitchen to the local people.

When the directors explained their idea of what they wanted to do with the building, which was about community exchange and a different way of conducting a supporting, but more transactional, relationship with the local community, the family who were struggling to maintain it financially were happy to make them a deal.

Getting a better understanding and a sense of place feels equally as important as getting to know people in a new project. The world is in crisis and projects like this have the potential to raise awareness and a sense of urgency.

Our potential UK partnership includes organisations which work with different business models across a variety of art forms and with diverse groups of people, so this is an interesting opportunity to come together responsively and experiment with ideas with a partner on the other side of the world, working out how we can use creativity to support inclusion and economic empowerment.

There are many things Procomum want to change – how a creative economy works is only one. Their mission consists of working towards recognising, empowering and protecting 'the commons'. The sign at the bottom of the stairs says: *There is no commons without commoning*. My task over my time here is to work out what all this really means in translation.

Part 2

The place is full of colour (a wooden yellow frog with a plant growing out of its back greets you on the stair), inspirational quotes are stencilled onto the ceilings and walls and many of the original features, including beautiful wooden period furniture, fill the building.

All around music belts out and everyone goes about their business often humming along. The resident dog is yapping excitedly every now and again as if he wants to join in any conversation

that is happening. A large dining hall makes a perfect place for performance with floor of black and white linoleum and ancient ceiling lights hanging precariously overhead. It is like an old school canteen and the mauve, blue and pink wooden chairs contribute to the 'school-like' feel.

On the wall is an incredible picture of a performance of one the previous artists in residence – he is dancing, captured leaping in the air with a broad smile on his face as the stunned audience look on. Upstairs in the office there is one long table with plug-in points that are not yet in use, and all the floors upstairs have beautiful parquet tiles, again an original feature. The room off from the office is a hang-out space and there is a smaller office for people if they need a private space.

Outside, the garden is open for people to come and explore. Permaculture is an important aspect here and a garden full of medicinal plants provides a point of exchange for the local community. The plants that grow are interesting too. One is the indigenous Taioba which has a 'good' and 'bad' variety. The good one being highly nutritious and the bad being deadly. I ponder the makings of a short story with Taioba as the good and bad spirit. In addition to the large communal spaces are smaller spaces housing a library, a hacker lab, a 'care' space where a dentist teaches the local people about oral hygiene and provides an occasional free surgery also.

I ask about the design on the floor tiles on the paths inside the complex and outside on the street, everywhere in fact. I am told this is a famous 'Caçara' design, from the people and culture that exist in the coastal region of Sao Paulo. They have an accent closer to that of Rio rather than a Paulista because of the proximity to the coast and trading history. The coast is important here: the skills of fishermen are used to create woven seats on the top of crates, which also cover the outside of the building. One of the projects is called MARAL which is the wind that blows from the ocean to the mainland stirring the water.

Every time I come to Brazil, I am humbled by how intelligent, generous, thoughtful and strong are the people I meet. Working at Procomum is demanding: two of the directors have families and one is also writing his PhD! Together the team are running many programmes and Victor gives me a whistle-stop tour of some of them, as well as presenting me with two beautifully produced small books documenting and laying out their methodology for others to share. I am already thinking that this is something we may be able to do together if we make a successful application!

The evening event has been curated by the artist Val Souza. Her performance is an audio voice recording of a speech she has made as a result of her work here. During her residency she explored issues affecting the city of Santos and promoted actions that allow black lives to be recognised as human. She also sought dialogue on commonalities and differences to further an understanding that difference does not put us as opposites. As a black woman her attention and focus was on women and during her speech she asks '*What do you see when you see a black woman?*'

The performance took place in the small chapel space, the only room the Institute has been asked not to change. All the religious icons have white covers over them; there is an audio visual film showing moments in the artist's life; and candles are everywhere.

The atmosphere is of a religious ceremony but it is not that. I listen to it in Portuguese and stop letting my mind try to translate the words (which, with my limited Portuguese, I know will be impossible) and so I listen instead to the emotions that tell her story.

As my first day comes to an end with this amazing piece of work, I am reminded of Procomum's values as they are listed on the website as a place for our conversation to now begin:

Caring; Cooperation; Free Knowledge; Civic Innovation; Diversity of gender and race; Territorial decentralisation; Joy and affection; Telling our stories.

Watch out for Part 3 coming shortly...

A more collaborative creative economy

By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/a-more-collaborative-creative-economy/>

December 1, 2018

Categories: News



Catherine Rogers, from Alliance partner Creative Leicestershire, continues her blog about a recent British Council funded partnership development visit to Brazil.

Part Three...

During my ten days in Santos and São Paulo, I met so many people who could put 'innovation' as their middle name, ranging from artists who run a tech collaboration space, a permaculture expert connecting farmers in Bahia with retailers and a DJ making the music he loves in a favela bringing in children and teachers from both public and private schools in the city.

Searching for a DICE partner, I knew I was interested in bringing a holistic approach to whatever we did. Partly, this is because I don't do just one job in the UK and I wanted to bring with me all my different hats. Working in partnership is something that drives me and I believe we can achieve more together, even if it takes longer to do it because there is more groundwork to cover.

There are several programmes running at Instituto Procomum, including a series of residencies for international artists to apply with ideas on the reflection of 'commons' across the southern hemisphere. What the team wanted was not an exhibition of ideas, but a commitment to search for

ideas and a series of reflections.

Six amazing people were selected from 150 applications and for more information about this I encourage you to take a look [here](#). However, the project in which we are looking to partner is called 'Colaboradora' and is just finishing a pilot stage. The idea behind Colaboradora is time-banking skills, meaning that those involved put in 10% of their time every month to exchange with another, thereby sharing expertise, skills and innovation. This idea may not be entirely new, but we are looking at how we make this a 'norm' with support and facilitation, bringing people on board who are prepared to act and think differently.

For this next stage, we hope to extend the invitation to creative entrepreneurs with the goal of creating a more collaborative creative economy starting with the idea of the time-bank. I am told we 'invented' creative economy in the UK, but I wonder how many of us working in it in the UK realise this fact? For a useful definition from one of my new heroes, John Newbigin, [here's a link](#).

It makes me excited to think that together we could redefine what a creative economy is and make it more of a collaborative economy. With the key drivers for change being a continued shortage of public funds and a demand for new ideas for income generation, organisations working creatively and socially are feeling the strain emotionally and practically, so thinking about creating something different feels like a breath of fresh air.

At our first meeting, the directors at Instituto Procomum and I knew we could work together. Over tapioca pancakes, cheese bread (pao de queijo) and buttery toast with fresh juice and espresso, we each took it in turns to talk about our goals or 'big hairy audacious goals', which included:

- working out how to live from doing what you love
- creating time and space for experimentation
- building a sustained international partnership and creating a different economy

We also discussed our personal journeys and the need for us to be able to create the right conditions for innovation to happen on every level – which includes working on our own conditioning and exploring how we think like we do.

Over this trip there have been lots of opportunities to talk about values and much of the joy has been finding out how we share values, such as believing in the power of arts to transform lives. But there is still a journey to go on in order to help people realise their ideas and innovation in working on a project like this. Part of this journey will mean unpicking my own privileges as a white woman who grew up with books at home and had the opportunity to study at university. What these brought even to a 'pathologically shy' girl have gone a long way to help me articulate value and acknowledge self-worth.

In Brazil, I am told, 'universities are for the elite': if you grow up as a Black Brazilian, going to university isn't an option and the journey to learn to value yourself is an uphill struggle when life is about learning to survive. At Instituto Procomum, they want people to come and meet them with ideas that have helped them survive and can as well help others not only survive but also value themselves, their community and their innovative abilities – proving you can innovate, wherever you are.

A question of capacity

By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/a-question-of-capacity/>

January 1, 2019

Categories: News



John Whall from Derby QUAD is the ArtWorks Alliance digital participation champion. Here he explores issues around mental capacity and creative work by participants in an edited version of a blog from DigitalpARTicipationis...No-one wants to participate in participation designed by somebody else following a Soap Box presentation at the 2018 Engage international conference A Social Prescription.

Derby QUAD's Creative Wellbeing programme has created strong links with local health and care services over several years.

Back in 2017, Digital Participatory Artist in Residence Kajal Patel worked with participants from Rethink Derby, local artists and other creatives. This provided a rich pool of people sharing learning and practice, from which an exhibition of participant work was developed in the context of contemporary visual art. This was a powerful process and outcome for everyone, especially those living with mental health issues.

We identified the 2018 Digital Participatory Artist in Residence programme as an opportunity to explore new ways of working with a selected participant group: inpatients from a Derbyshire Healthcare service for residents with acute mental health needs. The artist was Leila Johnson.

Our immediate challenge was the capacity question and how this affected what could, and could not, take place in relation to the presentation and use of participants' creative work.

Section 2 of the Mental Capacity Act 2005 says that 'a person lacks capacity in relation to a matter if at the material time he is unable to make a decision for himself in relation to the matter because of an impairment of, or a disturbance in the functioning of, the mind or brain'.

Lacking capacity includes when your ability to make decisions is affected either:

- permanently: which is where your ability to make decisions is always affected. This might be because, for example, you have a form of dementia, a learning disability or brain injury

or

- in the short term: which means your ability to make decisions changes from day to day. This might be because, for example, you are confused because you're on medication or because of certain mental health conditions, or you are unconscious.

Capacity Assessments establish, at that moment in time, someone's capacity to make an informed decision about themselves. Assessments can take up to 45 minutes per patient: it's time-consuming and may require additional staffing.

In our project, capacity related to people giving permission for their work to be used beyond the hospital. We decided that the assessment process was going to be too big an ask for the nature of the workshop engagement between our artist and residents.

This impacted on the documentation process as well as the representation of participants' voice and creative development, as it meant:

- No images could be taken to document the workshop
- None of the participants' words could be used
- None of the work created in the workshop could be used

Leila's work for the residency focused on falling and failing, which seemed to fit well with the concerns and issues faced by the participants. Participant engagement involved the exploration of technology and being creative with digital. The patients in residence varied and in these settings, there are often people who are very creative, although they may have difficult, negative feelings about creativity along with a sense of having 'failed' as artists, or potential artists. It's important we are always aware of these potential vulnerabilities.

Initially, there was a planned element of Leila's work which involved presenting participant comments within the exhibition space. However, because no capacity assessments were

undertaken, this could not be done. So, as another theme within Leila's work was dancers, she worked with local dancer Rosa Cisneros who used movements originated by inpatients and staff to create a dance sequence which she then performed.

This provided enough ambiguity not to be indicative of any particular participants. And with movement being a potential negative trigger, Rosa took great care in ensuring the vocabulary used was not exaggerated and was participant led.

Leila provided hands on access to 360° cameras, motion capture equipment and LED light systems. Participants were really taken back with this: not because of the equipment, but because they were being trusted to operate it.

Trust, the humanity of creativity and the up-close nature of the experience had a noticeable effect on participants. They entered the space quiet and withdrawn. They left energised, confident and excited about engaging with arts and culture further, as outpatients.

This experience has highlighted that, within arts and culture, it's important to remember the positive impact of the act of engaging a participant in creativity, regardless of which Key Performance Indicator they fall under or whether we've been able to record it: we don't need to show it to know that it's happened.

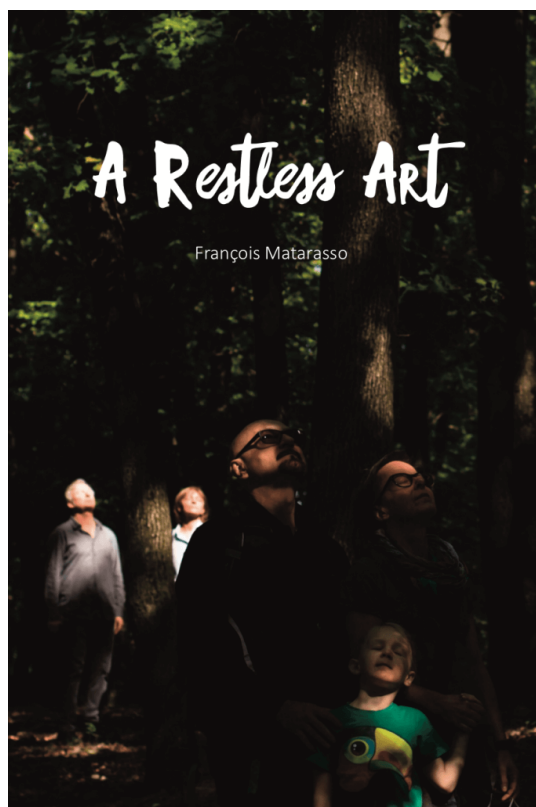
How participation won, and why it matters

By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/how-participation-won-and-why-it-matters/>

February 1, 2019

Categories: News



Kathryn Deane, visiting Professor at York St John University in the International Centre for Community Music, reviews François Matarasso's *A Restless Art*.

It is, it seems to me, virtually impossible to be a practitioner in the field of participatory art (more on that term later) without also being a theoretician of the field, and François Matarasso is the ultimate doer-thinker of this practice; and *A Restless Art* very much the Book of Why?

Matarasso's job here is, first and foremost, to satisfy himself about the nature, meaning and purpose of this art: to make sense to himself of the art forms of participatory and community art – art forms designed specifically to make sense of the world to those experiencing the practice.

He achieves his goal first through much practice (this is easily his 10th, maybe 15th, significant publication in the field); and second through a limpid writing style drawing heavily on Story: peppered throughout his 280 pages are over 40 case studies as well as innumerable references to activities not only in the UK but from the 40-plus countries he has visited in his four decades in the practice. This book is a cross between the European Grand Tour and Cobbett's Rural Rides.

And third, he invokes a process of disassembly familiar to many repairers of things: taking it apart,

looking at it, and then putting it back together again. A director I once worked with described the process of direction as like *'taking a bicycle apart, and spreading all the bits around you, to see how it works.'*

Thus, in going back to first principles Matarasso lays out in an early chapter some concepts of art: art as object, as meaning; art and children; and more. Take special note of the arguments that it's all the Enlightenment's fault for inventing the fine art tradition, with its split between *'cultured'* art and *'folk'* art, and the privileging of art as revered thing, over art as everyday activity – for he comes back to those themes frequently.

Chapters on the intentions and the art of participatory art should be familiar territory to most practitioners. But they need exploring nonetheless, otherwise you won't know how the bicycle works. More practically, you won't know how to argue with the fine art brigade about the importance, the essentiality of participatory art.

Why make participatory art? Matarasso asks. It's because we're humans: it's what we do, is the broad answer. Matarasso also identifies three specific intentions underpinning participatory art:

- increasing access to art (or cultural democratisation)
- creating social change, and
- advancing cultural democracy.

Other intentions are available, of course, including creating personal change which Matarasso bundles into social change. In a tightly argued section, beginning with the necessary references to Freire and Boal, he makes the often overlooked point that personal change is conditional on social change, not the other way around.

The unholy pair of cultural democratisation and cultural democracy get a good shaking-out. First, definition. Matarasso describes cultural democratisation as equivalent to increasing access to art; an act that he gives a cautious welcome to. If art does all those things that we say art does – why would we want to restrict access to it? Well, 'we' wouldn't – but 'they' might.

'The issue is not, has never been, that people don't enjoy art. It is about whether the state recognises the art they enjoy, and whether they enjoy the art that the state recognises.'

In other words, people don't need some sort of Lady Bountiful offering artistic soup to the huddled masses. They don't want cultural democratisation, they want cultural democracy. Well, at least the Campaign for Cultural Democracy did, in 1984, though little was heard from them subsequently. Until 2018, when the Movement for Cultural Democracy became Twitter-vocal.

In a beautiful section on advancing cultural democracy, Matarasso gently but ineluctably builds the argument for the centrality of cultural democracy in human lives. Culture is the *'parliament of our*

dreams' he says:

'Being able to represent ourselves within that cultural forum is how we can defend our values, identity, experience – and rights. So here is a tentative definition:

- *Cultural democracy is the right and capability to participate fully, freely and equally in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and create, publish and distribute artistic work.'*

The final section of this chapter is an underplayed examination of the issue of multiple agendas in participatory art projects. Matarasso takes as his Story for this section the subject of Arts on Prescription (which in its more generalist manifestation as 'social prescribing' is about to become bigger than big) and the scheme run in Gloucestershire whereby people with various health conditions are referred to weekly creative workshops.

Evaluations showed there were health benefits (GP consultation rates dropped by 37 percent and hospital admissions by 27 percent) and financial benefits (there was a net saving to the NHS of £216 a patient). And, Matarasso supposes, artistic benefits (practitioners did good (whatever that means) creative work and participants undertook creative expression); and social benefits (participants enjoyed the social contact).

These multiple purposes do not diminish each other, says Matarasso, On the contrary, *'... are more likely to result from the committed engagement that good art demands.'* Well, up to a point: my own evaluations on this subject suggest it's a bit more complicated than that. *'Participatory art's strength is that the instability of intentions is not problematic,'* Matarasso concludes. Up to a point again, for it depends on who is experiencing those instabilities (hopefully not the participants): because it requires, as Matarasso says, everyone involved to open themselves to other ideas, experiences and values.

This is so scary that the only response of many funders and policy makers is to treat the practice hostilely, choke off its funding, demand ever-more ludicrous hoop-jumping and castigate it for being not only what it is, but being successful at producing what they want.

Chapter 5 is about the Art. Centred on another beautiful description – this one, of a harrowing refugee play by the Dutch Fada Theatre: 'non-professional' (another definition which I park for later) actors bearing witness to their own lives and circumstances. The description leads to a careful deconstruction of what participatory art is about and why it is simply wrong – no, irrelevant – to judge it by the norms of fine art theatre tradition. We have all struggled over the years with what this means in practice, Matarasso more so than most and mostly he has rigorous argument

on his side. Try these three concepts for size (the titles are my own):

The well-meaning dangerous manager Production values of participatory art can be low – judged by the (arbitrary) standards of a fine art work. So ‘we’ (ie those of us ‘in charge’) feel the need to forestall criticism by making excuses: it’s a good play – for refugees, amateurs, considering what they’ve been through. Through the lens of Matarasso’s experience, we can see such apparently well-meaning excuses as condescension: ‘the othering that assigns to some people a subordinate position, while simultaneously reinforcing the speaker’s own superiority, conveyed in the claimed right to judge.’

Category confusion So when I’ve stopped applauding artists for overcoming weaknesses I’ve defined for them, how do I judge their work? Don’t apply the criteria and standards of fine art to participatory art: ‘not because of limitations in the quality of the work. The limitations are in the criteria and standards.’

The inseparability of art and life This one is really tricky, and the arguments become circular very quickly: this play is a political act because of the themes it deals with. But, then, it’s an artistic act because of the way the themes are presented.

Suddenly, Matarasso’s claim to the singular ‘art’ (as in the book’s title) makes complete sense: ‘the participatory arts’ would be sub-categories of specific art forms: theatre arts, music arts, visual arts – and hence inviting correspondence with the fine art traditions these art forms largely inhabit. But ‘participatory art’ is an art form itself, and must be judged against the standards of other participatory art activities of relevance. What standards? There has been an insidious practice among the participatory arts naysayers to point to participatory arts failing (which of course it has, like any other art form): be uplifted, therefore, by Matarasso’s rallying cry to simply turn that on its head: ‘Like all art, as a practice and a form, it should be considered on the basis of its *highest* achievements’ (my emphasis).

It is excellent to see a whole chapter on ethics, participatory art being fundamentally the practice of ethics in an artistic framework. Matarasso’s take on this is orthodox, his lodestar being that it is unethical to seek to make change without the informed consent of those involved; and his models the power imbalances in, say, doctor-patient relationships.

And so we arrive at the obligatory History – and the equally obligatory confessions of partiality, authoritativeness and bias. Matarasso owns up to an impressive list of mea culpas here – but his frame of reference is so broad and knowledgeable that it’s unlikely anyone knows more than him about which bodies are buried where, let alone the implications of their entombment.

Some histories start in the 1960s or 70s; some from post-war, and a few trawl back to Victorian times. Matarasso reckons it all kicked off in the late 1700s: one of his leitmotifs running through the

whole of this book is the continuing influence of the European Enlightenment and its invention of the western high art tradition: that ultimate cultural weapon for keeping the masses in their place. Because the Enlightenment was a human – specifically, male – construct it didn't even need truth on its side. The dominant history of Western art, with its tales of individual genius and narrow standards of taste is not, says Matarasso, fact: it is merely a version of events, and a 'questionable one at that. It has denied the legitimacy of artistic work that it does not control or benefit from.'

In other words, his thesis in all of this is an eternal struggle for cultural democracy: the elites inventing forms of culture and education (and critically the funding for these) that would mark them out from the common herd; the working classes subverting these forms for their own empowerment.

And thus, via pioneers such as Wesker and Littlewood, we arrive in the late-1960s in pretty much the same place as other recent recorded histories of participatory art: with its radical failure. But, argues Matarasso, a failure only of theorising. In its practice – especially the wider practice of participatory art – it was (as I also have argued) alive, kicking and developing. True, Owen Kelly's vision of the role of community artists as being '*to maintain a clear analysis of what we have done and the ways that it fits into a revolutionary programme aimed at the establishment of cultural democracy*' proved a non-starter.

However, the ream of stories Matarasso presents here on the development of a participatory art form which uniquely intertwines both social and aesthetic purposes; which serves the communities it works in and for; and which is resilient enough for more than a few companies in the field to be celebrating 40th and even 50th anniversaries, is powerful testament to the value of work which has '*helped millions find new life chances through new skills, confidence and social networks. Always on the margins, their survival may be their most profound political act.*'

But, as the communities of place – geographical locations where community artists set down roots and served participants from cradle to grave – gave way to communities of interest (people who had common experiences) the artist's job changed. The 'language of remedialism' entered the discourse, and the work became separated from the rights-based approaches of the first generation of practice.

The received narrative then goes on to discuss the effects of the National Lottery (which poured squillions into the arts, some of it eventually for participatory art) and the election of the first New Labour government (which had a more sympathetic attitude to the agendas of participatory art than government hitherto). But Matarasso then throws a lighted match into the bucket of fireworks by baldly stating that '*the transformation of the British cultural landscape in the past two or three decades is a local expression of a global phenomenon, and participatory art's normalisation within that landscape is the incidental result of historic change.*'

Sorry, guys, it wasn't participatory art wot won it after all. It is probably a mixture of a long period of economic growth and technology developments creating a cacophony that not only allows us a form of cultural democracy (see? Be careful what you wish for) but demands we use it (to serve Big Data's needs, obviously, not our own).

On the more recent history, Matarasso makes a good case for several points. First, while the recession following the crash of 2008 has undoubtedly hit arts funding as well as care homes, probation officers and social workers, in money terms participatory art has suffered relatively little. Second, Arts Council England's Creative People and Places programme – essentially participatory art – is popular, big, and thriving. *'Some of the work,'* says Matarasso, *is 'very high quality, in artistic, ethical and even political terms, and most represents good practice by today's standards.'*

Third, the assessment of Creative People and Places *'uttered from the epicentre of the British arts establishment'* makes exactly the same arguments that the community arts movement made to the Arts Council in 1973. That sounds like a win, albeit one taking a third of a century.

There is, however, one major stumble in *A Restless Art*. In an early chapter Matarasso sets out 'definitions' of participatory and community art. Participatory art, he says, is *'the creation of art by professional artists and non-professional artists'*. This grates, terribly. It is impossible to define 'professional', and even if you did so satisfactorily, the binary division goes against the grain of this whole book. It requires Matarasso to deny visual arts' 'socially-engaged practice' (Gormley's *Field*, for example) as 'participatory'. Even worse, he not only denies that status also to working with amateurs, he later leans heavily on amateur work as an actual example of participatory work. More: having developed the definition of participatory art, as above, he then more than once changes its goalposts so as to suit an argument he wants to make.

The final chapter of this remarkable book which tells such a remarkable tale has the scent of valediction about it. Matarasso tells us what participatory art now needs: money ('underpaid, overworked artists cannot do their best work'); trust (to end the nonsense of funders 'who rarely have first-hand understanding of the field demand advance guarantees of its value to be verified by evaluation'); and professional development (the membership associations get a shout-out here, as does ArtWorks Alliance). And Matarasso tells us also what participatory art does not need: a likely to be popular list, containing as it does condescension, appropriation, education and proving its impact.

Profound and detailed, beautiful and practical, text book and story: François Matarasso's *A Restless Art* could be the only work on participatory art that you will need to own and want to read.

Kathryn Deane has worked in community music for more than 30 years, and is now visiting Professor at York St John University in the International Centre for Community Music

François Matarasso (2019) *A restless art: how participation won, and why it matters* London:
Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, UK Branch

ISBN: 978-1-903080-20-7

234pp plus 48pp colour plates

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Holding the Space

By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/holding-the-space/>

March 1, 2019

Categories: News



Adrian Sinclair from partner Heads Together Productions looks at the ‘why, what, how and who for’ of training pathways for those wanting to pursue a career as participatory artists and reflects on the power of coaching in the UNION programme.

Artworks has always been an initiative aiming to strengthen practice in participatory settings. To do that it is imperative that we consider the training pathways for those wanting to pursue a career as participatory artists. How to do that is something that I’ve been thinking about over the last few years and it has been a privilege to develop both thinking and ideas amongst others committed to the sector.

It’s not just about how to do it (which I will come onto later) but also who for. One of the starting points for me was from a conversation with Hannah, a young woman I had been working with for a couple of years. My organisation, Heads Together Productions, has been working in East Leeds for 20 years now; it’s one of those urban areas that just don’t work for people, and I am talking about 150,000 people living in a series of decaying housing estates. Nurturing ambition with young people is key in our work and I’ve supported young people to enter all kinds of professions, even occasionally the arts. I asked Hannah what she wanted to do in the future and she responded in a flash ‘I’d quite like your job actually’. And whilst I was thinking – yes, I could kind of imagine you

doing that, she'd already followed up with the key question: 'How would I get it?'

The realisation that I had no idea what to suggest to her actually started us down a pathway that led to: UNION – the Northern school for creativity and activism.

Initially Hannah became one of a small team of researchers who, with a bit of PHF Artworks funding, did telephone research with a range of participatory arts organisations across Yorkshire and beyond. They spoke to senior staff in the different organisations, and asked that simple question: 'What would I need to get a job with you?'

In a way it was good to realise I wasn't the only one who struggled to give a succinct answer or a series of options. To paraphrase the research, the young people were told that they would have to be shit-hot at their chosen art form (and that might involve a university degree but it wasn't necessary) and then they would need a bunch of other stuff, skills and competencies, and to get those? Well maybe they just needed to get stuck in and learn on the job, although, yes, they might have to do that as unpaid volunteers.

I still didn't quite know what to advise Hannah, but she couldn't wait around so decided to take herself off to do a community music degree in Sunderland. Not a bad option! But what about alternatives for those who didn't want to enrol in a full-time university course? And what happens when those courses end? What about that 'bunch of other stuff' that still needed to be developed?

Over the years we had been working with an organisation called the Writing Squad. They aim to be 'creating the next generation of writers in the north'. Steve Dearden, the programme director, likens the Writing Squad to a football academy, where people are all off doing their own things and come together for training and coaching from time to time.

And that was the inspiration for UNION. A football academy for those at the crossover between creativity and social change! We've taken on 20 emerging artists and activists from across the north. They will come together for five weekends during 2019 in five different places with differing themes (the first weekend happened in January in East Leeds...). It's a blended programme with group work (the training weekends and online work) alongside mentoring, work placements and exchanges that are tailored to each individual participant. What holds it all together, and indeed what we talk about as being at the heart of the programme, is coaching.

We have a team of coaches trained by Relational Dynamics 1st up in Lancaster. As one of those coaches I can tell you it is a privilege to sit with someone and hold the space for them to talk, work out their goals and consider how they might get there. As one of the UNION participants said at the end of her first session... 'I just don't get the chance to think through my work like this.' And then she added, 'I suppose that's the point really'. And she was right.

So I hope UNION is adding something to the training mix. But no one approach or programme is sufficient to nourish the diversity of artists and the potential ways of working within the sector. But what I have learnt from starting UNION is that lots of organisations are finding different ways to develop training opportunities which work for different people at various stages in their careers.

And we need to join those up and that's where Artworks Alliance is key. To learn from each other. To create a narrative of the different offers. Not to reduce the diversity of the training being offered but to make sense of that diversity, not for us as providers but from the point of view of the potential trainees. So that if another young person in East Leeds comes to me and says 'I want your job', then I can sit down with her, do a little coaching and encourage her to discover the range of opportunities on offer and work out which one might be the perfect next step so she can enjoy the process of finding the right path, own it, set off on it and see where she ends up!

And that's one of the ways we will strengthen practice in participatory settings.

The World Cities Culture Report 2018

By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/the-world-cities-culture-report-2018/>

March 27, 2019

Categories: Evaluations & Reports, Resources

Tags: artists, arts, cities, culture, democracy, participation



Author: World Cities Culture Forum

Publication Date: December 2018

Summary

Innovative cultural programmes and policies.

Details

A key compendium of current city cultural policies from across the world showing a new, critical role for culture in addressing the inclusion of all citizens and a new definition of how, where and by whom culture is experienced.

[Download or View Resource](#)

Addressing the Dynamic

By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/addressing-the-dynamic/>

March 27, 2019

Categories: Case Studies, Resources

Tags: artists, managers, participants, Practice



Author: Hannah Wilmot

Publication Date: February 2015

Summary

Enquiry-based research into the relationship between project managers and artists.

Details

Illuminates the project manager/participatory artist relationship, showing assumptions and misunderstandings can lead to confusion and poor participant outcomes. Evidences a need to articulate organisational and project values well; establish clear roles, responsibilities and communications; and facilitate reciprocal feedback.

[Download or View Resource](#)

Shared decision-making

By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/shared-decision-making/>

March 27, 2019

Categories: Featured, Resources, Toolkits & Guidance

Tags: artists, collaboration, community, participation, power



Author: Louise White

Publication Date: January 2019

Summary

Practical resource for involving local people in decision-making.

Details

This practical resource shares examples, tips and tools drawn from Creative People and Places, showing how projects have involved local people in project-level decision-making.

It presents a range of approaches and learning to help inform thinking in the wider cultural sector. Woven throughout the resource are questions and quotations drawn from Chrissie Tiller's Power Up, posed as thinking points.

[Download or View Resource](#)

ArtWorks Symposium, Northern Ireland

By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/artworks-symposium-northern-ireland/>

March 27, 2019

Categories: Research, Resources

Tags: artists, commissioners, employers, funders, policy, Practice



Author: Sarah Tuck and Caragh O'Donnell

Publication Date: January 2014

Summary

Report on a day long event exploring participatory practice in Northern Ireland.

Details

The curators' report on a PHF ArtWorks special initiative funded one day event in Belfast in November 2013 exploring some of the range of practices and concerns for participatory arts practice in Northern Ireland. Key themes were: funders and commissioners; arts organisations; artists; and arts education.

[Download or View Resource](#)

Power Up

By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/power-up/>

March 27, 2019

Categories: Featured, Research, Resources

Tags: artists, collaboration, community, cultural capital, participation, power



Author: Chrissie Tiller

Publication Date: January 2019

Summary

Explores the complexities and challenges of sharing power.

Details

This think-piece unearths and explores some of the complexities and challenges of sharing power, drawing on thinking from Creative People and Place directors, community managers and other team members, artists and project critical friends.

Some of the big questions that underpin many collaborative practices are unpicked: power, reciprocity, cultural capital, participation, values, ethics, collaboration, and politics. Throughout are contextual reminders and cautionary notes to think about when aiming for truly participatory relationships in the arts. For a practical companion piece to Power Up, see the Shared Decision-

Making Toolkit.

Download or View Resource

International Next Practice Review

By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/international-next-practice-review/>

March 27, 2019

Categories: Research, Resources

Tags: higher education, international, participants, partnership, Pathfinder, Practice, training



Author: Chrissie Tiller

Publication Date: October 2012

Summary

Strategic overview of practice and training in international contexts.

Details

Commissioned to underpin PHF ArtWorks Pathfinders' work by offering a strategic overview of practice and training in international contexts. Includes existing contacts and partnerships; funders; artistic, cultural and educational networks; training institutions and courses; case studies and examples of good practice.

[Download or View Resource](#)

Research and Development towards Effective Partnerships between Higher Education and Rurally Based Participative Arts Organisations

By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/research-and-development-towards-effective-partnerships-between-higher-education-and-rurally-based-participative-arts-organisations/>

March 27, 2019

Categories: Case Studies, Resources

Tags: artists, higher education, partnership, Practice, rural



Author: The Stove Network

Publication Date: May 2016

Summary

Three strand approach to partnership development.

Details

Project aimed to explore the establishment of a module within MA courses delivered by The Stove Network; research the potential for a practice based collaborative PhD; and deliver a 'summit' around contemporary participatory art practice in rural contexts to strengthen partnership working and develop models to enable innovative partnership projects.

Download or View Resource

ArtWorks: Artist Consultations Working Paper 4

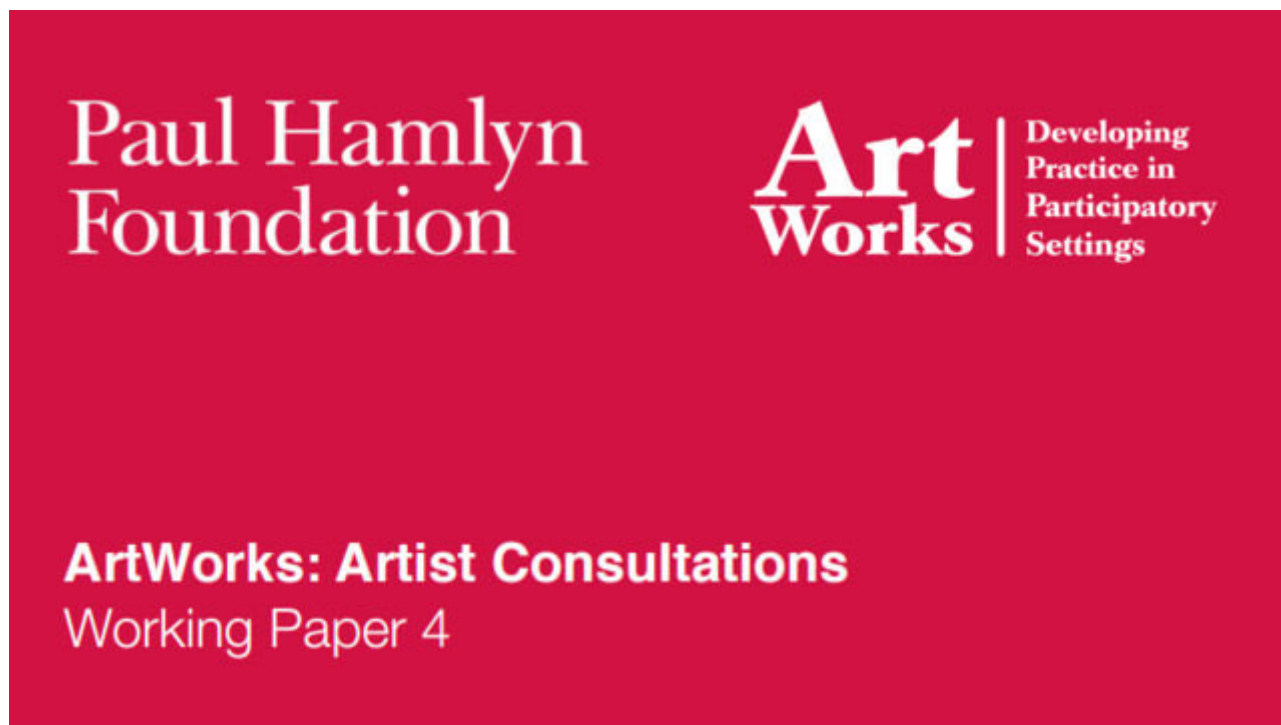
By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/artworks-artist-consultations-working-paper-4/>

March 27, 2019

Categories: Research, Resources

Tags: artists, CPD, Practice, quality



Author: Barbara Taylor

Publication Date: September 2013

Summary

Findings from across PHF ArtWorks Pathfinders' consultations with artists.

Details

Collates findings from Pathfinder consultation exercises, many of which acted as CPD reflection and exchange opportunities. Artists' views on quality and evaluation; evidence and advocacy; and sector professionalisation are of particular interest to employers and commissioners.

[Download or View Resource](#)

ArtWorks: Artists testing professional development methodologies Working Paper 3

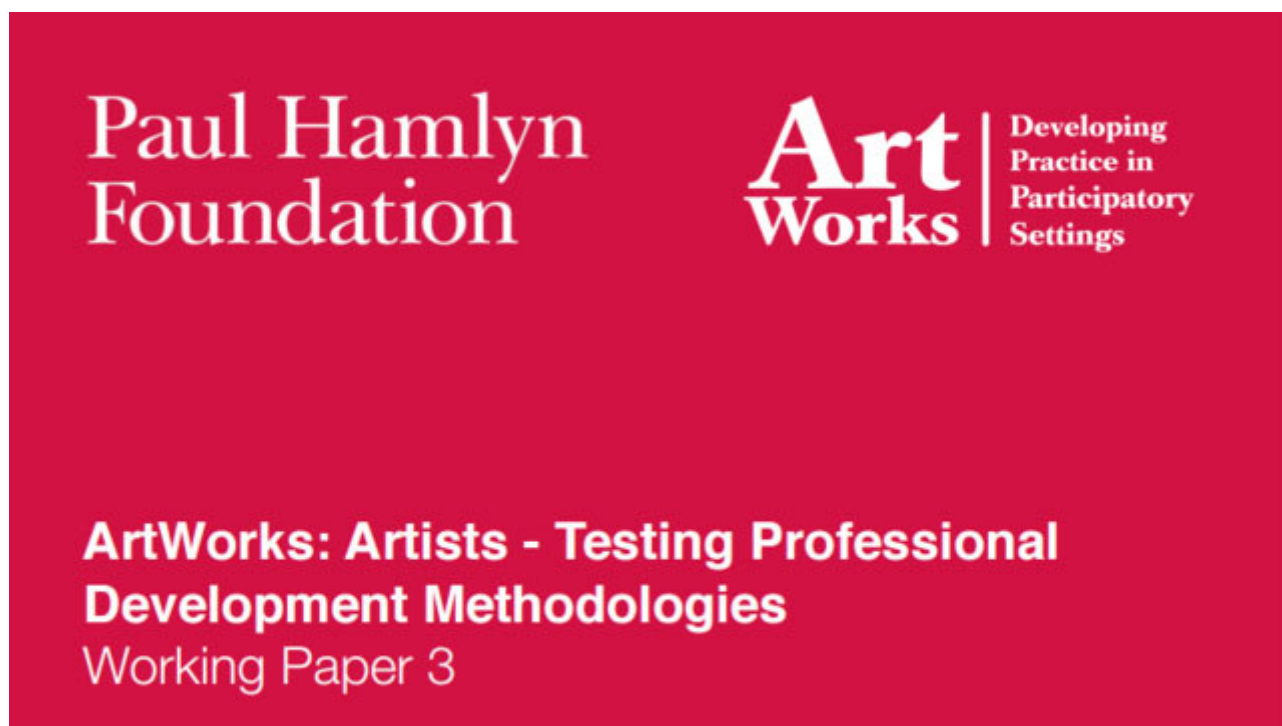
By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/artworks-artists-testing-professional-development-methodologies-working-paper-3/>

March 27, 2019

Categories: Research, Resources

Tags: artists, commissioners, CPD, employers, participants, pathfinders, qualifications, quality, training



Author: Barbara Taylor

Publication Date: September 2013

Summary

The nature of, and need for, effective artists' training and CPD.

Details

Identifies characteristics of effective artists' CPD, analysing the 'what /how' of learning from different Pathfinder opportunities. Appropriate training and qualifications are lacking; many 'learn on the job'. Employers and commissioners can support development needs, providing for higher quality participant experiences.

[Download or View Resource](#)

Changing the Conversation Provocation 2

By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/changing-the-conversation-provocation-2/>

March 27, 2019

Categories: Research, Resources

Tags: artists, careers, participants



Author: Pauline Tambling

Publication Date: January 2013

Summary

A challenge to scale up and drive up demand for participatory arts.

Details

Challenges the practice to 'scale up' by knowing how to recognise excellence, train artists and drive up demand to achieve a 'win-win' of creating jobs, contributing to economic growth and increasing the number of participant beneficiaries.

[Download or View Resource](#)

Between Worlds: Entelechy Open Lab

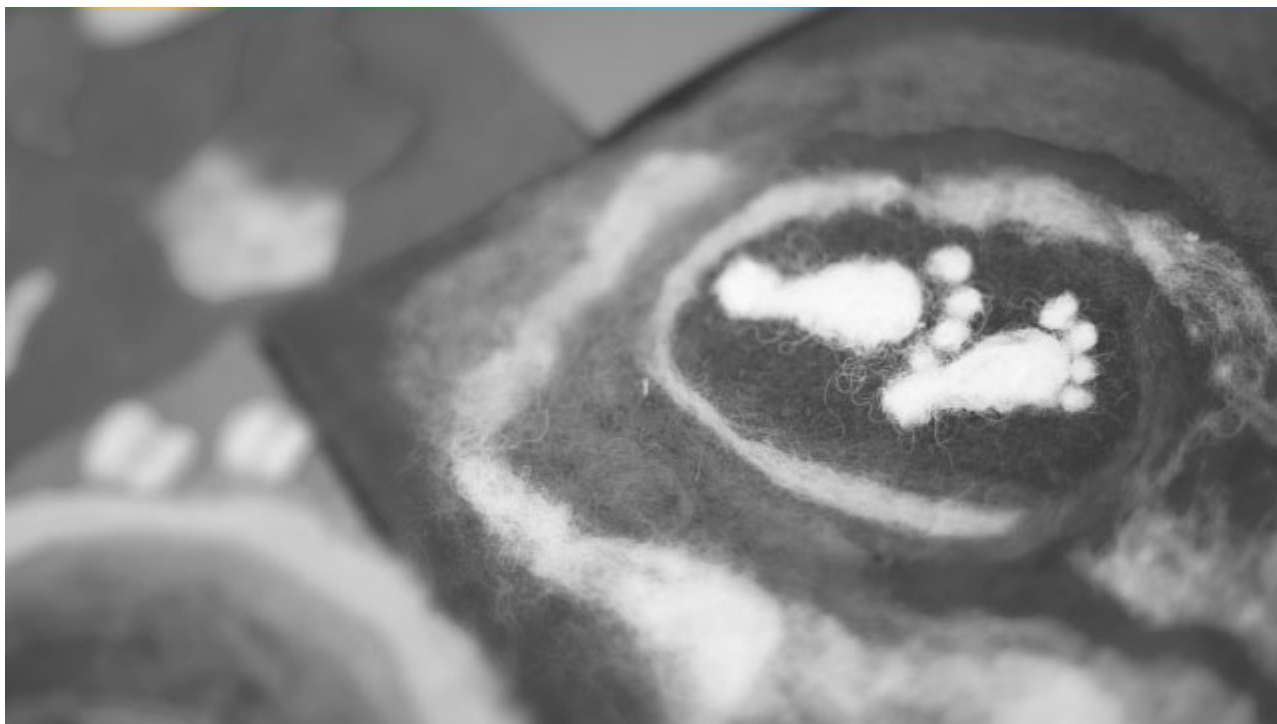
By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/between-worlds-entelechy-open-lab/>

March 27, 2019

Categories: Evaluations & Reports, Resources

Tags: artists, CPD, Practice



Author: Rebecca Swift

Publication Date: January 2014

Summary

Report on a multi-sensory CPD event.

Details

Evaluates participants' experience of Entelechy's approach to artistic CPD. With multi-sensory practical activity, presentations and discussion, delegates experienced how Entelechy's guiding values and principles cultivate an ecology where the artist's own creative identity engages equally with that of participants, in the unique context in which work takes place.

[Download or View Resource](#)

Persistent Encounter

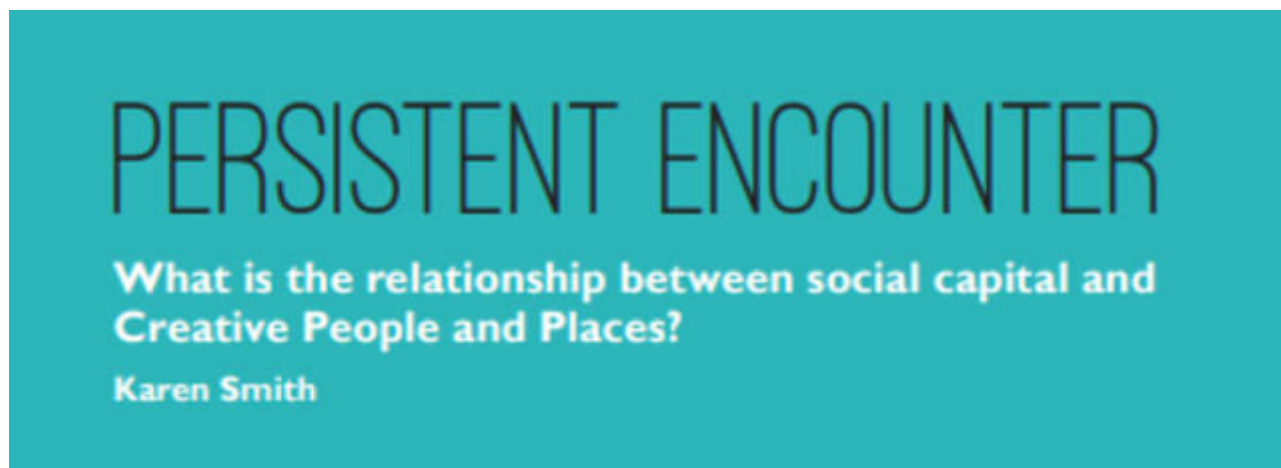
By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/persistent-encounter/>

March 27, 2019

Categories: Research, Resources

Tags: Creative People and Places, cultural democracy, social capital



Author: Karen Smith

Publication Date: August 2018

Summary

Think piece about social capital.

Details

Drawing on a range of discussions, this think piece explores the language, relationship and potential impact of Creative People and Places (CPP) in achieving and measuring developed social capital and social change. Written for an audience of those working directly in and with the CPP network, this think piece is also for the broader cultural sector and those interested in the notion of social capital.

Higher education institutions in London and artists working in participatory settings: Case studies

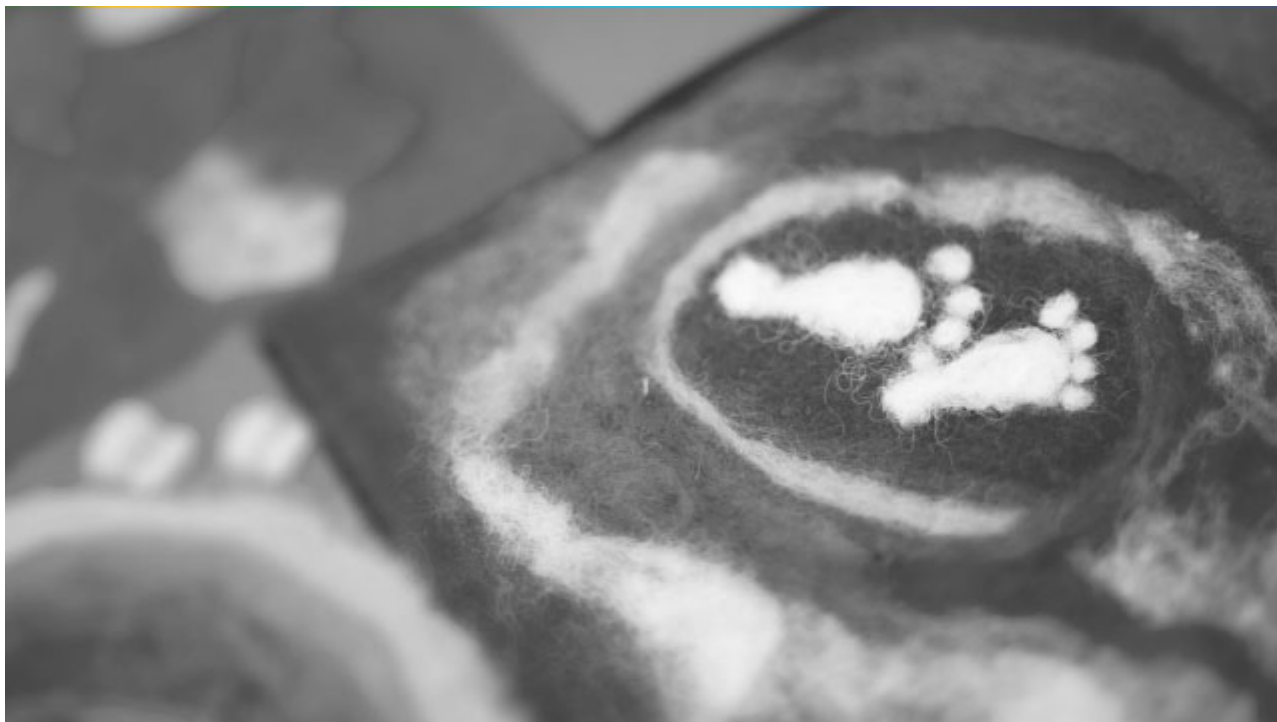
By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/higher-education-institutions-in-london-and-artists-working-in-participatory-settings-case-studies/>

March 27, 2019

Categories: Case Studies, Resources

Tags: artists, CPD, higher education, partnership, training



Author: Amanda Smethurst

Publication Date: March 2013

Summary

An overview of some higher education course and module provision.

Details

Four case studies of London-based higher education institutions offering participatory arts related courses or modules. Chosen to inform debate about what is currently available; what might constitute good practice; and how this might be shared and built upon strategically in the future through a partnership approach.

[Download or View Resource](#)

Fields of Vision. Other voices, rural places, global stories

By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/fields-of-vision-other-voices-rural-places-global-stories/>

March 27, 2019

Categories: Evaluations & Reports, Resources

Tags: inclusion, participation, rural

FIELDS OF VISION

Other voices, rural places, global stories

Report from the IETM Satellite Meeting in Wales, 13 – 16 September 2018

Author: Vassilka Shishkova

Publication Date: November 2018

Summary

Explores the plurality of the concepts of rural, identity, territory and culture

Details

A report resulting from an IETM Satellite Wales meeting in September 2018, which deepened conversations started during earlier plenaries in Brussels and Porto around the theme of working outside of the big centres and in rural areas. It explores the plurality of the concepts of rural, identity, territory and culture, and provides concrete case studies on inspiring arts projects taking place in rural areas.

[Download or View Resource](#)

Art Works Cymru in collaboration with ArtWorks London: Participant survey report

By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/art-works-cymru-in-collaboration-with-artworks-london-participant-survey-report/>

March 27, 2019

Categories: Research, Resources

Tags: artists, participants, quality

Art Works Cymru in collaboration with ArtWorks London

Participant survey report

Produced with funding from the Paul Hamlyn Foundation as part of the ArtWorks special initiative

Eleanor Sellers

December 2013

Author: Eleanor Sellers

Publication Date: March 2013

Summary

Project quality factors from participants' perspectives.

Details

Identifies and examines participants' experiences and views on quality factors in projects, including suitable resourcing, realistic aims, effective organisation, skills development, time for reflection, feeling valued and having a collaborative relationship with artists.

[Download or View Resource](#)

ArtWorks Cymru 'Made by Hand' Learning Group Report

By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/artworks-cymru-made-by-hand-learning-group-report/>

March 27, 2019

Categories: Research, Resources

Tags: artists, ArtWorks Cymru, participants, Practice

ArtWorks Cymru.

'Made By Hand' Learning Group Report

Produced with funding from the Paul Hamlyn Foundation as part of the ArtWorks special initiative.

Eleanor Sellers

July 2012

Author: Eleanor Sellers

Publication Date: March 2013

Summary

Exploring the theme of ownership.

Details

Findings from the exploration of ownership as part of the Made by Hand project, one of five ArtWorks Cymru participatory arts projects which included four learning group meetings in which creative teams explored and discussed a set of themed questions to capture processes, learning and development.

[Download or View Resource](#)

ArtWorks Cymru 'Scheherazade' Learning Group Report

By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/artworks-cymru-scheherazade-learning-group-report/>

March 27, 2019

Categories: Research, Resources

Tags: artists, ArtWorks Cymru, collaboration, participants, Practice

ArtWorks Cymru

'Scheherazade' Learning Group Report

Produced with funding from the Paul Hamlyn Foundation as part of the ArtWorks special initiative.

Eleanor Sellers

March 2013

Author: Eleanor Sellers

Publication Date: March 2013

Summary

Exploring the theme of collaboration.

Details

Findings from the exploration of collaboration as part of the Scheherazade project, one of five ArtWorks Cymru participatory arts projects which included four learning group meetings in which creative teams explored and discussed a set of themed questions to capture processes, learning and development.

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ArtWorks Cymru 'Blooming Voices' Learning Group

By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/artworks-cymru-blooming-voices-learning-group/>

March 27, 2019

Categories: Evaluations & Reports, Resources

Tags: artists, ArtWorks Cymru, participants, skills

ArtWorks Cymru

'Blooming Voices' Learning Group

Produced with funding from the Paul Hamlyn Foundation as part of the ArtWorks special initiative.

Eleanor Sellers

March 2013

Author: Eleanor Sellers

Publication Date: March 2013

Summary

Exploring the theme of context.

Details

Findings from the exploration of context as part of the Blooming Voices project, one of five ArtWorks Cymru participatory arts projects which included four learning group meetings in which creative teams explored and discussed a set of themed questions to capture processes, learning and development.

[Download or View Resource](#)

ArtWorks Cymru 'Company 5' Learning Group

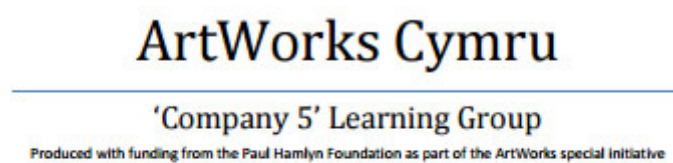
By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/artworks-cymru-company-5-learning-group/>

March 27, 2019

Categories: Research, Resources

Tags: artists, ArtWorks Cymru, learning group, Practice



Eleanor Sellers

May 2013

Author: Eleanor Sellers

Publication Date: May 2013

Summary

Exploring the theme of transformation.

Details

Findings from the exploration of transformation as part of the Company 5 project, one of five ArtWorks Cymru participatory arts projects which included four learning group meetings in which creative teams explored and discussed a set of themed questions to capture processes, learning and development.

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ArtWorks Cymru Community Music Wales Learning Group

By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/artworks-cymru-community-music-wales-learning-group/>

March 27, 2019

Categories: Research, Resources

Tags: artists, ArtWorks Cymru, learning group, Practice

ArtWorks Cymru

Community Music Wales Learning Group

Produced with funding from the Paul Hamlyn Foundation as part of the ArtWorks special initiative

Eleanor Sellers

June 2013

Author: Eleanor Sellers

Publication Date: June 2013

Summary

Exploring Welsh language practice.

Details

Findings from the exploration of Welsh language practice as part of the Roc Tawe project, one of five ArtWorks Cymru participatory arts projects which included four learning group meetings in which creative teams explored and discussed a set of themed questions to capture processes, learning and development.

[Download or View Resource](#)

ArtWorks Cymru participatory arts training audit

By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/artworks-cymru-participatory-arts-training-audit/>

March 27, 2019

Categories: Research, Resources

Tags: artists, ArtWorks Cymru, CPD, further education, higher education, skills, training

ArtWorks Cymru

Participatory arts training audit.

Produced with funding from the Paul Hamlyn Foundation as part of the ArtWorks special initiative.

Eleanor Sellers

Author: Eleanor Sellers

Publication Date: March 2012

Summary

An assessment of formal and informal training opportunities.

Details

Evidences a pressing need for training, with career options in the field unsupported by provision of necessary skills and experience. Initial training and CPD opportunities are fragmented and uneven in terms of art form and geographical accessibility.

[Download or View Resource](#)

ArtWorks Cymru Buying Organisations Survey Report

By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/artworks-cymru-buying-organisations-survey-report/>

March 27, 2019

Categories: Research, Resources

Tags: artists, participants, Practice

ArtWorks Cymru

Buying Organisations Survey Report

Produced with funding from the Paul Hamlyn Foundation as part of the ArtWorks special initiative.

Eleanor Sellers

March 2012

Author: Eleanor Sellers

Publication Date: March 2012

Summary

Findings from a survey of organisations buying in participatory arts projects.

Details

Organisations across Wales that had experience of buying in, or using, participatory arts projects completed an online survey aimed to provide a deeper understanding of these organisations' experiences and assess their confidence in setting up participatory arts projects for their clients.

[Download or View Resource](#)

ArtWorks Cymru Creating Organisations Survey Report

By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/artworks-cymru-creating-organisations-survey-report/>

March 27, 2019

Categories: Research, Resources

Tags: artists, ArtWorks Cymru, employers, quality, skills, training

ArtWorks Cymru

Creating Organisations Survey Report

Produced with funding from the Paul Hamlyn Foundation as part of the ArtWorks special initiative.

Eleanor Sellers

March 2012

Author: Eleanor Sellers

Publication Date: March 2012

Summary

Findings from a survey of organisations creating projects with participatory artists.

Details

Organisations involved in participatory arts projects across Wales completed an online survey to provide baseline data on confidence within the sector; how arts organisations recruit artists, and how they monitor projects. Supported by three case studies.

[Download or View Resource](#)

ArtWorks Cymru Artist Consultation Report

By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/artworks-cymru-artist-consultation-report/>

March 27, 2019

Categories: Research, Resources

Tags: artists, careers, CPD, Practice, quality, training

ArtWorks Cymru.

Artist Consultation Report.

Produced with funding from the Paul Hamlyn Foundation as part of the ArtWorks special initiative.

Eleanor Sellers

February 2012

Author: Eleanor Sellers

Publication Date: March 2012

Summary

Findings from consultations with artists about their participatory practice.

Details

Five consultation sessions took place across Wales at which artists considered their participatory practice, talking about their career development and discussing key topics including how artists share learning; what makes experiences inspirational; whether artists reflect on their practice; and what artists have learnt throughout their practice.

[Download or View Resource](#)

ArtWorks Cymru Artist on-line survey report

By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/artworks-cymru-artist-on-line-survey-report/>

March 27, 2019

Categories: Research, Resources

Tags: artists, ArtWorks Cymru, CPD, employers, funders, Practice, quality, skills, training

ArtWorks Cymru.

Artist on-line survey report

Produced with funding from the Paul Hamlyn Foundation as part of the ArtWorks special initiative.

Eleanor Sellers

February 2012

Author: Eleanor Sellers

Publication Date: February 2012

Summary

Findings from a survey of artists involved in participatory arts projects across Wales.

Details

Artists involved in participatory projects across Wales were invited to complete an online survey covering issues such as skills training, CPD, networking, resources and quality.

[Download or View Resource](#)

ArtWorks Cymru Participant Consultation Report

By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/artworks-cymru-participant-consultation-report/>

March 27, 2019

Categories: Research, Resources

Tags: artists, ArtWorks Cymru, participants

ArtWorks Cymru

Participant consultation report

Produced with funding from the Paul Hamlyn Foundation as part of the ArtWorks special initiative.

Eleanor Sellers

March 2012

Author: Eleanor Sellers

Publication Date: February 2012

Summary

Findings from consultations with project participants.

Details

Findings from small group interviews with a range of individuals who had been involved in participatory arts projects in Wales, in which they shared their motivations, expectations and experiences.

[Download or View Resource](#)

ArtWorks: Understanding Demand Working Paper 9

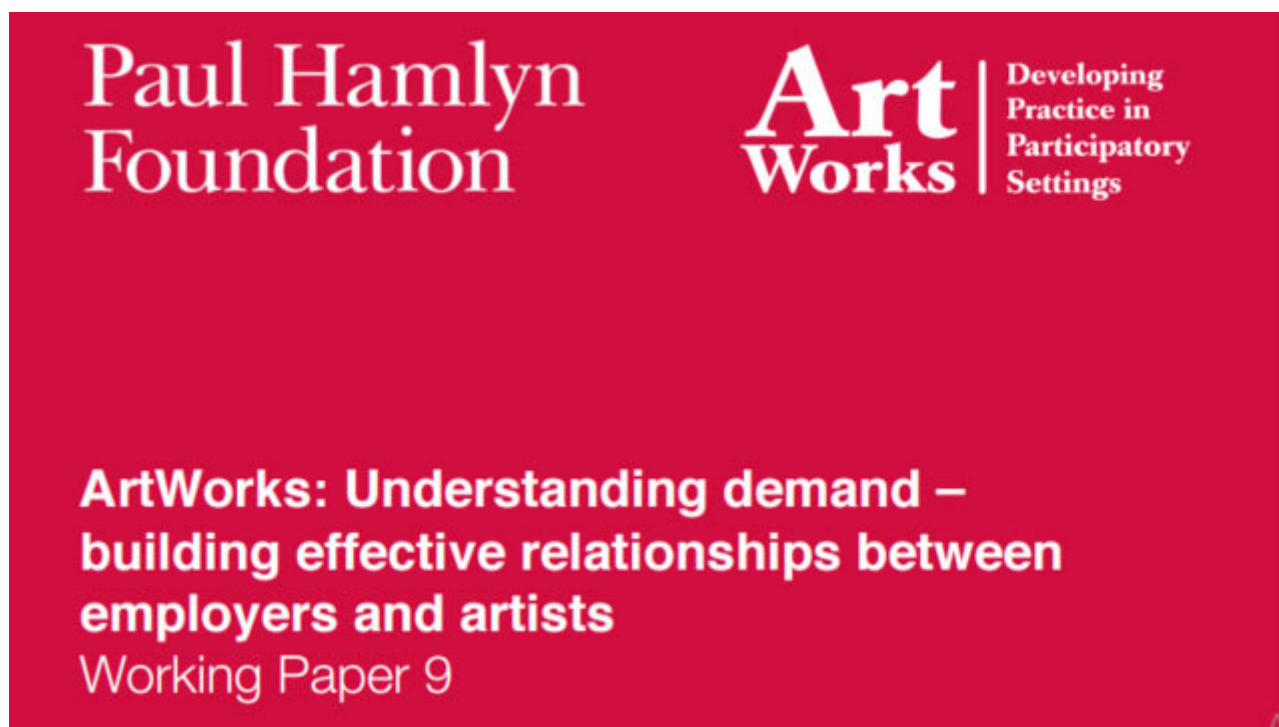
By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/artworks-understanding-demand-working-paper-9/>

March 27, 2019

Categories: Research, Resources

Tags: artists, commissioners, CPD, employers, funders, quality, training



Author: Eleanor Sellers

Publication Date: October 2014

Summary

Perspectives from different artist employer types.

Details

Focuses on the perspective of different types of 'employers' of artists, exploring expectations; recruitment; quality factors; and the provision of training and CPD, including opportunities to 'lead from the front'.

[Download or View Resource](#)

Reflectors: Experiences of co-mentoring within dance and disability

By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/reflectors-experiences-of-co-mentoring-within-dance-and-disability/>

March 27, 2019

Categories: Evaluations & Reports, Resources

Tags: CPD, dance, disability, mentoring, peer learning



Author: Sarah Scott

Publication Date: December 2005

Summary

Reflections by participants in a co-mentoring programme.

Details

The personal stories of disabled and non-disabled dance practitioners working together in a shared learning experience.

The origins of this co-mentoring project can be traced back to 1999 and a research project undertaken for the Foundation for Community Dance (now People Dancing) by consultant, researcher and journalist Annie Delin. The research report, *Do Dancing*, reviewed opportunities for disabled people to dance in the East and West Midlands, as a participatory arts experience, for recreation and as a career choice.

This report highlighted the value of peer-learning opportunities and exchange, in supporting both disabled and non-disabled dancers with artistic and creative development, exchange of expertise, and knowledge and understanding of context. To this end, the Foundation for Community Dance developed a co-mentoring programme for ten disabled and non-disabled dance practitioners.

Reflectors is a collection of reflections by participants in this co-mentoring programme. It reveals process, outcome and impact through the voices of the participants themselves.

[Download or View Resource](#)

ArtWorks Cymru Artist Case Study Report

By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/artworks-cymru-artist-case-study-report/>

March 27, 2019

Categories: Case Studies, Resources

Tags: artists, ArtWorks Cymru, Practice, quality, skills

ArtWorks Cymru

Artist case study report.

Produced with funding from the Paul Hamlyn Foundation as part of the ArtWorks special initiative.

Eleanor Sellers

February 2012

Author: Eleanor Sellers

Publication Date: February 2012

Summary

Interviews with experienced participatory artists.

Details

Extracts from ArtWorks Cymru interviews with artists known for undertaking good quality participatory art projects exploring motivations and belief, along with reflections on issues of skills and quality.

[Download or View Resource](#)

More mince, less sausage: making art that doesn't look like art

By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/more-mince-less-sausage-making-art-that-doesnt-look-like-art/>

March 27, 2019

Categories: Research, Resources

Tags: artist, participatory, Practice

NEWS / News comment

More mince, less sausage: making art that doesn't look like art

by Rosalie Schweiker

Author: Rosalie Schweiker

Publication Date: August 2018

Summary

The difference between a conventional 'sausage' artist and 'mince' artist.

Details

London-based German artist Rosalie Schweiker presented an improvised slide show about the difference between being a conventional 'sausage' artist and a hard to pigeonhole 'mince' artist at the Jamboree 2018 event at Dartington, Devon. Here she turns that talk into a short explanation of her thinking – with added drawings of sausages, mince, and mince-based products.

More mince, less sausage: making art that doesn't look like art

ArtWorks: Quality – because we all want to do better

Working Paper 8

By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/artworks-quality-because-we-all-want-to-do-better-working-paper-8/>

March 27, 2019

Categories: Research, Resources

Tags: artists, Practice, quality



Author: Mary Schwarz

Publication Date: January 2014

Summary

Quality issues and the continuous quality improvement cycle.

Details

Considers meanings of quality; explores issues in articulating quality; reports on quality factors; and identifies approaches to assessment, assurance and improvement. Advocates commitment to continuous quality improvement in all aspects of the work.

[Download or View Resource](#)

ArtWorks: Arts Practice in Participatory Settings

Working Paper 2

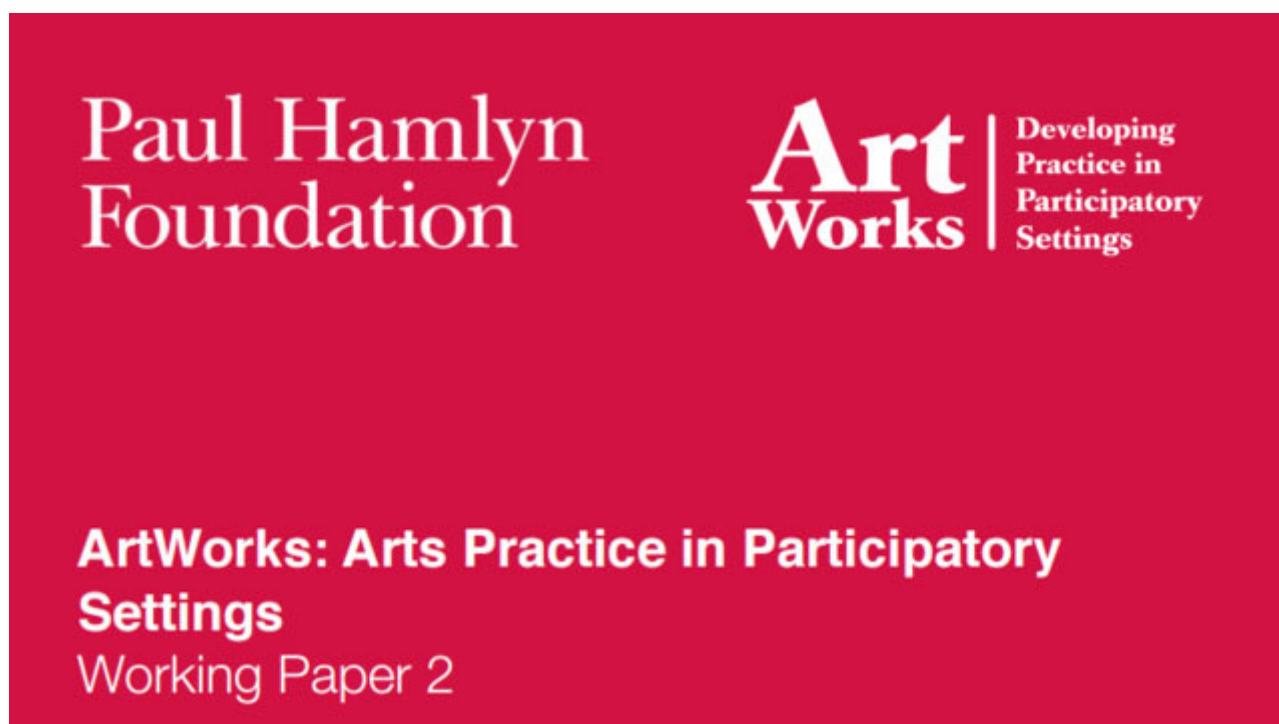
By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/artworks-arts-practice-in-participatory-settings-working-paper-2/>

March 27, 2019

Categories: Research, Resources

Tags: artists, definition, Practice, quality



Author: Mary Schwarz

Publication Date: September 2013

Summary

Participatory arts as a range of practices.

Details

Uses questions to review research about the range of participatory practices. Proposes it is important to articulate practices and intentions clearly and to evaluate work to ensure quality, in the development of praxis ie 'reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it'.

[Download or View Resource](#)

ArtWorks: Training and Development Providers and Opportunities Working Paper 5

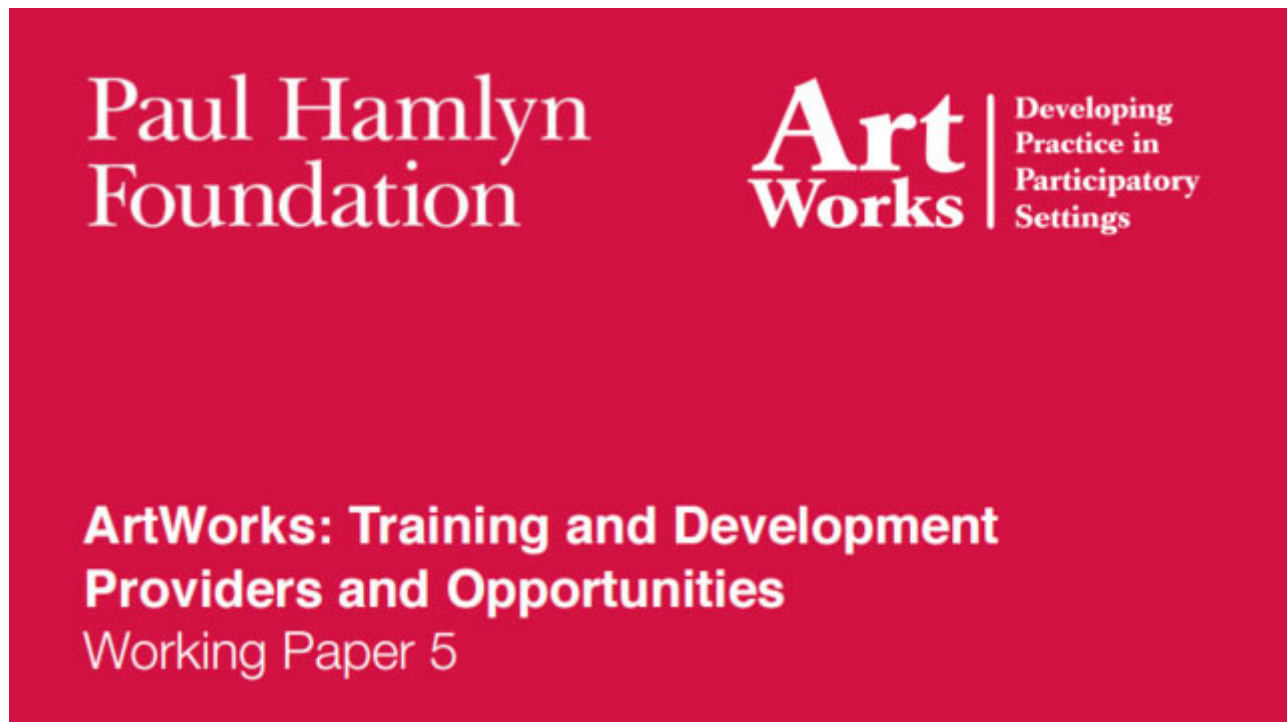
By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/artworks-training-and-development-providers-and-opportunities-working-paper-5/>

March 27, 2019

Categories: Research, Resources

Tags: artists, CPD, further education, higher education, Practice, skills, training



Author: Mary Schwarz

Publication Date: September 2013

Summary

Providers and provision, current and potential.

Details

Reviews the current training and development situation, noting the need for better recognition and understanding of participatory arts. Advocates timely and appropriate support for the development of the particular range of skills, knowledge and attributes required for working in the field.

[Download or View Resource](#)

ArtWorks: Qualifications, Codes of Practice and Standards Working Paper 7

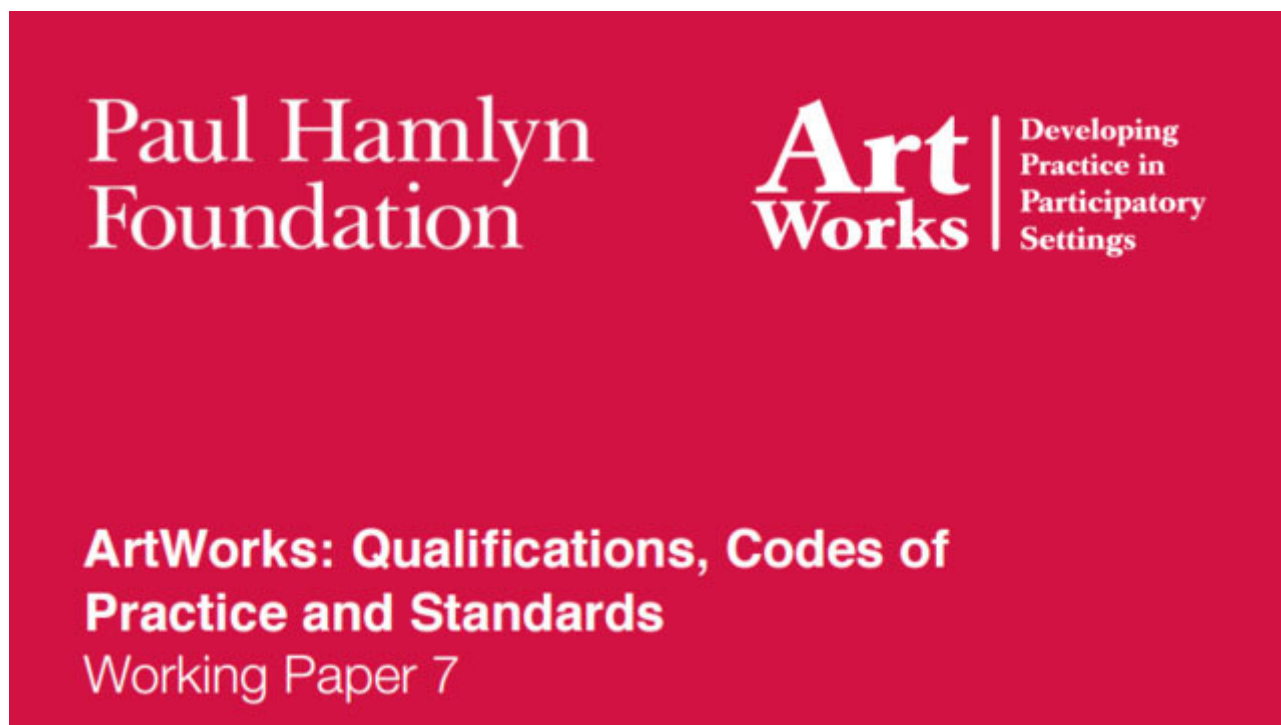
By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/artworks-qualifications-codes-of-practice-and-standards-working-paper-7/>

March 27, 2019

Categories: Research, Resources

Tags: artists, codes, commissioners, employers, qualifications, skills, standards



Author: Esther Salamon

Publication Date: September 2013

Summary

How standards, codes and qualifications can impact on practice and careers.

Details

Defines and explains the interrelationship between National Occupational Standards, codes of practice and qualifications. Explores developments for employers and commissioners to better understand the sector and engage artists with appropriate competencies.

[Download or View Resource](#)

ArtWorks: Understanding Participants' Views Working Paper 6

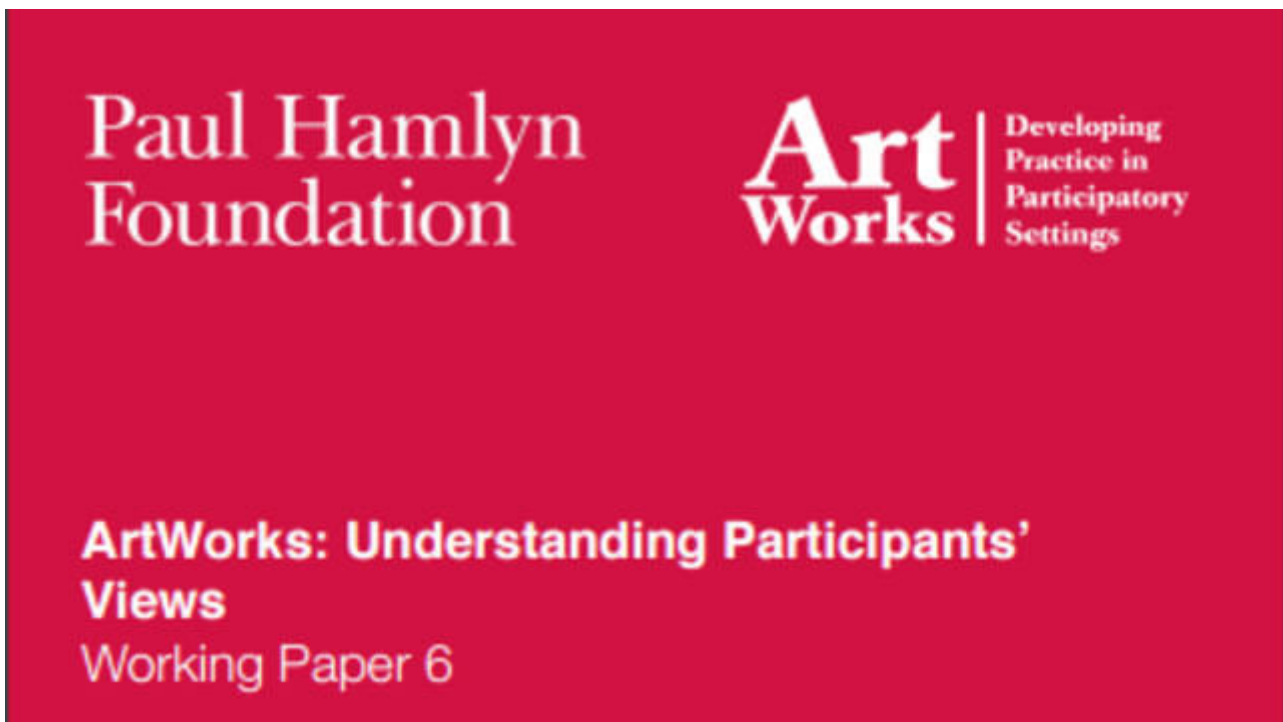
By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/artworks-understanding-participants-views-working-paper-6/>

March 27, 2019

Categories: Research, Resources

Tags: artists, participants, quality



Author: Esther Salamon

Publication Date: September 2013

Summary

Participants' perspectives on quality and excellence.

Details

Collates research findings about participants' views and experiences of participatory arts, including what qualities they feel contribute to an outstanding project and what qualities artists need to provide the best experience for them.

[Download or View Resource](#)

Evaluation Report for the North East Pilot Short Courses in Developing Practice in Participatory Settings

By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/evaluation-report-for-the-north-east-pilot-short-courses-in-developing-practice-in-participatory-settings/>

March 27, 2019

Categories: Evaluations & Reports, Resources

Tags: artists, ArtWorks North East, CPD, higher education, Practice, skills, training

Evaluation Report for the North East Pilot Short Courses in Developing Practice in Participatory Settings

**Report produced by Susan Priestley
May 2014**

Author: Susan Priestley

Publication Date: May 2014

Summary

Evaluation of a short course programme.

Details

Evaluation report from the ArtWorks North East Pilot Short Courses Programme identifying outcomes, impact, areas for development and recommendations.

[Download or View Resource](#)

ArtWorks North East Focus Groups – summary of findings

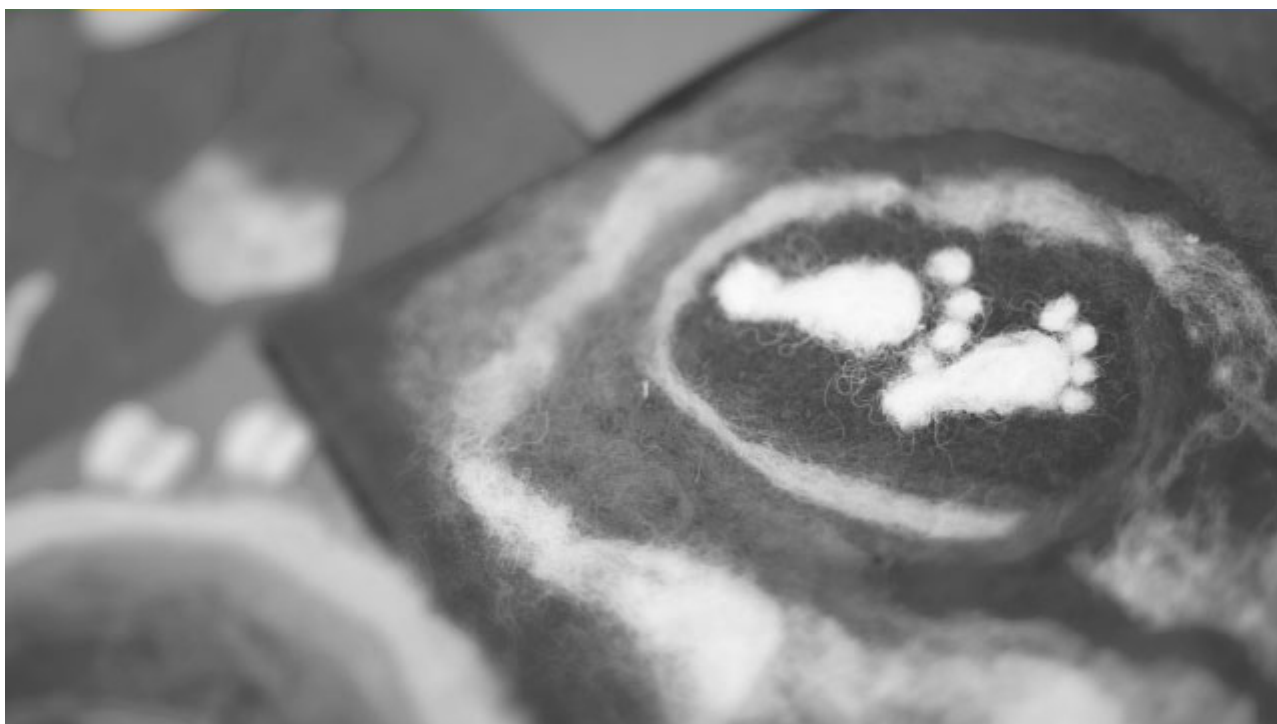
By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/artworks-north-east-focus-groups-summary-of-findings/>

March 27, 2019

Categories: Evaluations & Reports, Resources

Tags: artists, ArtWorks North East, CPD, Practice, quality, skills, training



Author: Alex Pheby

Publication Date: February 2012

Summary

Summary of focus group questions, notes and conclusions.

Details

Notes, findings and conclusions from facilitated discussions between artists (newly qualified, mid career, well established) and academics in the North East of England focused on key questions including scope of practice, influence of stakeholders' views, initial training and CPD. Informed development of pilot short course programme.

[Download or View Resource](#)

Old People's Dance Activities – the first UK survey

By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/old-peoples-dance-activities-the-first-uk-survey/>

March 27, 2019

Categories: Research, Resources

Tags: artist, dance, health & wellbeing, participation, Practice



Author: People Dancing

Publication Date: November 2016

Summary

A snapshot of current practice in older people's dance.

Details

This research report into current practice in older people's dance, published by People Dancing and co-commissioned by Aesop, was launched at the House of Lords on 7 November 2016. The report provides a snapshot of current practice in older people's dance.

It sought expert views from those working in the field to identify the characteristics of the practice and the conditions required for success. The report describes a picture of practice based on the research gathered and an analysis of that data.

The report is intended to be of practical use. It provides reassurance and reference points for artists and organisations working on the ground that what they do all contributes to a greater body of practice. For those supporting activities, it provides reassurance that when the conditions for success are met then dance really can deliver.

It also offers some more compelling evidence about the ‘value-added’ contribution that participation in dance and dancing – in whatever way is right for you – can make to the ‘health and wellbeing’ of people and their communities, not just in older age but throughout life.

[Download or View Resource](#)

National Occupational Standards for Dance Leadership – employing dancers

By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/national-occupational-standards-for-dance-leadership-employing-dancers/>

March 27, 2019

Categories: Resources, Toolkits & Guidance

Tags: CPD, dance, employers, National Occupational Standards



Author: People Dancing

Publication Date: December 2012

Summary

Guide for organisations, employers and providers.

Details

This booklet is designed for **organisations, employers and providers of dance in the arts, sport, health, education, voluntary and social sectors** and identifies the role of the dance leader and the current context for participatory dance practice and provides a baseline dialogue with dance artists about their skills requirements, helping employers make informed choices about selection and recruitment.

See also Knowing your role and Supporting dancers.

Download or View Resource

National Occupational Standards for Dance Leadership – supporting dancers

By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/national-occupational-standards-for-dance-leadership-supporting-dancers/>

March 27, 2019

Categories: Resources, Toolkits & Guidance

Tags: CPD, dance, National Occupational Standards



Author: People Dancing

Publication Date: December 2012

Summary

Guide for CPD providers.

Details

A booklet for **CPD providers**, which will introduce you to the National Occupational Standards for Dance Leadership, provide information about the importance being placed on continuing professional development (CPD) across the dance sector and illustrates the benefits to CPD providers of linking your CPD provision to the National Occupational Standards.

See also Knowing your role and Employing dancers.

Download or View Resource

National Occupational Standards for Dance Leadership – knowing your role

By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/national-occupational-standards-for-dance-leadership-knowing-your-role/>

March 27, 2019

Categories: Resources, Toolkits & Guidance

Tags: CPD, dance, National Occupational Standards



Author: People Dancing

Publication Date: December 2012

Summary

Guide for dance artists.

Details

This booklet has been designed for **dance leaders** to help you cross-reference the National Occupational Standards with the skills that you need to be more effective practitioners. This has the benefit of helping you identify where to find training to help you fill skills gaps and identify the transferable skills you need to move into new markets.

See also [Supporting dancers](#) and [Employing dancers](#).

[Download or View Resource](#)

ArtWorks Scotland Evaluation Report

By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/artworks-scotland-evaluation-report/>

March 27, 2019

Categories: Evaluations & Reports, Resources

Tags: artists, ArtWorks Scotland, further education, higher education, mentoring, participants, partners, peers, placements, Practice, quality, skills, training

ArtWorks Scotland: Evaluation Report

Final Draft: October 2014

Author: Hilary Nicoll

Publication Date: October 2014

Summary

Report on the ArtWorks Scotland programme 2011-14.

Details

Aims to capture the impact of ArtWorks Scotland. Describes the need and approach adopted to develop and deliver the project; early stage research; action planning; in-depth analysis of the pilot projects; additional learning; future activity; and project recommendations.

[Download or View Resource](#)

Changing The Conversation Provocation 1

By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/changing-the-conversation-provocation-1/>

March 27, 2019

Categories: Research, Resources

Tags: artists, participants, Practice, quality, skills



Author: Professor Helen Nicholson

Publication Date: January 2013

Summary

Cross-sector collaboration is needed to support participatory artists.

Details

Cross-sector collaboration is needed to support artists motivated by making a difference. They need more than just a skillset. Knowledge and creativity are required to interrogate artistic convention, question social orthodoxies, challenge injustice, re-imagine and re-shape the world.

[Download or View Resource](#)

HE Open Lab Reflective Report

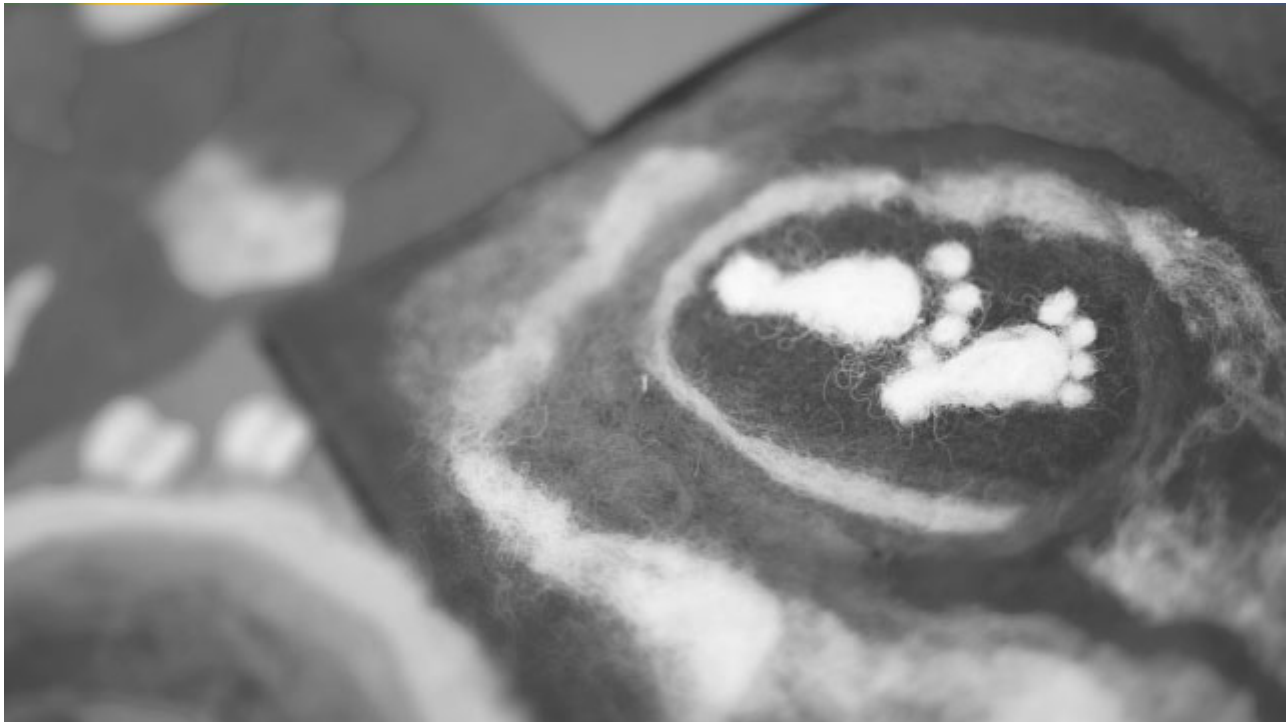
By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/he-open-lab-reflective-report/>

March 27, 2019

Categories: Evaluations & Reports, Resources

Tags: artists, CPD, higher education, Practice, training



Author: Gerri Moriarty

Publication Date: April 2014

Summary

Reflections by the facilitator of an Open Lab event.

Details

Evaluation report by the facilitator of a four-day Open Lab event enabling postgraduate students across art forms to explore their practice and strengthen its critical framework, which also provided a test model of learning.

[Download or View Resource](#)

Academics' perceptions of arts work in participatory settings

By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/academics-perceptions-of-arts-work-in-participatory-settings/>

March 27, 2019

Categories: Research, Resources

Tags: artists, higher education, quality, skills, training



Academics' perceptions of arts work in participatory settings

A report on research carried out as part of ArtWorks North East

Author: Caroline Mitchell, Sheila Spencer, Alex Lockwood

Publication Date: August 2012

Summary

Views on participatory practice and higher education provision.

Details

Examines institutional drivers and barriers as well as individual perceptions and motivations. Offers recommendations to raise awareness and valuing of the practice; support inclusion in teaching programmes; and recognise employability benefits.

[Download or View Resource](#)

Critical Conversations – Artists' reflections on quality in participatory arts practice

By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/critical-conversations-artists-reflections-on-quality-in-participatory-arts-practice/>

March 27, 2019

Categories: Evaluations & Reports, Resources

Tags: artists, conversations, CPD, Practice, quality

Critical Conversations

Author: Toby Lowe

Publication Date: September 2014

Details

Report and analysis on the Critical Conversations series of discussion events in which artists were supported to reflect critically on their practice.

[Download or View Resource](#)

Audit of Practice “Arts in Participatory Settings”

By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/audit-of-practice-arts-in-participatory-settings/>

March 27, 2019

Categories: Research, Resources

Tags: artists, ArtWorks North East, CPD, Practice, quality, training



Audit of Practice “Arts in Participatory Settings”

Author: Toby Lowe

Publication Date: October 2011

Summary

The what, why and how of arts in participatory settings.

Details

Explores the range of practices, settings, definitions and language in participatory work through interviews with ArtWorks North East partners. Offers a typology of artmaking practice and the basis for a quality framework.

[Download or View Resource](#)

ArtWorks London Laboratories Autumn 2012 Research Evaluation Report

By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/artworks-london-laboratories-autumn-2012-research-evaluation-report/>

March 27, 2019

Categories: Evaluations & Reports, Resources

Tags: artists, ArtWorks London, CPD, mentoring, portfolio, Practice



Author: Sophie Leighton-Kelly

Publication Date: December 2012

Summary

Review of three Lab models for CPD.

Details

Report based on participant responses to testing three Lab models – a ‘masterclass’ format providing training by artist for artists; peer to peer sharing of practice within a single art form; and peer to peer sharing of practice across art forms – and also Lab intentions, including to support artists’ portfolio roles; bring together artists from different disciplines or people from outside the arts; test ways to enable reflection; give artists time and space to develop new ways of working; and trial support methods.

[Download or View Resource](#)

ArtWorks London Connecting Conversations 2011-2012 Research Evaluation Report

By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/artworks-london-connecting-conversations-2011-2012-research-evaluation-report/>

March 27, 2019

Categories: Evaluations & Reports, Resources

Tags: artists, ArtWorks London, conversations, Practice



Author: Sophie Leighton-Kelly

Publication Date: December 2012

Summary

Review of the Connecting Conversations CPD strand.

Details

Connecting Conversations was an ArtWorks London pilot project comprising an iterative series of facilitated discussions bringing together Barbican and Guildhall School staff with artists working in participatory settings to discuss key issues in the field. Provided consultation and also tested the model as a support framework for reflective practice.

[Download or View Resource](#)

ArtWorks London Laboratories 2011-12 Research Evaluation Report

By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/artworks-london-laboratories-2011-12-research-evaluation-report/>

March 27, 2019

Categories: Evaluations & Reports, Resources

Tags: artists, ArtWorks London, collaboration, CPD, lab



Author: Sophie Leighton-Kelly

Publication Date: July 2012

Summary

Review of the Lab model for artists' CPD.

Details

Barbican Guildhall Creative Learning diversified and reviewed its Lab model of professional development during the pilot year of ArtWorks London. A Lab supports artists working together in a creative environment conducive to collaborative learning. Five types of Lab were developed, varied in terms of duration, level of facilitation, development focus, art form and requirement (or not) for a performance outcome.

[Download or View Resource](#)

ArtWorks London Pilot Year Artists Follow Up Survey Report

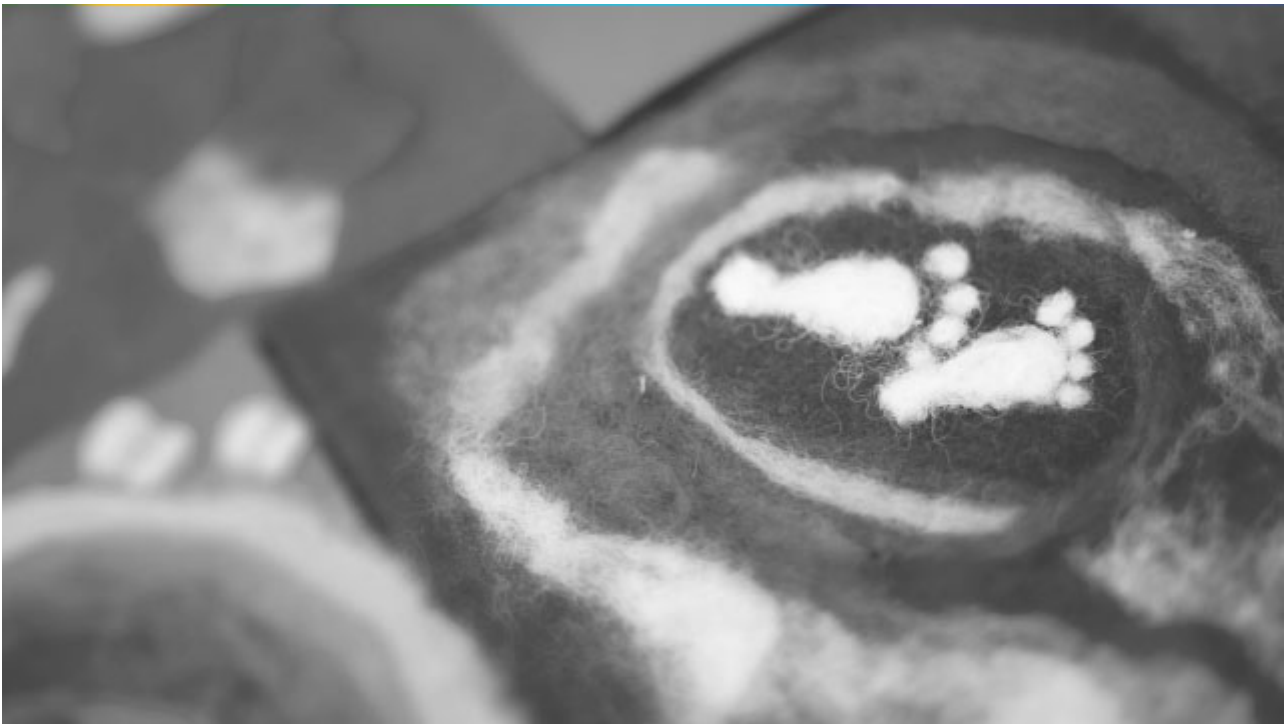
By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/artworks-london-pilot-year-artists-follow-up-survey-report/>

March 27, 2019

Categories: Evaluations & Reports, Resources

Tags: artists, ArtWorks London, CPD, impact



Author: Sophie Leighton-Kelly

Publication Date: March 2013

Summary

Six month follow up CPD impact survey.

Details

Findings from a six month follow up survey of artists taking part in ArtWorks pilot year activity – Connecting Conversations, Labs and the Arts School Lab – focusing on the impact of these professional development opportunities.

[Download or View Resource](#)

ArtWorks London Pilot Year Report Executive Summary

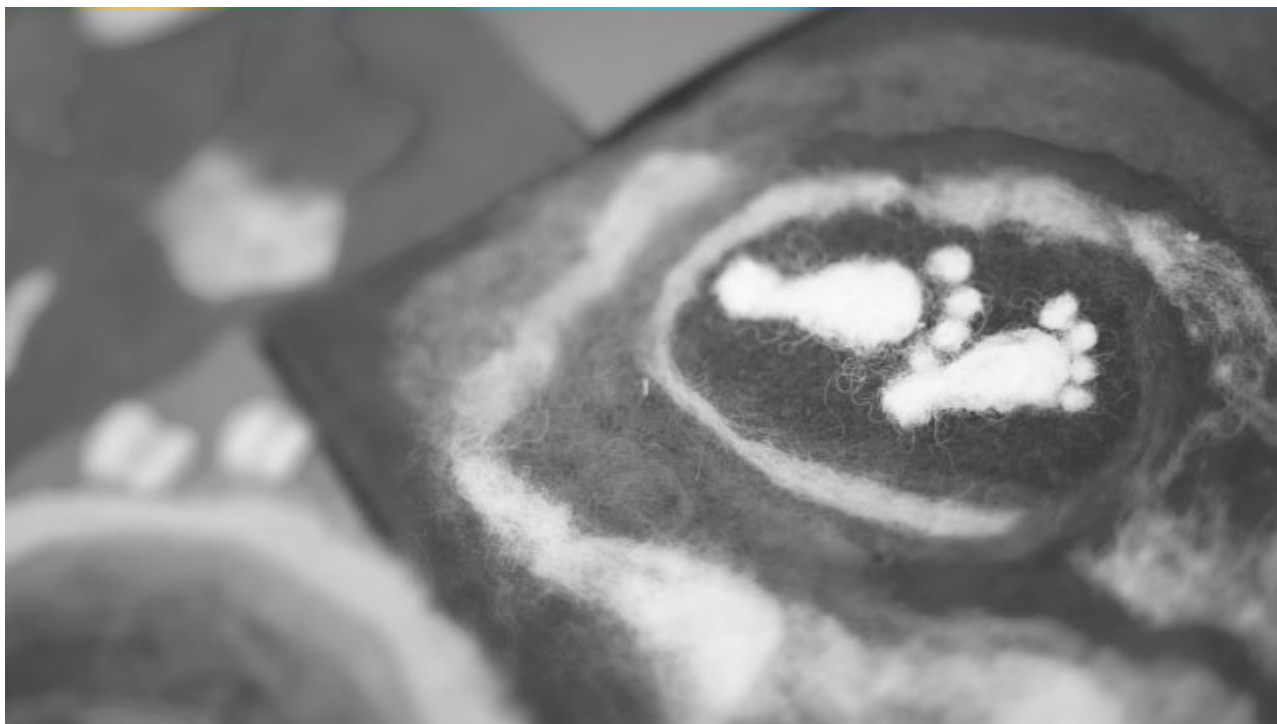
By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/artworks-london-pilot-year-report-executive-summary/>

March 27, 2019

Categories: Evaluations & Reports, Resources

Tags: artists, ArtWorks London, CPD, Practice, training



Author: Sophie Leighton-Kelly

Publication Date: January 2012

Summary

ArtWorks London activity and learning from the pilot year.

Details

ArtWorks London used the skills, experience and resources of Barbican/Guildhall to increase understanding, capacity, collaboration and synergy across the different stages of professional development for artists working in participatory settings in London during the pilot year of the pathfinder. As a result of activity and learning, they revised programme plans for the following two years.

[Download or View Resource](#)

In search of cultural democracy

By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/in-search-of-cultural-democracy/>

March 27, 2019

Categories: Research, Resources

Tags: artists, community, community arts, cultural democracy, democratisation of culture, participation



Author: Owen Kelly

Publication Date: August 2018

Summary

Response to 'Arts for All'.

Details

Originally published in the October 1985 edition of Arts Express, Owen Kelly wrote this in response to Roy Shaw's essay on 'Arts for All'. Shaw, a former General Secretary of the then Arts Council of Great Britain, argued for the 'democratisation of culture'. Kelly argues that debate lies with an alternative idea, and this article became a rallying call for many community artists of the time.

With thanks to the Jubilee Arts archive.

Download or View Resource

ArtWorks: Learning from the Research Working Paper 1

By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/artworks-learning-from-the-research-working-paper-1/>

March 27, 2019

Categories: Research, Resources

Tags: artists, CPD, learning, participants, Practice, training



Author: Sue Kay

Publication Date: December 2012

Summary

The benefits of better joined-up working and training congruent with practice.

Details

Mid-point PHF ArtWorks programme learning overview. Better joining-up would improve practice profile, evidence base and credibility; ensure information, advice and support for artists where needed; and enhance supply/demand match. Initial training and CPD provision processes should be congruent with the practice.

[Download or View Resource](#)

Navigating art in participatory settings – issues for artists and employers

By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/navigating-art-in-participatory-settings-issues-for-artists-and-employers/>

March 27, 2019

Categories: Research, Resources

Tags: artists, commissioners, employers, Practice, qualifications, quality, standards, training

Navigating art in participatory settings –

Author: Johnstone, Salamon, Leatherdale, Killick and Deane

Publication Date: April 2013

Summary

How employers can hire quality practitioners.

Details

Summarises interrogation findings into how employers and commissioners can hire quality practitioners and the scope for common training, qualifications and standards across art forms. Includes examples of good and recommended practice.

[Download or View Resource](#)

Tell Me More

By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/tell-me-more/>

March 27, 2019

Categories: Research, Resources

Tags: artists, careers, diversity, employers



Author: Alexis K Johnson

Publication Date: March 2014

Summary

The current state of play for artists from different cultural backgrounds.

Details

Documents the current state of play for artists from different cultural backgrounds in the North West of England wanting to work in the sector, identifying barriers and success criteria along with recommendations.

[Download or View Resource](#)

Trinity Laban Older People's Arts Network (OPAN) CPD project

By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/trinity-laban-older-peoples-arts-network-opan-cpd-project/>

March 27, 2019

Categories: Evaluations & Reports, Resources

Tags: artists, CPD, mentoring, older people



Author: Veronica Jobbins and Kate Atkinson

Publication Date: July 2014

Summary

Evaluation of CPD project for artists working with older people.

Details

Evaluation report from a two-part CPD project for artists engaged, or wishing to become engaged, in participatory arts practice with older people, comprising a facilitated 'reflective learning' group with co-mentoring and a one day conference style event.

[Download or View Resource](#)

Culture, Democracy and the Right to Make Art: The British Community Arts Movement

By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/culture-democracy-and-the-right-to-make-art-the-british-community-arts-movement/>

March 27, 2019

Categories: Case Studies, Research, Resources

Tags: artists, collaboration, community arts, history, Practice, quality



Author: edited by Alison Jeffers and Gerri Moriarty

Publication Date: October 2018

Summary

The story of the UK community arts movement.

Details

Based on the words and experiences of the people involved, this book tells the story of the community arts movement in the UK, and, through a series of essays, assesses its influence on present day participatory arts practices. Part I offers the first comprehensive account of the movement, its history, rationale and modes of working in England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales; Part II brings the work up to the present, through a scholarly assessment of its influence on contemporary practice that considers the role of technologies and networks, training, funding,

commissioning and curating socially engaged art today.

Reading this book for free has been enabled by institutional funds from the University of Manchester. Just follow the link below:

Culture, Democracy and the Right to Make Art: The British Community Arts Movement

A paperback version will be published on 27 December 2018 and you can pre-order a copy [here](#).

A book review *Dandelions and Dissent* is available on our News & Views section, where you'll also find a blog from the book launch and associated Cultural Democracy: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow symposium.

Evaluation Report for the Open School East Mentoring

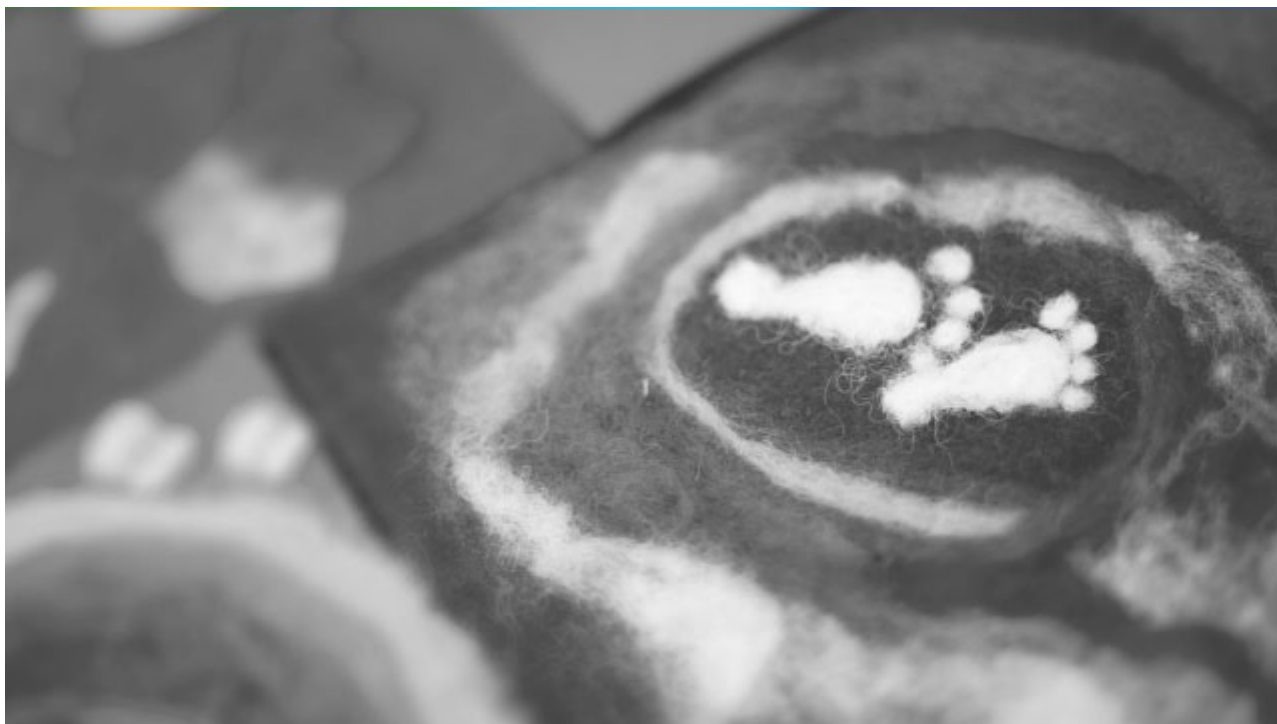
By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/evaluation-report-for-the-open-school-east-mentoring/>

March 27, 2019

Categories: Evaluations & Reports, Resources

Tags: artists, CPD, mentoring



Author: Annabel Jackson Associates Ltd

Publication Date: September 2014

Summary

Evaluation of mentoring support.

Details

Evaluation report from the ArtWorks London supported mentoring scheme for Open School East, looking at strengths, weaknesses, impact and lessons learned.

[Download or View Resource](#)

Evaluation Report for ICA's Koki Tanaka Project

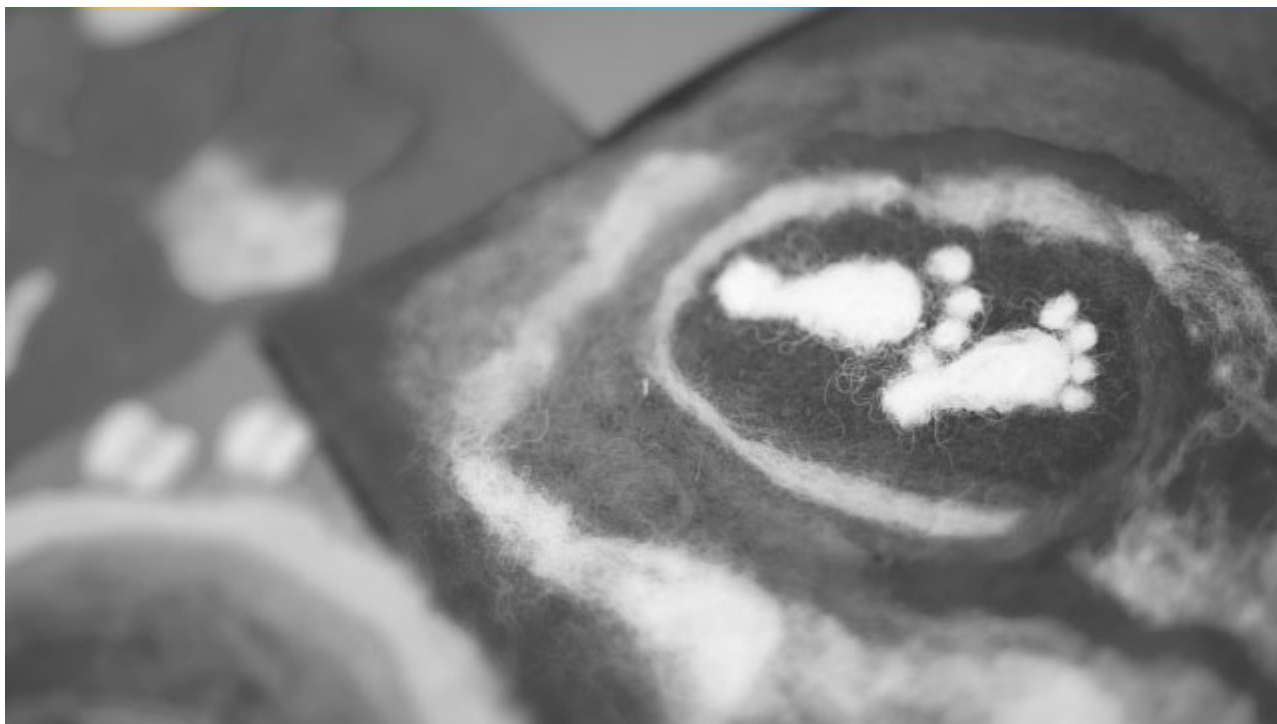
By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/evaluation-report-for-icas-koki-tanaka-project/>

March 27, 2019

Categories: Evaluations & Reports, Resources

Tags: artist, impact, international, participants, Practice, quality



Author: Annabel Jackson Associates Ltd

Publication Date: July 2014

Summary

Evaluation of gallery based participatory project.

Details

Evaluation report from the Koki Tanaka project which explored provocations about the valuing of participative practice and giving it equal esteem to gallery work, through the practice of an international artist.

[Download or View Resource](#)

ArtWorks Cymru Evaluation Report

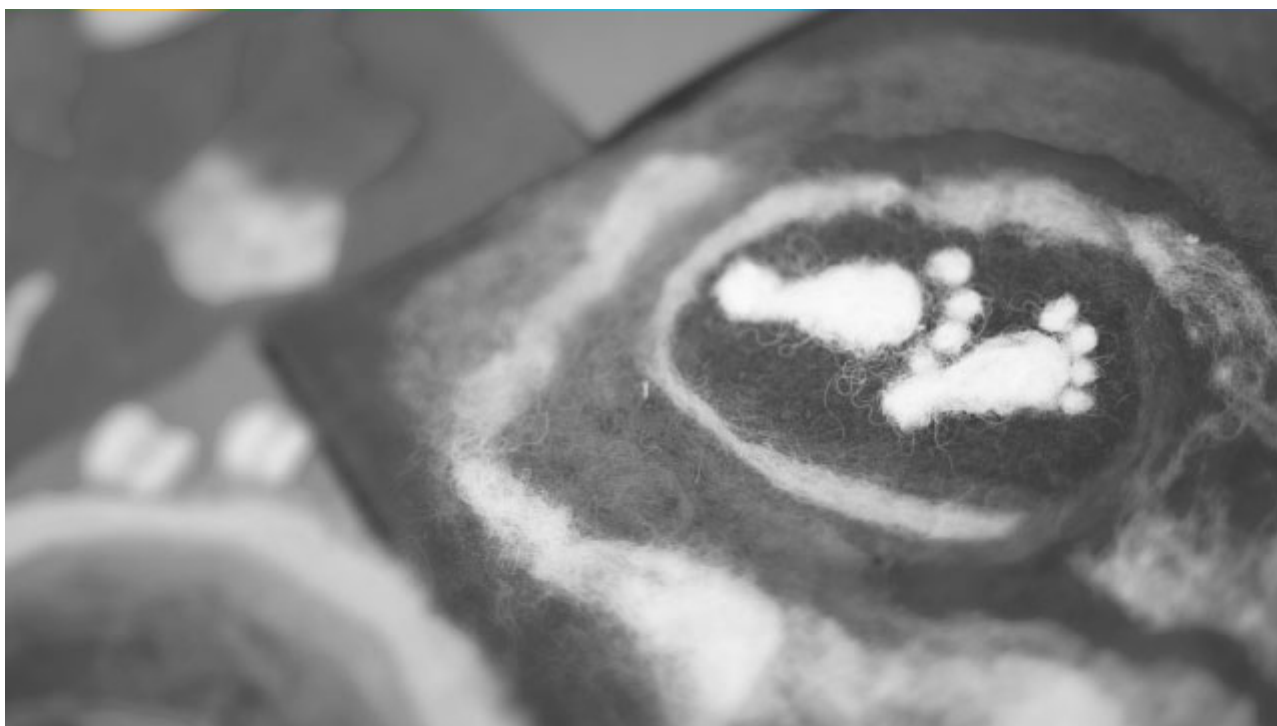
By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/artworks-cymru-evaluation-report/>

March 27, 2019

Categories: Evaluations & Reports, Resources

Tags: artists, ArtWorks Cymru, commissioners, CPD, employers, funders, participant, Pathfinder, Practice, quality, skills, training



Author: Annabel Jackson Associates Ltd

Publication Date: April 2014

Summary

Evaluation of the ArtWorks Cymru pathfinder partnership.

Details

Evaluation of the ArtWorks Cymru pathfinder and its work over a three year period, which included partnership meetings; consultations with training providers, artists, arts organisations and commissioners; five action learning projects; and dissemination events.

[Download or View Resource](#)

Older and Wiser and Reflective Learning Group Evaluation Report

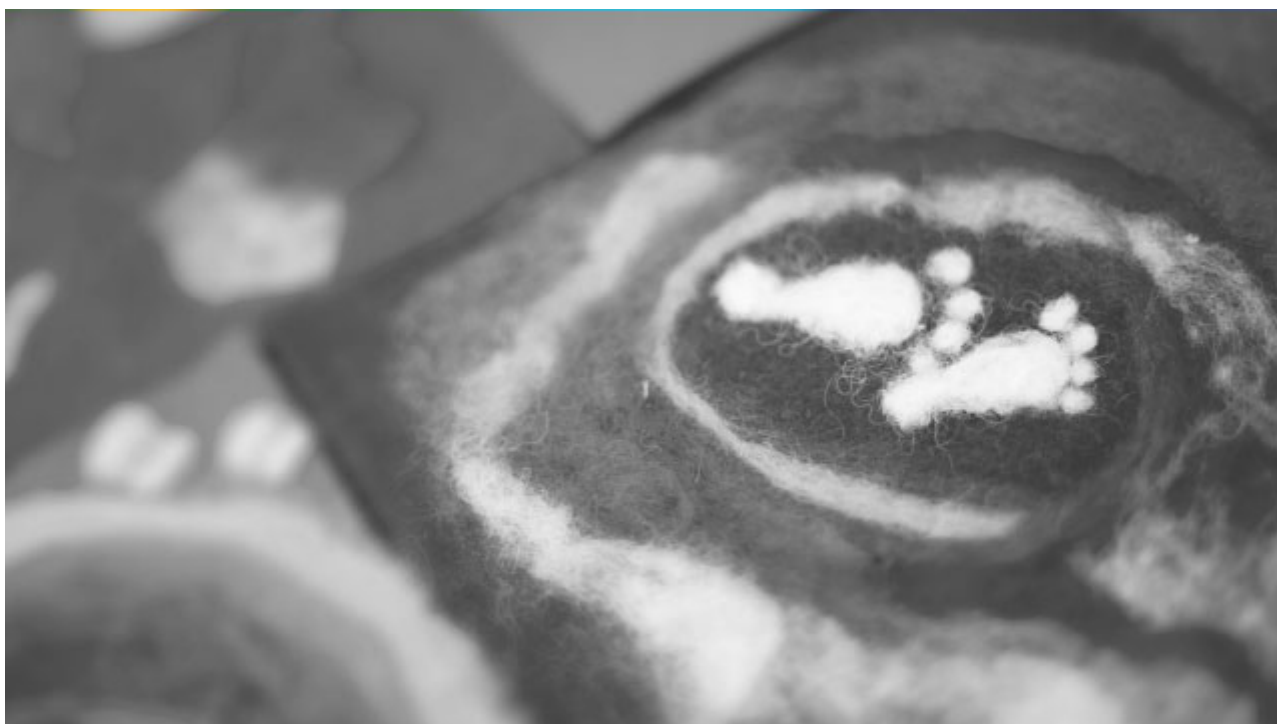
By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/older-and-wiser-and-reflective-learning-group-evaluation-report/>

March 27, 2019

Categories: Evaluations & Reports, Resources

Tags: artists, CPD, older people, Practice



Author: Annabel Jackson Associates Ltd

Publication Date: February 2014

Summary

Evaluation of participants' experiences of CPD in working with older people.

Details

Evaluation report drawn from survey responses from participants on the Older and Wiser workshop and Reflective Learning Group CPD events piloted by Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance following an OPAN (Older People's Arts Network) seminar.

[Download or View Resource](#)

ArtWorks London Evaluation of AND Seminar and ICA Salons

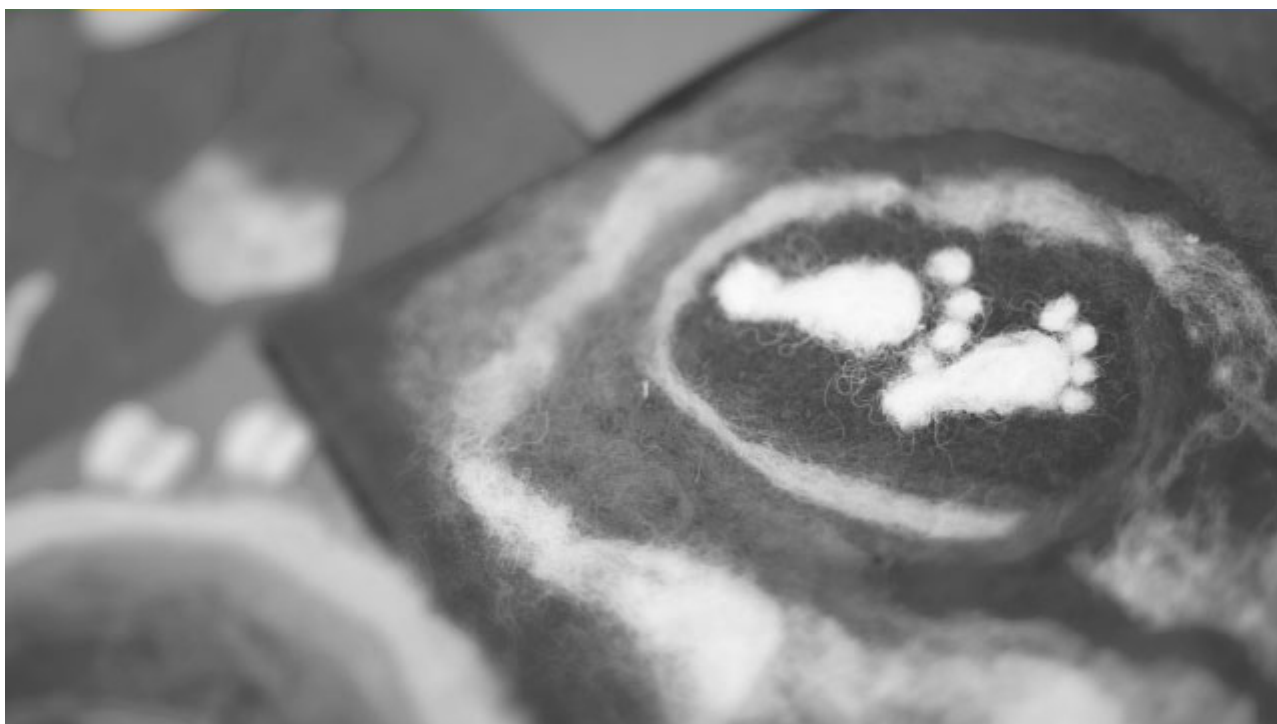
By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/artworks-london-evaluation-of-and-seminar-and-ica-salons/>

March 27, 2019

Categories: Evaluations & Reports, Resources

Tags: artists, ArtWorks London, CPD



Author: Annabel Jackson Associates Ltd

Publication Date: March 2013

Summary

Evaluation of two CPD formats.

Details

Evaluation of participants' experiences of two external ArtWorks London CPD projects: an AND arts organisations seminar and two ICA Salons.

[Download or View Resource](#)

Fourth International Teaching Artist Conference

By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/fourth-international-teaching-artist-conference/>

March 27, 2019

Categories: Resources, Videos

Tags: artists, collaboration, community, participatory, Practice, socially engaged



Author: ITAC

Publication Date: September 2018

Summary

Conference presentation videos.

Details

Alliance partners ArtWorks Cymru, Barbican Guildhall, Creative Scotland (ArtWorks Scotland), Heart of Glass and National Theatre of Scotland all presented at the Fourth International Teaching Artist Conference (ITAC4) in New York City, 13-15 September 2018.

Watch the archived conference livestream of keynotes, panel presentations (including the Paul Hamlyn Foundation chaired Alliance session) and workshops plus other material here.

ArtWorks Cymru Conference Evaluation Report

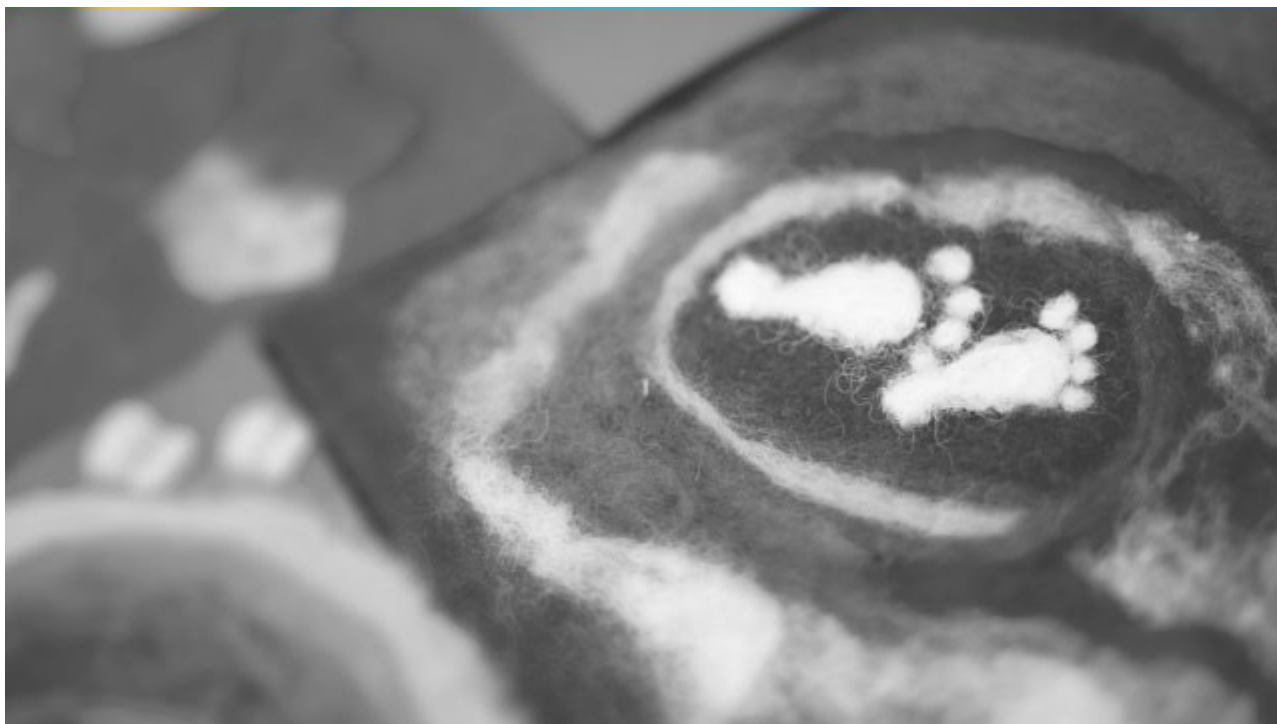
By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/artworks-cymru-conference-evaluation-report/>

March 27, 2019

Categories: Evaluations & Reports, Resources

Tags: artists, ArtWorks Cymru, collaboration, Practice



Author: Rhian Hutchings

Publication Date: May 2014

Summary

Report on the ArtWorks Cymru conference held in April 2014.

Details

Report on the ArtWorks Cymru conference held in April 2014 to disseminate the pathfinder research; open out issues to the wider arts participation sector in Wales; create links across the sector through networking; and to explore the way forward.

[Download or View Resource](#)

SNAP PRACTICE

By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/snap-practice/>

March 27, 2019

Categories: Case Studies, Resources

Tags: artists, children and young people, commissioners, CPD, employers, Practice



Author: Sophie Hunter

Publication Date: May 2016

Summary

Learning from enquiry days with artists, employers and commissioners.

Details

Sheffield Network of Arts Providers (SNAP) which works with children and young people ran a series of collaborative enquiry days, bringing together artists from different career stages and art forms with employers and commissioners from key organisations in the city, to generate new ideas for innovative approaches to participatory practice with children and young people.

[Download or View Resource](#)

Development of CPD by the cultural sector and HEIs

By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/development-of-cpd-by-the-cultural-sector-and-heis/>

March 27, 2019

Categories: Case Studies, Resources

Tags: artists, ArtWorks North East, commissioners, CPD, employers, higher education



Author: Judith Hills

Publication Date: February 2015

Summary

Learning from a pilot series of accredited and non-accredited short courses.

Details

ArtWorks North East piloted a series of accredited and non-accredited evening short courses for artists and media practitioners who work or aspire to work in participatory settings. The courses were part of an exploration to see how employers, commissioners, artists and training providers – especially higher education – can jointly provide artist development opportunities.

[Download or View Resource](#)

Artist Pathways and Student Careers

By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/artist-pathways-and-student-careers/>

March 27, 2019

Categories: Research, Resources

Tags: artists, careers, CPD, employers, further education, higher education, qualifications, training

Paul Hamlyn
Foundation

Art
Works | Developing
Practice in
Participatory
Settings

Artist pathways and student careers

Author: Judith Hills

Publication Date: January 2015

Summary

Developing a career in participatory arts.

Details

Explores issues around careers in participatory arts; available advice and guidance; opportunities for developing this career in initial training; ongoing support for graduates; and CPD opportunities for artists who wish to embed this work into a portfolio career.

[Download or View Resource](#)

WELL

By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/well/>

March 27, 2019

Categories: Case Studies, Resources

Tags: artists, CPD, mentoring, peer



Author: Ashleigh Griffith

Publication Date: May 2016

Summary

Learning from a peer artist learning project.

Details

WELL was a participatory site-specific project involving 39 emerging artists paired with seven professional mentors, based on ArtWorks North East's Peer Artist Learning model, but extended to inclusion in a real world setting.

[Download or View Resource](#)

The ArtWorks 'Golden Thread'

By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/the-artworks-golden-thread/>

March 27, 2019

Categories: Research, Resources

Tags: artists, careers, CPD, further education, higher education, training

Paul Hamlyn
Foundation

Art
Works | Developing
Practice in
Participatory
Settings

The ArtWorks 'Golden Thread'

Author: Sean Gregory

Publication Date: January 2015

Summary

A continuum approach to artists' training and CPD.

Details

Provides the conceptual and ideological context to the thinking behind a 'Golden Thread' of training and development for artists working in participatory and socially engaged settings.

[Download or View Resource](#)

Creative Practitioners Training Programme

By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/creative-practitioners-training-programme/>

March 27, 2019

Categories: Case Studies, Resources

Tags: artists, CPD, primary education, secondary education, teachers, training



Author: Paul Gorman

Publication Date: May 2016

Summary

Training programme for artists working in schools.

Details

Learning from a training programme challenging seven artists to adapt their practice by exploring their role within a theoretical context and then through practical pilot projects in schools.

Comprised three training days, project work and an open day-long event attracting 70 people.

[Download or View Resource](#)

Artists and mental health: a conversation that needs to get louder

By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/artists-and-mental-health-a-conversation-that-needs-to-get-louder/>

March 27, 2019

Categories: Research, Resources

Tags: artists, mental health, mental wellness, wellbeing

NEWS / News comment

Artists and mental health: a conversation that needs to get louder

by Alistair Gentry

Author: Alistair Gentry

Publication Date: August 2018

Summary

Mental illness and wellness in the arts.

Details

When artist and writer Alistair Gentry first shared his experiences of depression earlier this year it resulted in a flood of private feedback and led a-n The Artists Information Company to commission a series on artists and mental health for their Resources section. Drawing on the conversations he's had with artists and arts workers, he argues for more openness about mental illness and wellness in the arts in Artists and mental health: a conversation that needs to get louder.

Creative Retreat

By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/creative-retreat/>

March 27, 2019

Categories: Case Studies, Resources

Tags: artists, CPD, Practice, quality



Author: Lindsey Fryer

Publication Date: February 2015

Summary

Reflecting on and developing practice through collaborative enquiry.

Details

Achievements, lessons learned and future actions from a creative based Open Space Technology retreat for artists to have an intense and inspiring experience, sharing practice across art forms and at differing career stages. Involved six artist participants, two facilitators and three commissioners.

[Download or View Resource](#)

ArtWorks Cymru and Welsh National Opera

By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/artworks-cymru-and-welsh-national-opera/>

March 27, 2019

Categories: Case Studies, Resources

Tags: artists, commissioners, CPD, Cymru, employers



Author: Emma Flatley and Rhian Hutchings

Publication Date: February 2015

Summary

Action research in Wales identifying appropriate development support.

Details

Welsh National Opera, as project lead for ArtWorks Cymru, brought together seven other organisations and individuals from across Wales to create a consortium of participatory commissioners to explore and share their practice and to investigate how employers can better support the artists that deliver their work. They set out a three stage research structure covering consultation, action research and dissemination, to identify what was appropriate for the sector.

[Download or View Resource](#)

Developing and delivering high quality participatory arts practice in Torbay

By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/developing-and-delivering-high-quality-participatory-arts-practice-in-torbay/>

March 27, 2019

Categories: Case Studies, Resources

Tags: artists, CPD, mentoring, peer, Practice



Author: Kate Farmery

Publication Date: May 2016

Summary

Piloting a CPD model.

Details

Learning from a pilot CPD model comprising practice sharing and development workshops led by project members, structured reflective conversations and peer support through buddying. Helped build relationships and create conditions for collaboration between practitioners.

[Download or View Resource](#)

Tuning Document: Participatory Art Practice in Europe

By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/tuning-document-participatory-art-practice-in-europe/>

March 27, 2019

Categories: Research, Resources, Toolkits & Guidance

Tags: artist, competencies, CPD, higher education, training



Author: European Academy of Participation

Publication Date: May 2018

Summary

Graduate profile of a participatory artist.

Details

This document about participatory art practice and the respective graduate profile of a creative producer is intended as a reference document that reflects the diversity of the field of participatory art in Europe and at the same time, as a benchmark for curriculum builders, teachers, employers and all those academics and practitioners that want to enhance educational offers and development of the professional field. It sets out to establish a Master level standard and contribute to enhancing pedagogy in this area of higher education.

[Download or View Resource](#)

University of Hull – Associate Artists

By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/university-of-hull-associate-artists/>

March 27, 2019

Categories: Case Studies, Resources

Tags: artists, higher education, training



Author: Dr Sarah Jane Dickenson and Dr Colette Conroy

Publication Date: February 2015

Summary

Exploring artist-university links and a model of CPD.

Details

Achievements, lessons learned and future actions from a University of Hull project commissioning local artists to become Associate Artists. Workshop based research explored participatory arts relationships between the university and city and tested a CPD model linking artists and the higher education environment.

[Download or View Resource](#)

ArtWorks Evaluation Final Report: Executive Summary

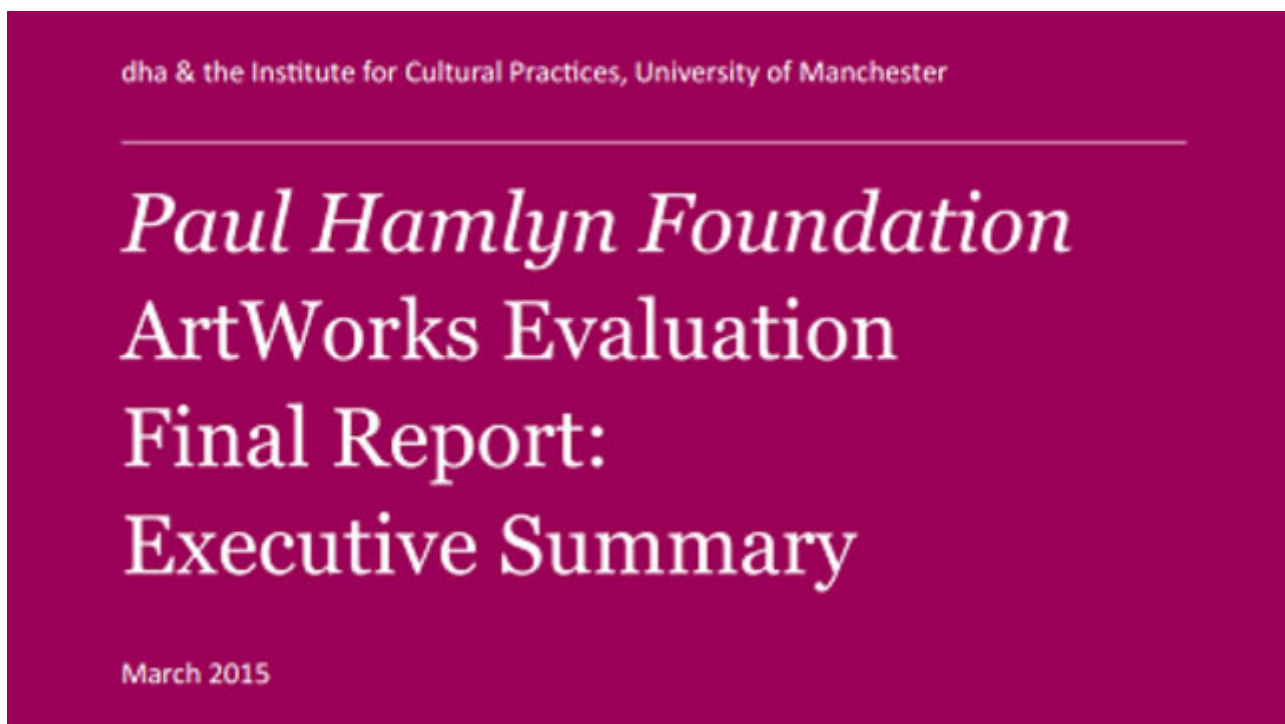
By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/artworks-evaluation-final-report-executive-summary/>

March 27, 2019

Categories: Evaluations & Reports, Resources

Tags: artists, ArtWorks Cymru, ArtWorks London, ArtWorks Navigator, ArtWorks North East, ArtWorks Scotland, careers, codes, commissioners, consultation, CPD, definition, diversity, employers, funders, further education, higher education, participants, partnerships, Pathfinder, peer, Practice, qualifications, quality, skills, training



Author: dha & the Institute for Cultural Practices, University of Manchester

Publication Date: March 2015

Summary

Mapping, analysis, achievements and findings of the PHF ArtWorks special initiative.

Details

Executive summary of the ArtWorks Evaluation Final Report, explaining how the evaluation team has mapped and analysed the initiative, with key findings and achievements.

[Download or View Resource](#)

ArtWorks Evaluation Final Report

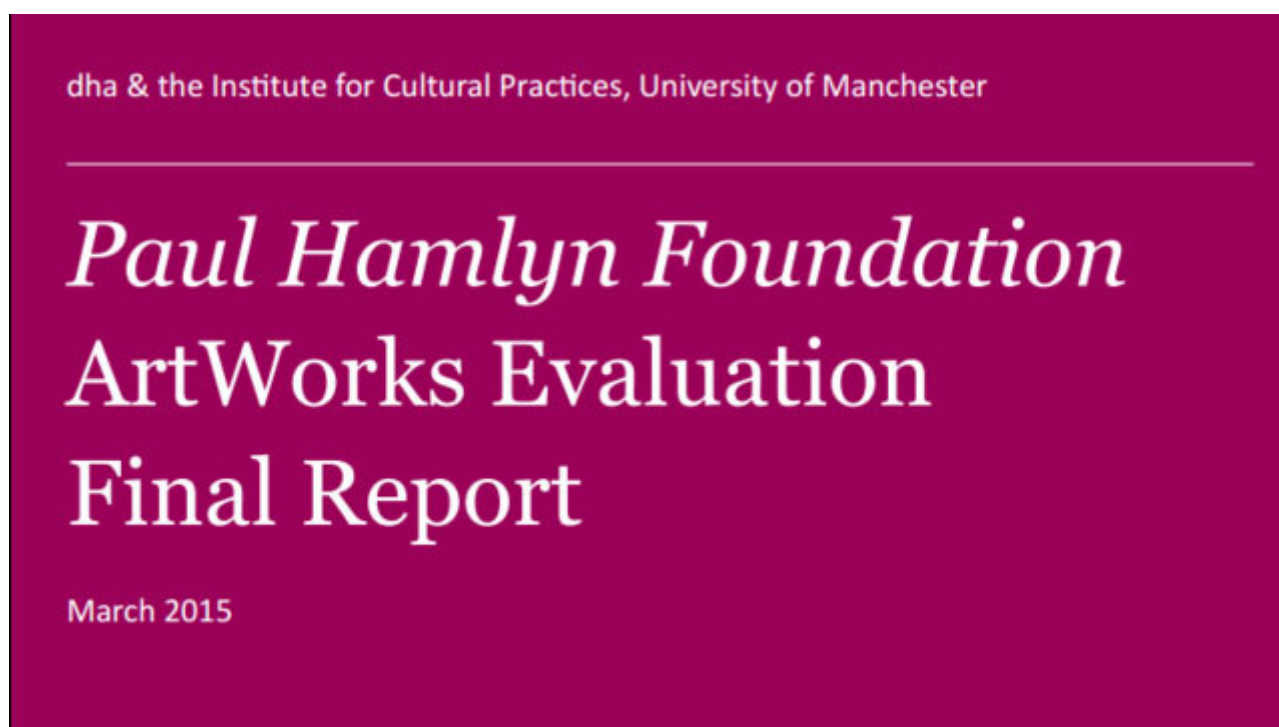
By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/artworks-evaluation-final-report/>

March 27, 2019

Categories: Evaluations & Reports, Resources

Tags: artists, ArtWorks Cymru, ArtWorks London, ArtWorks Navigator, ArtWorks North East, ArtWorks Scotland, careers, codes, commissioners, consultation, CPD, definition, diversity, employers, funders, further education, higher education, participants, partnerships, Pathfinder, peer, Practice, qualifications, quality, skills, training



Author: dha & the Institute for Cultural Practices, University of Manchester

Publication Date: March 2015

Summary

Mapping, analysis, achievements and findings of the PHF ArtWorks special initiative

Details

The evaluation team's report explains how they have mapped and analysed ArtWorks as an initiative – using an 'intervention model' against which to understand progress against aims; assessing its size and scale; undertaking conceptual clustering of activities; and modelling partnership approaches. It also details their findings. Key achievements noted include: new partnerships and relationships; contribution to the critical mass of knowledge in this area; pathfinders and partners better informed about artists' needs; tested and transferable models; the

engagement of national funding agencies; and strong indications of legacy work.

[Download or View Resource](#)

ArtWorks Evaluation Interim Report

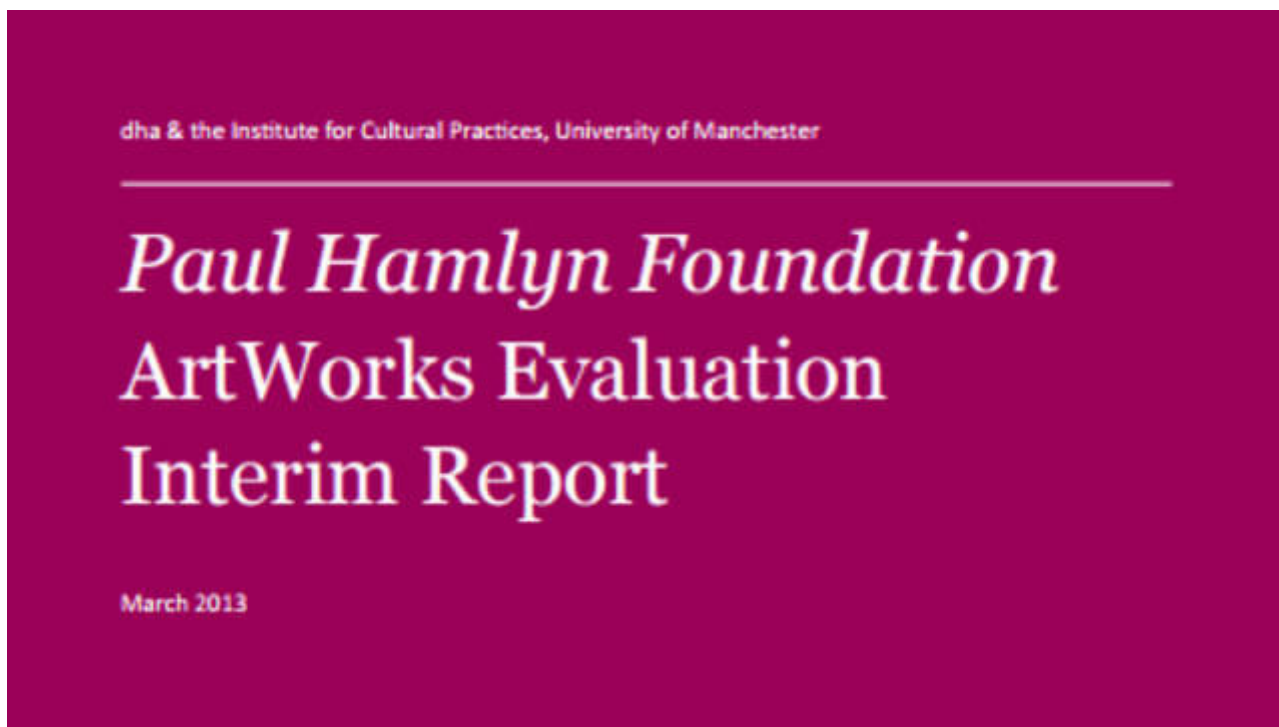
By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/artworks-evaluation-interim-report/>

March 27, 2019

Categories: Evaluations & Reports, Resources

Tags: artists, CPD, further education, higher education, pathfinders, Practice, quality, skills, training



Author: dha & the Institute for Cultural Practices, University of Manchester

Publication Date: March 2013

Summary

Evaluation of the first year of the PHF ArtWorks Special Initiative.

Details

Pulls together key findings from across the first year of evaluation activity, undertaken by DHA and the Institute of Cultural Practices at the University of Manchester, and building on a range of sources and analytical approaches. It looks not only at activity which has already taken place, but at plans, opportunities and challenges going forwards.

[Download or View Resource](#)

ArtWorks Evaluation Literature Review

By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/artworks-evaluation-literature-review/>

March 27, 2019

Categories: Evaluations & Reports, Resources

Tags: bibliography, literature review, Practice

dha & the Institute for Cultural Practices, University of Manchester

Paul Hamlyn Foundation ArtWorks Evaluation Literature Review

Author: dha & the Institute for Cultural Practices, University of Manchester

Publication Date: February 2013

Summary

Literature reviews and annotated bibliographies.

Details

This document combines two literature reviews with their accompanying annotated bibliographies which were undertaken for the evaluation of ArtWorks. It has been produced by the evaluation team, Tamsin Cox, dha, and Dr. Abigail Gilmore, Institute for Cultural Practices, University of Manchester, with primary literature research and annotation undertaken by Institute for Cultural Practices alumni, Liz Fitzpatrick and Lottie Clarke.

[Download or View Resource](#)

ArtWorks Legacy Funded Projects Evaluation – Executive Summary

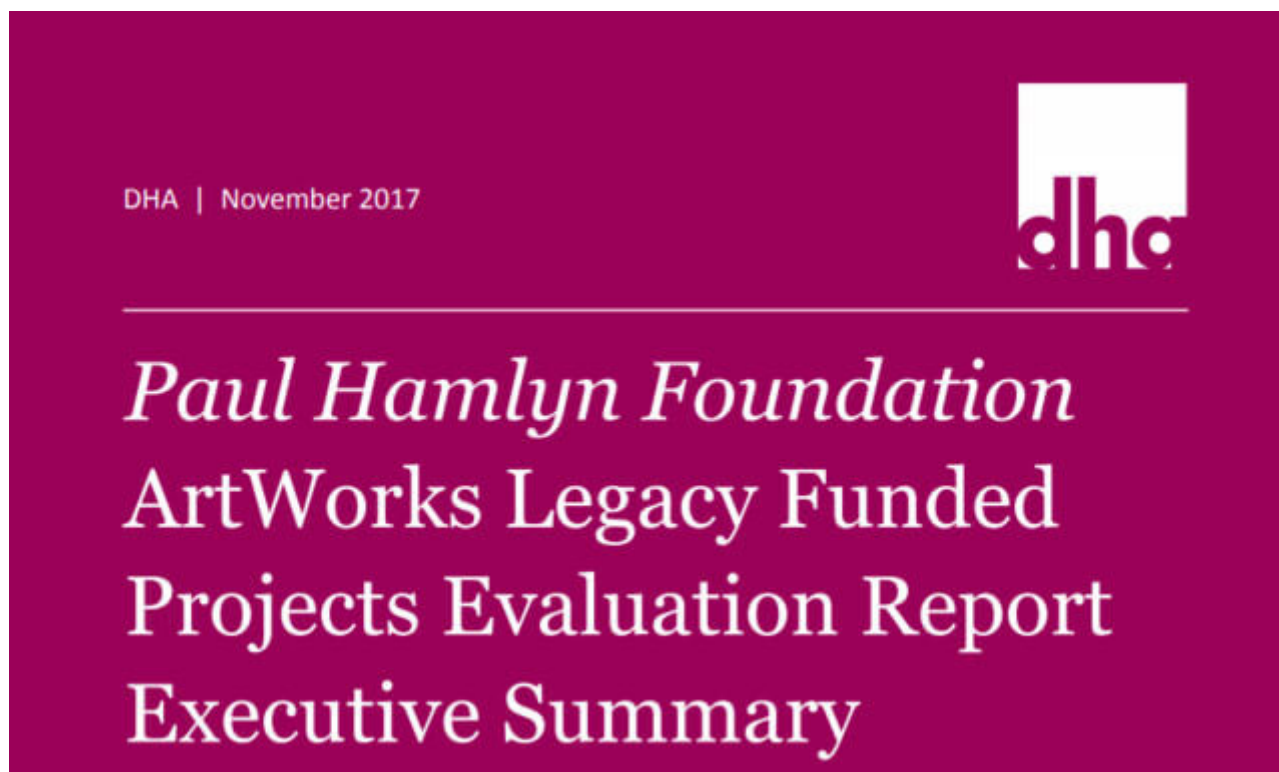
By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/artworks-legacy-funded-projects-evaluation-executive-summary/>

March 27, 2019

Categories: Evaluations & Reports, Resources

Tags: artist, ArtWorks Alliance, ArtWorks Cymru, ArtWorks London, ArtWorks North East, ArtWorks Scotland, collaboration, CPD



Author: DHA

Publication Date: December 2017

Summary

Summary of ArtWorks Legacy Funded Projects Evaluation.

Details

An overview of the evaluation report for the Paul Hamlyn Foundation legacy funded projects following on from PHF's ArtWorks special initiative.

[Download or View Resource](#)

ArtWorks Legacy Funded Projects Evaluation Report

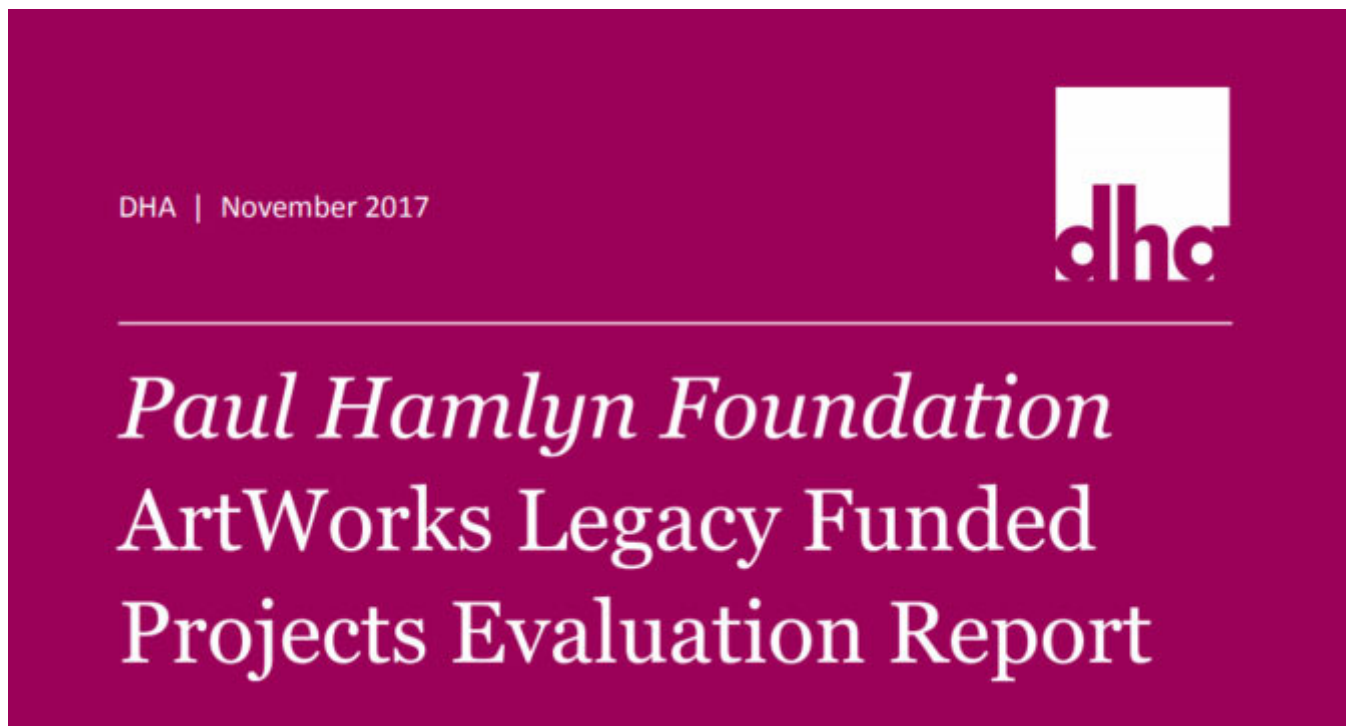
By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/artworks-legacy-funded-projects-evaluation-report/>

March 27, 2019

Categories: Evaluations & Reports, Resources

Tags: artist, ArtWorks Alliance, ArtWorks Cymru, ArtWorks London, ArtWorks North East, ArtWorks Scotland, collaboration, CPD



Author: DHA

Publication Date: December 2017

Summary

Analyses of seven projects over two years of activity.

Details

This evaluation report covers PHF ArtWorks legacy grant funded projects led by ArtWorks Cymru, ArtWorks London (including the ArtWorks Fellowship), ArtWorks Scotland/Creative Scotland (including ITAC 3), University of Sunderland (the lead partner in the ArtWorks North East pathfinder) for a Massive Online Open Course (MOOC) and the establishment of ArtWorks Alliance.

[Download or View Resource](#)

ArtWorks Alliance: Reflections & evaluation

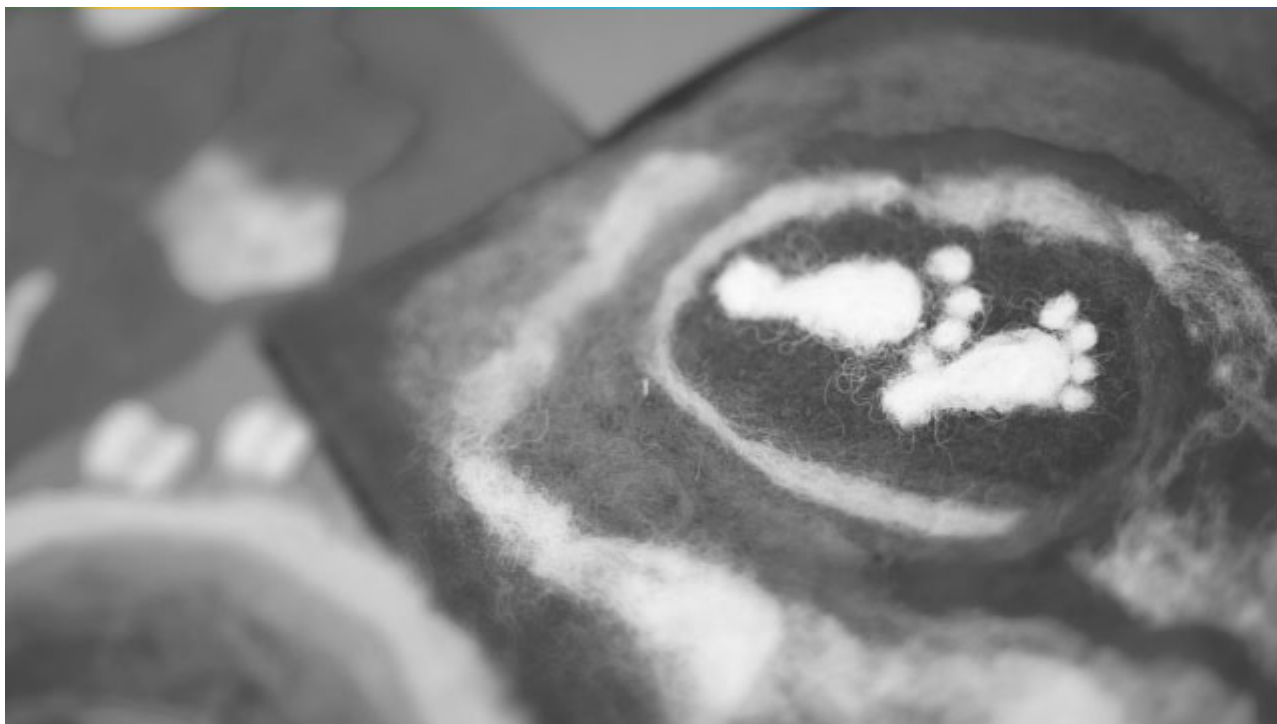
By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/artworks-alliance-reflections-evaluation/>

March 27, 2019

Categories: Evaluations & Reports, Resources

Tags: ArtWorks Alliance, collaboration, evaluation



Author: DHA

Publication Date: July 2017

Summary

Findings from interviews undertaken by DHA.

Details

Findings from one-to-one telephone interviews undertaken with a range of stakeholders by DHA to ascertain their experience of ArtWorks Alliance, their understanding of its purpose, what works well and not so well, and ideas for the future.

[Download or View Resource](#)

ArtWorks Development Grants, Year 2 Evaluation

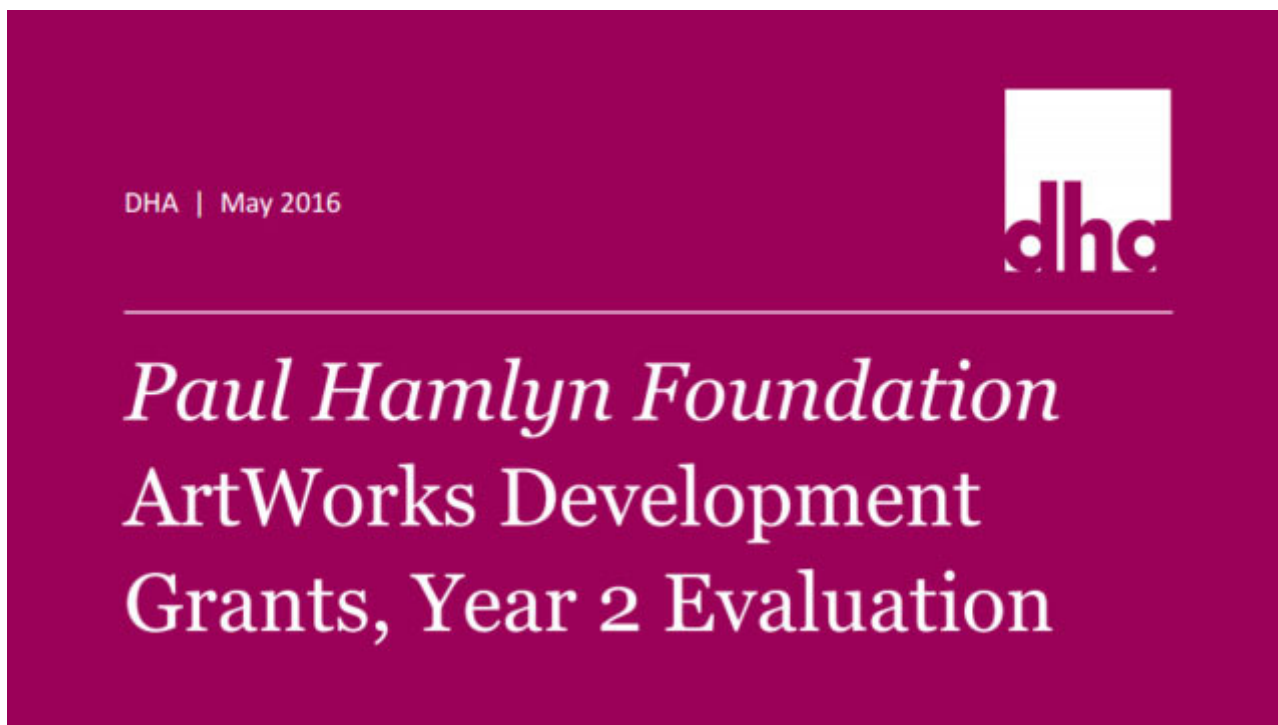
By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/artworks-development-grants-year-2-evaluation/>

March 27, 2019

Categories: Evaluations & Reports, Resources

Tags: artists, CPD, higher education, Practice, quality, skills, training



Author: dha

Publication Date: May 2016

Summary

Projects funded to explore how artists can be supported in developing their practice.

Details

Evaluation of six projects which largely focus on one or two of three things: supporting new or enhancing existing networks; trialling models of continuing professional development (CPD) for artists working in participatory settings; and developing improved circumstances for collaboration and/or new work.

[Download or View Resource](#)

ArtWorks Evaluation Interviews with Artists

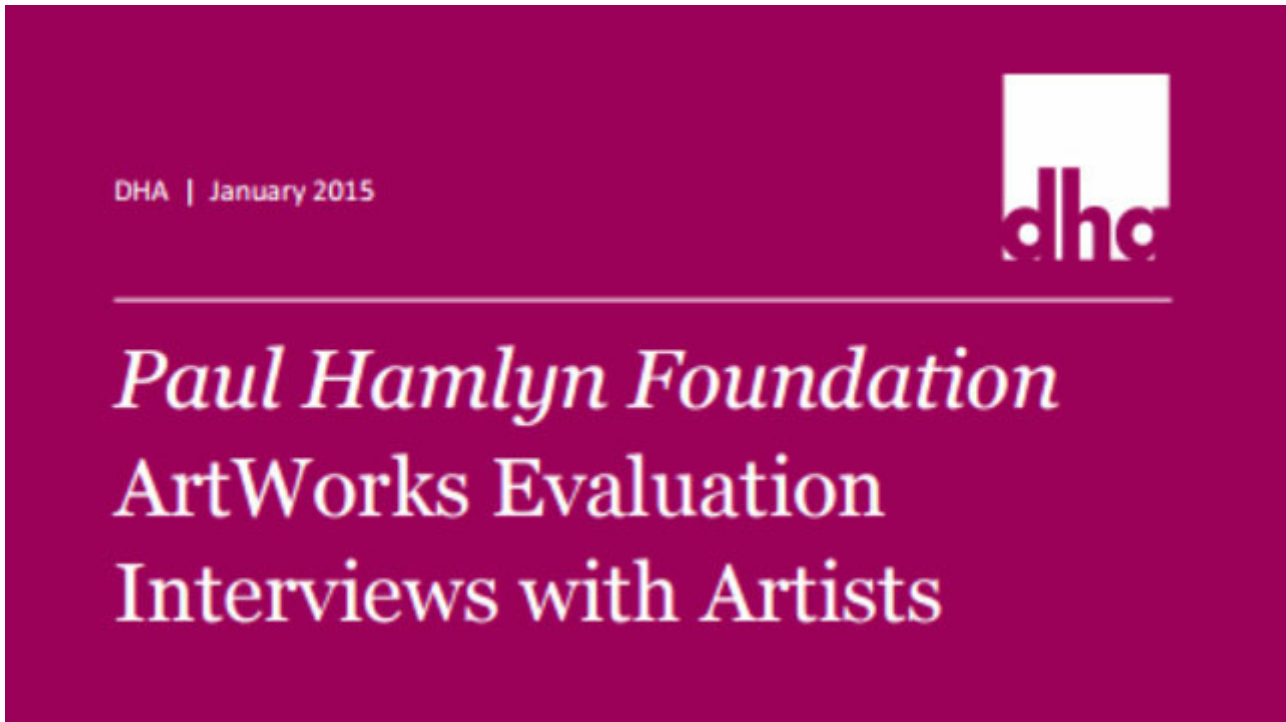
By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/artworks-evaluation-interviews-with-artists/>

March 27, 2019

Categories: Evaluations & Reports, Resources

Tags: artists, Practice



Author: dha

Publication Date: January 2015

Summary

Artist interviews complementing the PHF ArtWorks Survey of Artists.

Details

Explores in depth the motivations, experience and practice development of 11 artists interviewed to complement the Survey of Artists undertaken in the first phase of the PHF ArtWorks Special Initiative.

[Download or View Resource](#)

ArtWorks Evaluation Survey of Artists

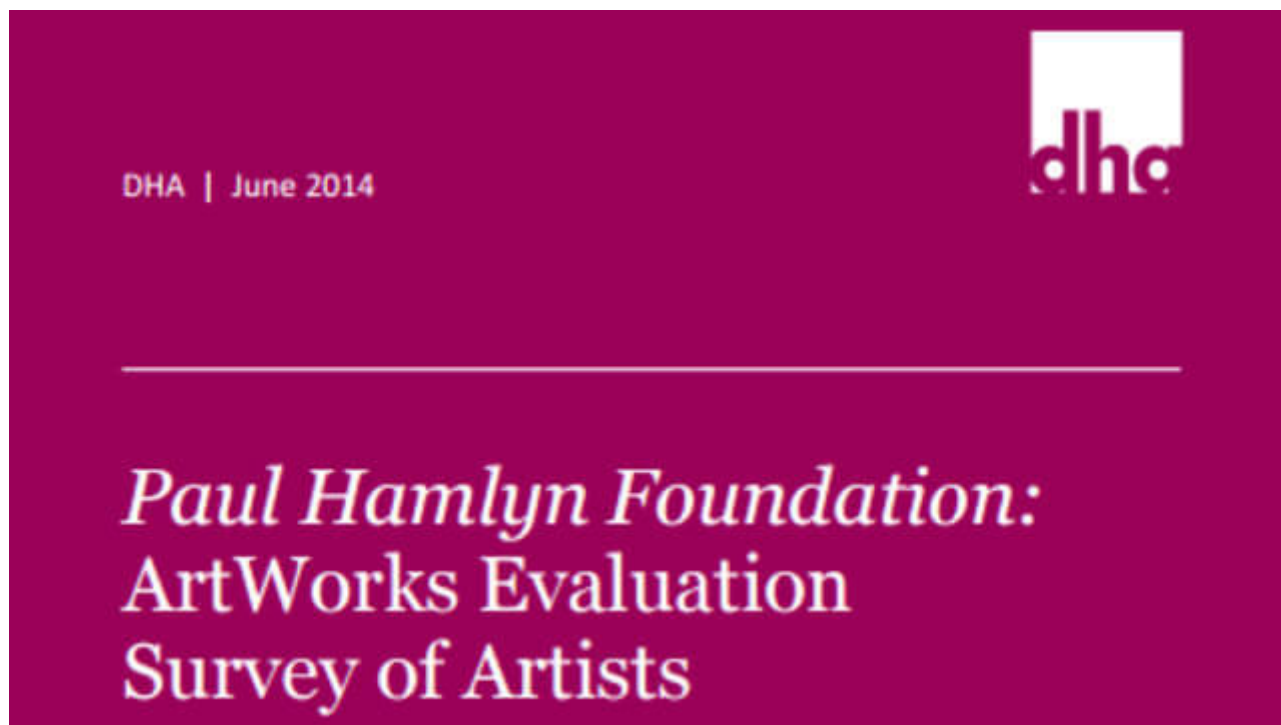
By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/artworks-evaluation-survey-of-artists/>

March 27, 2019

Categories: Evaluations & Reports, Resources

Tags: artists, careers, commissioners, CPD, employers, Practice, training



Author: dha

Publication Date: June 2014

Summary

Findings from over 1,000 respondents across artforms and career stages.

Details

Reports on the findings from over 1,000 artist survey respondents working in a spread of art forms, at different stages of their career and with different approaches to practice. Covers artists' experiences in different settings; their motivations; engagement with employers and commissioners; experience of greater informal rather than formal training; and commitment to CPD.

[Download or View Resource](#)

ArtWorks code of practice

By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/artworks-code-of-practice/>

March 27, 2019

Categories: Resources, Toolkits & Guidance

Tags: artists, ArtWorks Navigator, codes, commissioners, CPD, employers, funders, Practice, quality, standards, training

Paul Hamlyn
Foundation

Art
Works | Developing
Practice in
Participatory
Settings

ArtWorks code of practice

Author: Kathryn Deane

Publication Date: November 2014

Summary

A common code of practice for participatory artists.

Details

Reports on the development of a common code of practice for artists working in participatory settings, also of benefit to employers, learners, trainers and supporting organisations. Explains how to sign up to the code, which supports a two-way partnership between artist and employer.

[Download or View Resource](#)

Codes of practice mapping examples for participatory arts

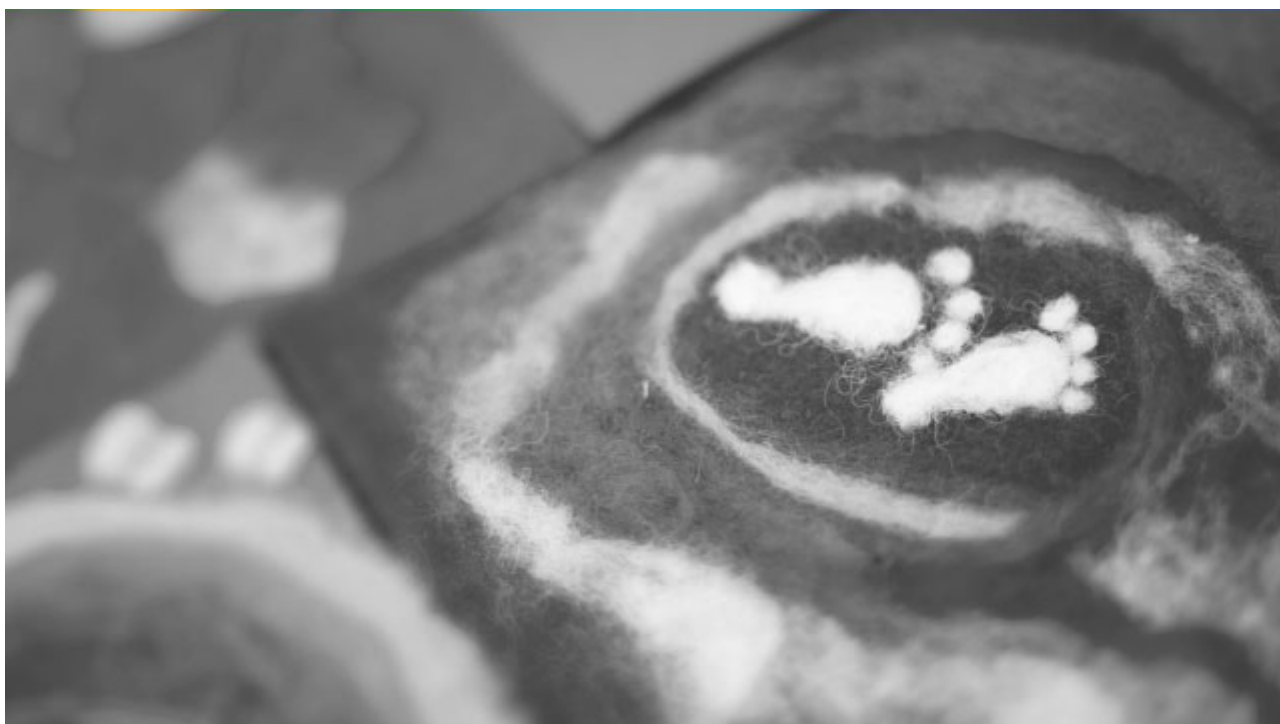
By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/codes-of-practice-mapping-examples-for-participatory-arts/>

March 27, 2019

Categories: Research, Resources

Tags: artists, ArtWorks Navigator, codes, Practice, qualifications, standards



Author: Kathryn Deane

Publication Date: October 2013

Summary

Maps relevant codes of practice.

Details

Explores codes of conduct relevant to participatory arts, and asks if a generic code covering all artforms, types and purposes of participatory could be constructed.

[Download or View Resource](#)

ArtWorks Scotland Revisiting Learning from the Peer to Peer Networks

By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/artworks-scotland-revisiting-learning-from-the-peer-to-peer-networks/>

March 27, 2019

Categories: Research, Resources

Tags: artists, ArtWorks Scotland, CPD, peer, Practice

ArtWorks Scotland

Research Report: *Revisiting Learning from the Peer to Peer Networks*

Prepared by: Dr Fiona Dean Freelance Researcher ArtWorks Scotland, March 2014



Author: Dr Fiona Dean

Publication Date: March 2014

Summary

Second research report on Peer to Peer Networks.

Details

Reports on the second phase of research about the ArtWorks Scotland PPNs (Peer to Peer Networks) identifying added value; how each PPN worked; what was achieved; what approaches, connections, resources were used and which were seen as most valuable.

[Download or View Resource](#)

ArtWorks Scotland Student Placements in Prison Learning Centres Appendix

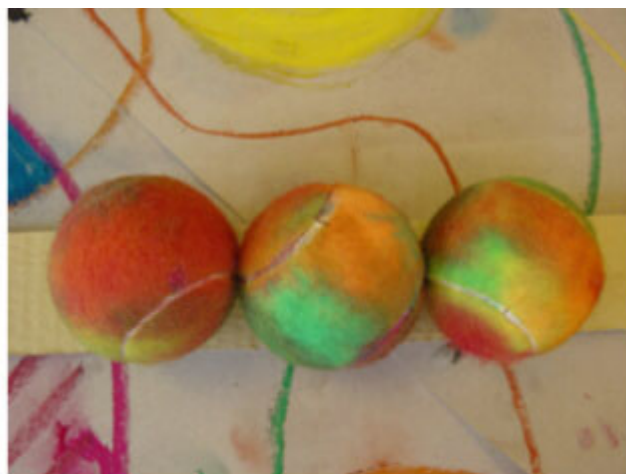
By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/artworks-scotland-student-placements-in-prison-learning-centres-appendix/>

March 27, 2019

Categories: Research, Resources

Tags: artists, criminal justice, further education, higher education, placements, training



Author: Dr Fiona Dean

Publication Date: March 2014

Summary

Images of work created during the placements.

Details

A series of images of work created through a range of creative starting points and approaches used within the placements.

[Download or View Resource](#)

ArtWorks Scotland Student Placements in Prison Learning Centres

By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/artworks-scotland-student-placements-in-prison-learning-centres/>

March 27, 2019

Categories: Research, Resources

Tags: artists, criminal justice, further education, higher education, placement, skills, training

ArtWorks Scotland

Research Report: *Student Placements in Prison Learning Centres*

A Partnership with New College Lanarkshire and the Department of Sculpture and Environmental Art, the Glasgow School of Art

Prepared by: Dr Fiona Dean Freelance Researcher ArtWorks Scotland, February 2014



Author: Dr Fiona Dean

Publication Date: February 2014

Summary

A research report on student placements in prison learning centres.

Details

Evaluates the experiences of learners in prisons, staff and art school students in relation to the process, motivations for being involved and impact felt from the placements. Identifies potential from a partnership based approach which involved New College Lanarkshire and the Department of Sculpture and Environmental Art, the Glasgow School of Art.

Download or View Resource

ArtWorks Scotland Quality Perspectives, Artists and Partners: Research Background and Key Observations

By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/artworks-scotland-quality-perspectives-artists-and-partners-research-background-and-key-observations/>

March 27, 2019

Categories: Research, Resources

Tags: artists, ArtWorks Scotland, commissioners, employers, Practice, quality

ArtWorks Scotland

Research Summary

Quality Perspectives, Artists and Partners: Research Background and Key observations

Prepared by: Dr Fiona Dean Freelance Researcher ArtWorks Scotland, November, 2013



Author: Dr Fiona Dean

Publication Date: November 2013

Summary

Summary of research into quality factors

Details

Summarises the ArtWorks Scotland research into quality factors with artists in the Peer to Peer Networks, and with partners. The findings are also illustrated in an infographic.

[Download or View Resource](#)

ArtWorks Scotland Learning from the Peer to Peer Networks

By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/artworks-scotland-learning-from-the-peer-to-peer-networks/>

March 27, 2019

Categories: Research, Resources

Tags: artists, ArtWorks Scotland, CPD, peer, Practice, quality



ArtWorks Scotland

Research Report: *Learning from ArtWorks Scotland Peer to Peer Networks*

Prepared by: Dr Fiona Dean Freelance Researcher ArtWorks Scotland, October 2012



Author: Dr Fiona Dean

Publication Date: October 2012

Summary

First research report on Peer to Peer Networks.

Details

Reports on the first phase of research about the ArtWorks Scotland PPNs (Peer to Peer Networks) identifying how each network was evolving their practice and processes of working to meet developing needs, including consideration of roles and quality.

[Download or View Resource](#)

ArtWorks London Case Studies

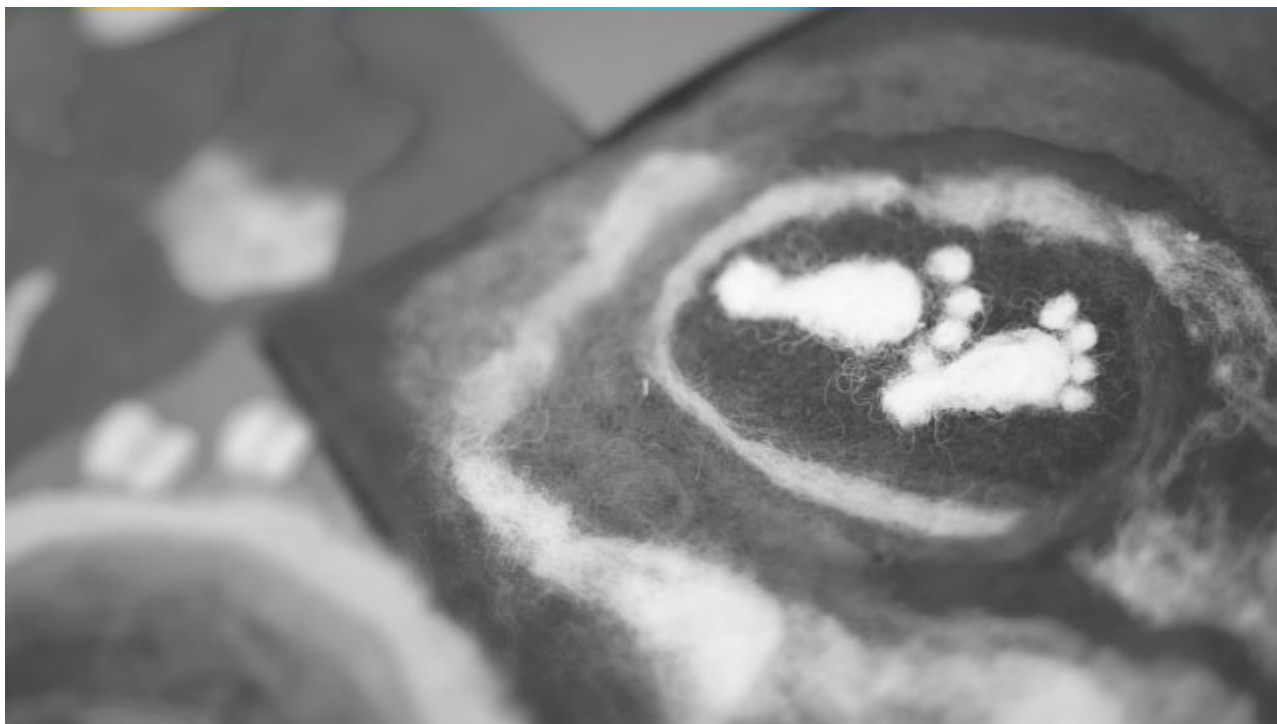
By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/artworks-london-case-studies/>

March 27, 2019

Categories: Case Studies, Resources

Tags: artists, ArtWorks London, CPD, Practice, training



Author: Sarah B Davies

Publication Date: December 2012

Summary

Examples of arts organisations' training and development programmes.

Details

Case studies providing a snapshot of good practice in London based arts organisations in training and professional development provision for artists working in participatory settings. Contributes to discussion about effective support for artists.

[Download or View Resource](#)

Changing the Conversation Provocation 3

By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/changing-the-conversation-provocation-3/>

March 27, 2019

Categories: Research, Resources

Tags: artists, CPD, knowledge, Practice, quality, skills, training



Author: Anna Cultler

Publication Date: April 2013

Summary

The contingent nature of arts practice in participatory settings.

Details

Advocates recognising and articulating the contingent nature of practice, so we shift from a singular (or oppositional) conversation and embrace the greater and more complicated truth: we require a different kind of conversation altogether that looks more like the practice itself.

[Download or View Resource](#)

ITAC 3: Best, next and radical practice in participatory arts

By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/itac-3-best-next-and-radical-practice-in-participatory-arts/>

March 27, 2019

Categories: Evaluations & Reports, Resources, Videos

Tags: artists, ArtWorks Scotland, Practice



Author: Creative Scotland

Publication Date: August 2016

Summary

Reflections from the third International Teaching Artists Conference.

Details

Report on the ITAC 3 conference, an opportunity to share, discuss and disseminate the significant body of learning from the PHF ArtWorks Special Initiative and build on previous ArtWorks Scotland conferences (2011-14), consciously creating a sense of 'continuity' for the Scottish community of practice. Videos of keynote and panel presentations available at ITAC 3.

[Download or View Resource](#)

People Place Power conference

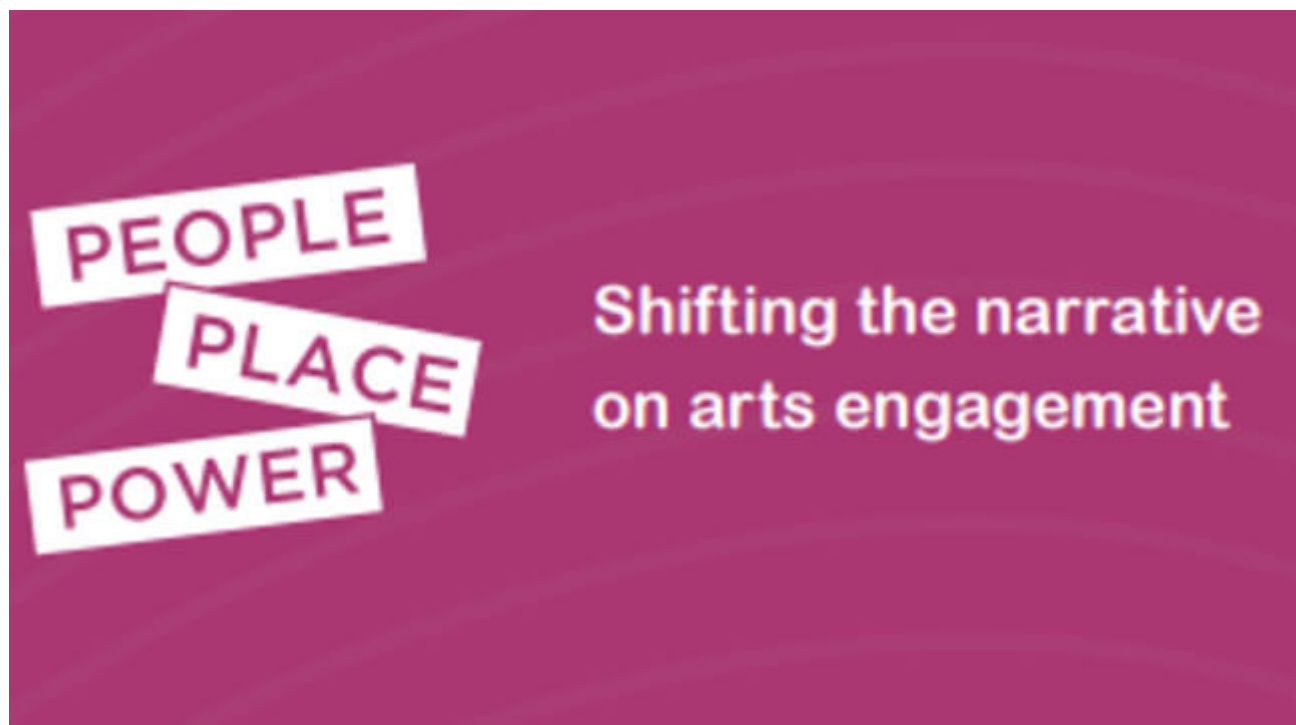
By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/people-place-power-conference/>

March 27, 2019

Categories: Evaluations & Reports, Resources, Videos

Tags: artists, community, participatory



Author: Creative People and Places

Publication Date: August 2018

Summary

Conference films and reflections.

Details

Films and reflections from the Creative People and Places 2018 conference.

Opening session – Can we ever be truly democratic? Features Saffi Price from Wolverhampton Voluntary Sector Council, Parminder Dosanjh from Creative Black Country; a keynote from Jess Thom, co-founder of Touretteshero; a panel including Tina Reford from LeftCoast, Claire Doherty from Arnolfini and Quddous Ahmed from Poetical Word. The session is chaired by Talia Randall.

Closing panel – reflections on People Place Power. Featuring contributions by five delegates;

Sir Nicholas Serota Chair of Arts Council England; Anne Torreggiani of The Audience Agency; Parminder Dosanjh from Creative Black Country and Quddous Ahmed of Poetical Word. Chaired by Talia Randall.

Personal reflections on People Place Power. Community members from several Creative People and Place projects came to People Place Power to share their ideas and experiences with delegates and each other. Here they reflect on the conference.

Mark Robinson of Thinking practice reflects on the themes and learning emerging from the People Place Power conference in his essay **Changing the Cultural Landscape isn't too mighty a task** – download below.

[Download or View Resource](#)

Community arts toolkit

By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/community-arts-toolkit/>

March 27, 2019

Categories: Resources, Toolkits & Guidance

Tags: artists, community, participatory



Author: Creative New Zealand

Publication Date: August 2018

Summary

Best practice guide to community arts projects in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Details

A best practice guide to community arts projects in Aotearoa New Zealand: our Keteparaha Mō Ngā Toi Hapori (Community Arts Toolkit).

Community arts are created **by, with, and for** a community. The community is actively involved in creating the art. Community arts projects come in many different shapes and sizes.

In the toolkit you'll find videos of New Zealanders sharing their experiences and what they've learned. There are also tipsheets, tools and examples of successful projects and events to get you inspired.

Community arts toolkit

Mapping the terrain

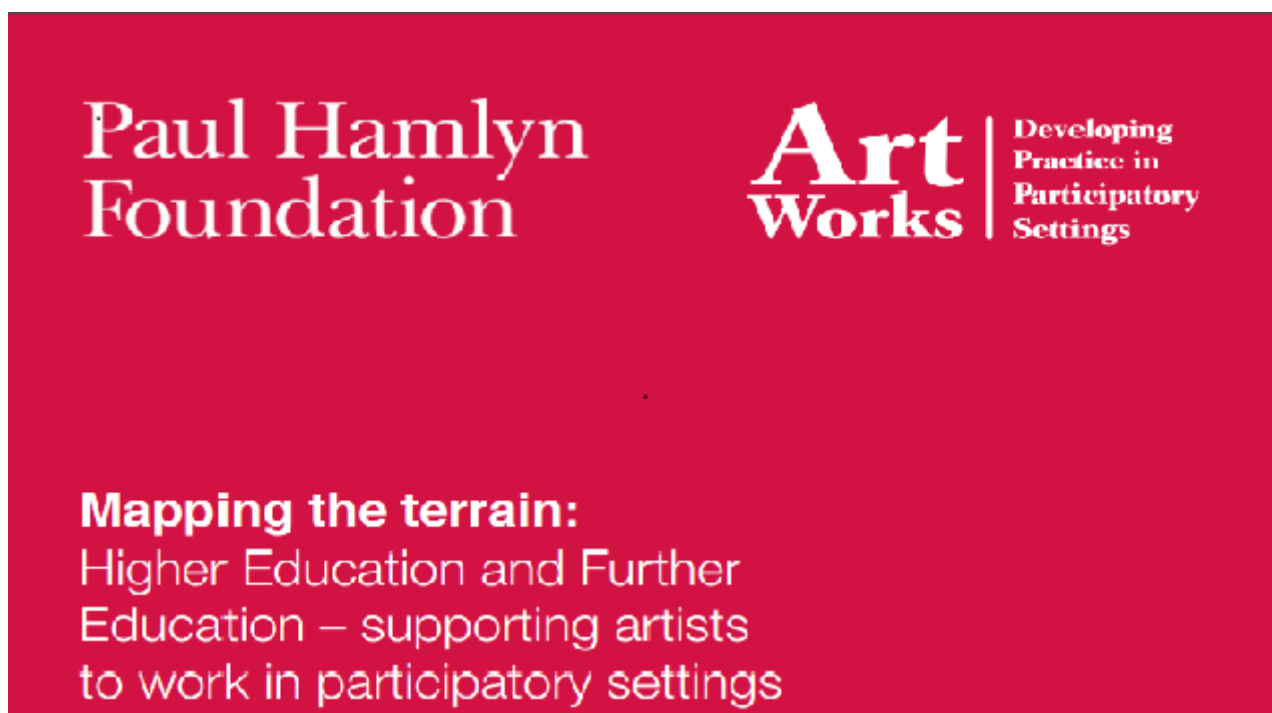
By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/mapping-the-terrain/>

March 27, 2019

Categories: Research, Resources

Tags: artists, CPD, further education, higher education, portfolio, Practice, training



Author: Consilium Research & Consultancy

Publication Date: November 2012

Summary

Audit of further and higher education programme provision.

Details

A quantitative baseline audit of relevant further and higher education programmes with a qualitative sample of provision. Covers characteristics, challenges and future direction of the sector within the context of a growing community of practice and portfolio careers.

[Download or View Resource](#)

Skillset Research and Gap Analysis for Artists Working in Participatory Settings: Phase 2 Final Report

By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/skillset-research-and-gap-analysis-for-artists-working-in-participatory-settings-phase-2-final-report/>

March 27, 2019

Categories: Research, Resources

Tags: artists, CPD, further education, higher education, qualifications, quality, training



Author: Consilium Research & Consultancy

Publication Date: October 2012

Summary

Artists' required skills, existing support provision and recommendations.

Details

Examines the skills, knowledge and qualities required by artists across art forms and identifies existing support provision. Includes recommendations about initial training; CPD; creating a more confident and professional sector; and quality assurance.

[Download or View Resource](#)

ArtWorks Scotland: Is this the best it can be?

By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/artworks-scotland-is-this-the-best-it-can-be/>

March 27, 2019

Categories: Resources, Toolkits & Guidance

Tags: artists, ArtWorks Scotland, collaboration, participants, partnership, Practice, quality



Author: ArtWorks Scotland

Publication Date: December 2016

Summary

Guidance and toolkit for delivering participatory arts.

Details

A toolkit that can be used by anyone delivering arts and creative learning through collaborative or participatory projects and programmes. Developed by ArtWorks Scotland through collaborative engagement with artists, professionals from other sectors and participant. Comprises a guidance document and a set of downloadable tools. Provides prompt questions to assist in the creation of a 'compass' for creative partnership.

Is this the best it can be?

Is this the best it can be? Case studies

By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/is-this-the-best-it-can-be-case-studies/>

March 27, 2019

Categories: Case Studies, Resources

Tags: artists, ArtWorks Scotland, collaboration, participants, partnership, Practice, quality



Author: ArtWorks Scotland

Publication Date: March 2018

Summary

Case studies accompanying the ArtWorks Scotland quality toolkit.

Details

Eight case studies to accompany the quality toolkit *Is this the best it can be?* which can be used by anyone delivering arts and creative learning through collaborative or participatory projects and programmes. Through the sharing of experience and top tips for getting the most from the resource, these show how the toolkit can be used in a variety of ways.

Is this the best it can be? Using the toolkit case studies

Eric Booth interview

By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/eric-booth-interview/>

March 27, 2019

Categories: Resources, Videos

Tags: ArtWorks Scotland



Author: ArtWorks Scotland

Summary

Conversation with a leading arts education consultant and adviser.

Details

ArtWorks Scotland's Chrissie Ruckley in conversation with Eric Booth, a leading arts education consultant and adviser. Part of a visit to New York City where the work of ArtWorks and ArtWorks Scotland was shared at the New York City Arts and Education Roundtable.

Eric Booth Interview

ArtWorks Scotland: Tim Rollins and K.O.S.

By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/artworks-scotland-tim-rollins-and-k-o-s/>

March 27, 2019

Categories: Resources, Videos

Tags: artists, ArtWorks Scotland, Practice



Author: ArtWorks Scotland

Publication Date: August 2012

Summary

Summary video from a Tim Rollins and K.O.S. led seminar.

Details

Summary film featuring footage, lecture extracts and interviews from the ArtWorks Scotland Seminar and Art and Knowledge workshops at Talbot Rice Gallery, August 2012, led by Tim Rollins and K.O.S., an artist collective from New York who create original artworks inspired by classic novels, speeches and music. Open to participatory artists working from all art forms, the day explored how the artists' methodology could potentially apply across disciplines and settings.

Tim Rollins and K.O.S.

Separate videos of each session are also available on the ArtWorks Scotland Vimeo channel.

ArtWorks Scotland: Artists and teachers resource

By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/artworks-scotland-artists-and-teachers-resource/>

March 27, 2019

Categories: Resources, Toolkits & Guidance

Tags: artists, ArtWorks Scotland, funding, schools, training

[jects](#) > [Creative Learning and Young People](#) > [ArtWorks](#) > [Resources](#) > [Artis](#)

Artists and teachers resource

This [ArtWorks Scotland](#) resource has been developed for teachers and artists looking to embed creativity into school plans, offering relevant policy, evaluation and funding information, tips on planning together and case studies from artists and teachers who have worked in partnership.

Author: ArtWorks Scotland

Summary

Policy, research, networks and funding information for artists and teachers.

Details

Everything you need to know about education, curriculum and policy guidance in Scotland, including working with children and young people; links to research, networks and training; advice on how to get started with arts, creativity and local authority contacts, as well as information on funding, monitoring and evaluation. Part of an ArtWorks Scotland resource for teachers and artists wanting to embed creativity in schools.

Artists and teachers resource

Artists and teachers resource: case studies

By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/artists-and-teachers-resource-case-studies/>

March 27, 2019

Categories: Case Studies, Resources, Toolkits & Guidance, Videos

Tags: artists, ArtWorks Scotland, Practice, schools

[jects](#) > [Creative Learning and Young People](#) > [ArtWorks](#) > [Resources](#) > [Artis](#)

Artists and teachers resource

This [ArtWorks Scotland](#) resource has been developed for teachers and artists looking to embed creativity into school plans, offering relevant policy, evaluation and funding information, tips on planning together and case studies from artists and teachers who have worked in partnership.

Author: ArtWorks Scotland

Summary

Artists and teachers talking about embedding creativity in schools.

Details

Artists and teachers talk about embedding creativity, plans and flexibility, what an artist brings to a school, working across departments, linking to the curriculum and successful planning and negotiation. Part of an ArtWorks Scotland resource for teachers and artists wanting to embed creativity in schools.

Case studies

ArtWorks Scotland: Voices from NYC

By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/artworks-scotland-voices-from-nyc/>

March 27, 2019

Categories: Resources, Videos

Tags: artists, ArtWorks Scotland, Practice

Voices from NYC



Author: ArtWorks Scotland

Summary

How ArtWorks Scotland research relates to the contexts of key NYC arts figures and organisations.

Details

Audio recorded conversations between Chrissie Ruckley, ArtWorks Scotland, with Gigi Antoni (Chief Executive and President of the Big Thought Dallas, Texas), Eric Booth (a leading arts education consultant and advisor), David Shookhoff (Director of Education at the Manhattan Theatre Club), Melissa Freidman (Artistic Director of Epic Theatre Ensemble), Sarah Johnson (Director of the Weill Institute at Carnegie Hall) and Anne Gregg (Director of Community Programmes for the Weill Institute at Carnegie Hall). Focus on how ArtWorks Scotland lines of inquiry relate to their own contexts.

Voices from NYC

Artists in participatory settings: 8 out of 10 prefer...

By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/artists-in-participatory-settings-8-out-of-10-prefer/>

March 27, 2019

Categories: Research, Resources

Tags: artists, Practice, quality



Author: ArtWorks Scotland

Publication Date: July 2014

Summary

Infographic showing artists' views about their work in participatory settings.

Details

Infographic illustrating the views of artists in Scotland about their work in participatory settings, including the roles they play and factors for quality. Information selected from the Skillset Research and Gap Analysis for Artists Working in Participatory Settings Phase 2 Final Report, by Consilium Research & Consultancy, and the Learning from ArtWorks Scotland Peer to Peer Networks interim research report by Dr Fiona Dean.

[Download or View Resource](#)

Mutual Curiosity: a look at participatory practice in Scotland

By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/mutual-curiosity-a-look-at-participatory-practice-in-scotland/>

March 27, 2019

Categories: Resources, Videos

Tags: artists, ArtWorks Scotland, participants, Practice



Author: ArtWorks Scotland

Summary

Film giving voice to project artists and participants.

Details

Commissioned by Creative Learning at Creative Scotland and developed through the ArtWorks Scotland programme, Mutual Curiosity supports continual improvement in participatory practice. The film gives a voice to artists and participants and highlights the processes involved in their projects.

Mutual Curiosity

Quality Perspectives: Artists and Partners

By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/quality-perspectives-artists-and-partners/>

March 27, 2019

Categories: Research, Resources

Tags: artists, commissioners, employers, partners, quality



Author: ArtWorks Scotland

Publication Date: June 2014

Summary

Infographic showing artists' and partners' views on quality factors.

Details

Presents the views of partners (employers, commissioners, co-ordinators etc) and artists to illustrate some of the convergent and divergent thoughts about how important the quality factors are to both groups, as well as how often they happen in practice.

[Download or View Resource](#)

ArtWorks Scotland: Pilot Projects

By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/artworks-scotland-pilot-projects/>

March 27, 2019

Categories: Evaluations & Reports, Resources

Tags: artists, ArtWorks Scotland, further education, higher education, placements, Practice, training

[acts](#) > [Creative Learning and Young People](#) > [ArtWorks](#) > [Pilot Projects](#) > [Adopt an Artist](#)

Adopt an Artist - Edinburgh College of Art



Author: ArtWorks Scotland

Summary

Projects in further and higher education to raise practice profile and model student placements.

Details

Reports on pilot projects undertaken by further and higher education supported by ArtWorks Scotland in response to recommendations emerging from their research and addressing the questions: How can we raise the profile of participatory arts within initial training and What does a good student placement look like?

Pilot projects

ArtWorks Scotland: Placements in Practice

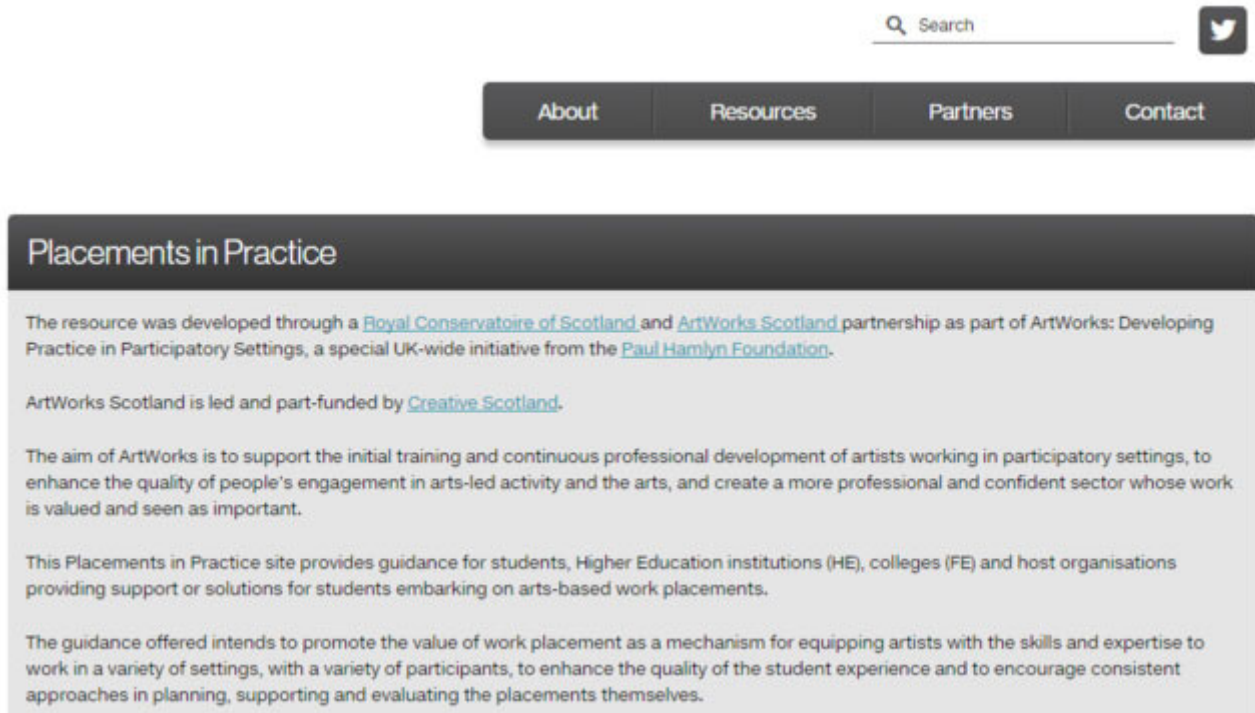
By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/artworks-scotland-placements-in-practice/>

March 27, 2019

Categories: Resources, Toolkits & Guidance

Tags: artists, ArtWorks Scotland, placement, Practice, training



Author: ArtWorks Scotland and Royal Conservatoire of Scotland

Summary

Website providing guidance on arts-based work placements.

Details

The Placements in Practice site provides guidance for students, further and higher education and host organisations embarking on arts-based work placements. Includes effective practice guides, case studies from institutions and hosts, and student reflections.

Placements in Practice

ArtWorks-U

By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/artworks-u/>

March 27, 2019

Categories: Resources, Toolkits & Guidance

Tags: artists, ArtWorks North East, CPD, Practice



Author: ArtWorks North East

Publication Date: September 2017

Summary

Developing practice in participatory settings website.

Details

Learning resources developed by ArtWorks North East to accompany its short courses series for developing practice in participatory settings. Includes sections on: the business, getting started, development opportunities, artistic practice, exploring context.

ArtWorks-U

B Arts and Staffordshire University – Social Agents

By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/b-arts-and-staffordshire-university-social-agents/>

March 27, 2019

Categories: Case Studies, Resources

Tags: artists, higher education, Practice, training



Author: B Arts

Publication Date: February 2015

Summary

Embedding participatory practice in the curriculum.

Details

Achievements, lessons learned and future actions from a project involving B Arts and Staffordshire University. Looks at how opportunities for experience of participatory arts practice can be embedded in the curriculum content of undergraduate courses which are not primarily focussed on participatory arts.

[Download or View Resource](#)

ArtWorks London Age Gap Symposium

By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/artworks-london-age-gap-symposium/>

March 27, 2019

Categories: Evaluations & Reports, Resources

Tags: artists, ArtWorks London, CPD, older people, Practice, training

AGE GAP Symposium

A symposium exploring ways of supporting and nurturing artists to develop creative practice, in participatory settings with older people.



Author: Helen Ball and Ginevra Jacobucci

Publication Date: August 2013

Summary

Report on supporting artists' participatory practice with older people symposium.

Details

Reports on the Age Gap symposium that took place in April 2013 at Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance, exploring ways of supporting artists to develop creative practice in participatory settings with older people and informing future pilot training and development provision.

[Download or View Resource](#)

Artist profiles

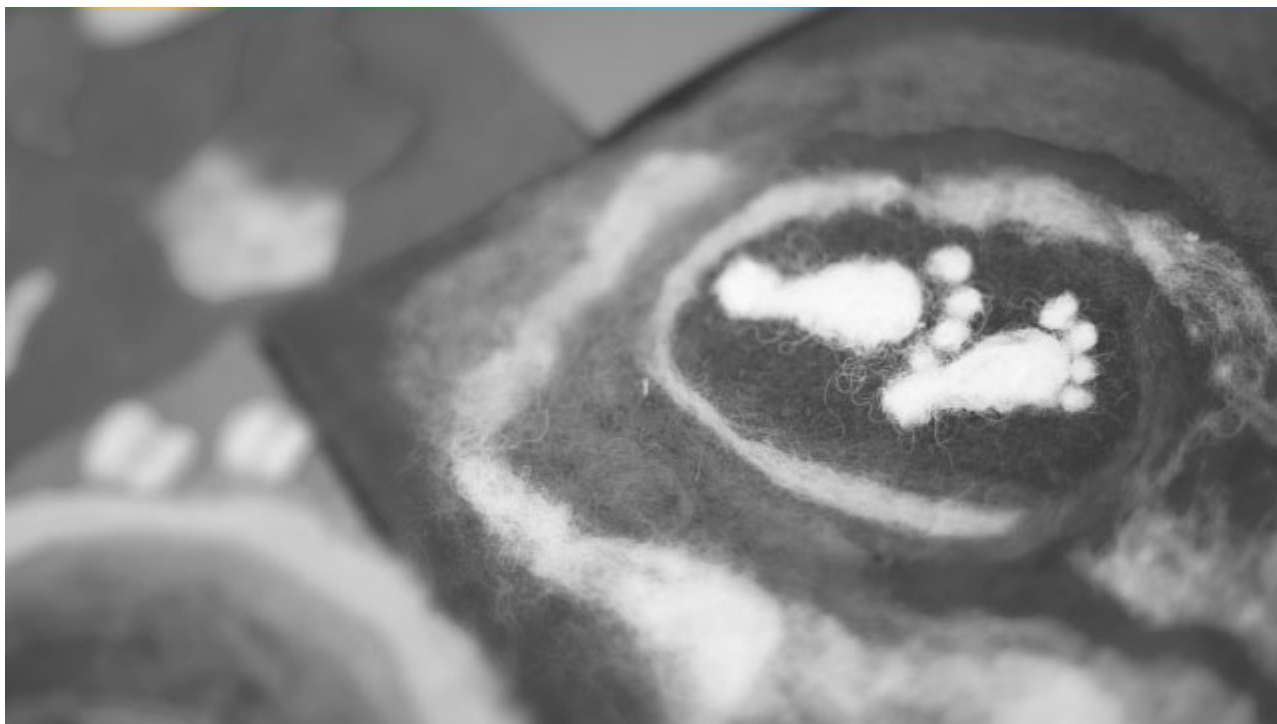
By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/artist-profiles/>

March 27, 2019

Categories: Case Studies, Resources

Tags: artists, ArtWorks North East, careers, CPD, Practice, training



Author: ArtWorks North East

Publication Date: January 2013

Summary

Profiles of six artists working in participatory settings.

Details

Six profiles of artists working in participatory settings, transcribed from interviews. Covers their motivations, project experience and work paths, as well as their views on the field, including perspectives on training and development.

[Download or View Resource](#)

Community Out of Bounds – Arts and Communities

By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/community-out-of-bounds-arts-and-communities/>

March 27, 2019

Categories: Case Studies, Resources

Tags: artists, CPD, peer, Practice, skills



Author: Jonathan Baxter and Margaret Stewart

Publication Date: May 2016

Summary

An artist-led peer education programme.

Details

Learning from a project addressing a deficit in knowledge, skills and connectivity within participatory and socially engaged art practice in Aberdeen. Explored pathways for post-academic development and provided a forum for peer-led discussion about participatory and socially engaged art practice.

[Download or View Resource](#)

Moveable Feast

By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/moveable-feast/>

March 27, 2019

Categories: Case Studies, Resources

Tags: artists, collaboration, CPD, mentoring, placement, quality, training



Author: Rose Barnecut

Publication Date: May 2016

Summary

Learning from an apprenticeship mentoring and placement project.

Details

Tested the creation of a framework in Cornwall encouraging more experienced artists to provide routes into participatory work for younger or emerging artists. Associated seminar involving a broad cross section of participatory artists evidenced real appetite for opportunities for artists to meet, exchange ideas and possibilities, set up new ventures and collaborations, share challenges and problem solve jointly.

[Download or View Resource](#)

Insights for employers, commissioners and funders in facilitating quality impacts through participatory arts

By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/insights-for-employers-commissioners-and-funders-in-facilitating-quality-impacts-through-participatory-arts/>

March 27, 2019

Categories: Research, Resources

Tags: artists, commissioners, employers, funders, partners, Practice, quality

Insights for employers, commissioners and funders in facilitating quality impacts through participatory arts

Author: Rachel Blanche

Publication Date: November 2014

Summary

Creating the conditions for quality participatory arts work.

Details

Evidences that quality cannot be attributed solely to the artist and activity undertaken, as decisions by a wide range of stakeholders, at different project stages, influence delivery. Explains robust, constructive communication between partners is key to creating the conditions needed for quality work.

[Download or View Resource](#)

Bibliography: Artists Working in Participatory Settings

By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/bibliography-artists-working-in-participatory-settings/>

March 27, 2019

Categories: Research, Resources

Tags: artists, ArtWorks Navigator, bibliography, Practice

Bibliography: Artists Working in Participatory Settings

As part of its programme Artworks Navigator developed this bibliography to identify and present a range of available resources for artists working in participatory settings.

Author: ArtWorks Navigator

Publication Date: October 2013

Summary

Lists a range of relevant resources.

Details

Artworks Navigator developed this bibliography to identify and present a range of available resources for artists working in participatory settings. With general and art form specific sections, it includes practical guides, articles and online resources as well as books.

[Download or View Resource](#)

Mapping and analysis of engagement approaches across the Creative People and Places programme

By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/mapping-and-analysis-of-engagement-approaches-across-the-creative-people-and-places-programme/>

March 27, 2019

Categories: Research, Resources

Tags: artists, engagement, participation



Author: Sarah Boiling and Clare Thurman

Publication Date: June 2018

Summary

Engagement approaches.

Details

Audience engagement is at the heart of the Creative People and Places (CPP) programme, and this research aims to map and analyse the range of different approaches to engage new audiences that are being used across the network; identify the success factors and challenges of these approaches; and share the learning and insights gained by CPP Places to support audience engagement.

This report was commissioned by the Creative People and Places network.

Download or View Resource

Developing a Foundation for Quality Guidance

By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/developing-a-foundation-for-quality-guidance/>

March 27, 2019

Categories: Research, Resources

Tags: artists, ArtWorks Scotland, Practice, quality

Developing a Foundation for Quality Guidance for arts organisations and artists in Scotland working in participatory settings

A report commissioned by Creative Scotland

Rachel Blanche
September 2014

Author: Rachel Blanche

Publication Date: September 2014

Summary

Providing a foundation for a quality framework for participatory arts.

Details

Commissioned to provide a foundation for a quality framework for the participatory arts in Scotland, rationalising, synthesising and condensing learning from the body of knowledge extant in the fields of arts, culture and education, including the Artworks programme, to inform the development of a guidance toolkit.

[Download or View Resource](#)

ArtWorks Navigator: Good Practice Gets Better

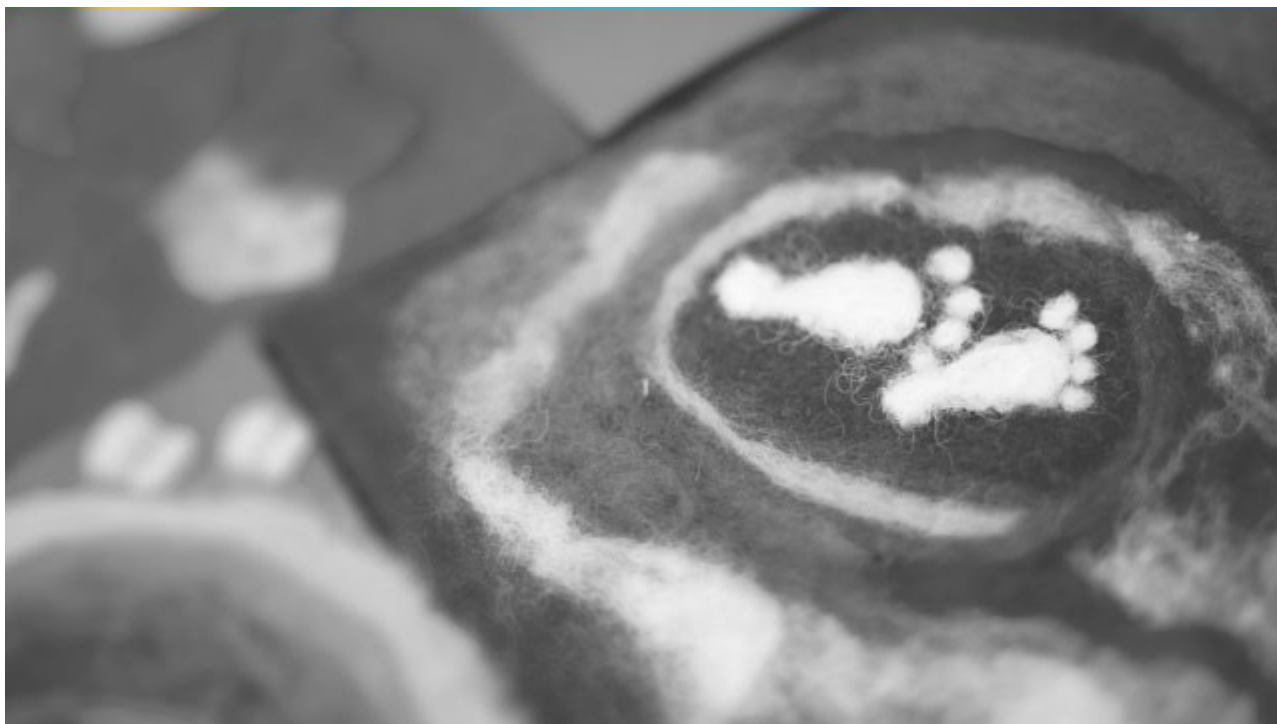
By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/artworks-navigator-good-practice-gets-better/>

March 27, 2019

Categories: Evaluations & Reports, Resources

Tags: artists, ArtWorks Navigator, codes, Practice, qualifications, standards



Author: ArtWorks Navigator

Publication Date: May 2013

Summary

ArtWorks Navigator pathfinder plan 2013 to 2014.

Details

A re-focused proposal and plan from ArtWorks Navigator for work from June 2013 to September 2014, supporting the overall ArtWorks aim to help develop artists of any artform working in any way in any participatory setting. Based on work undertaken by Navigator and the other pathfinders.

[Download or View Resource](#)

What Do You Need?

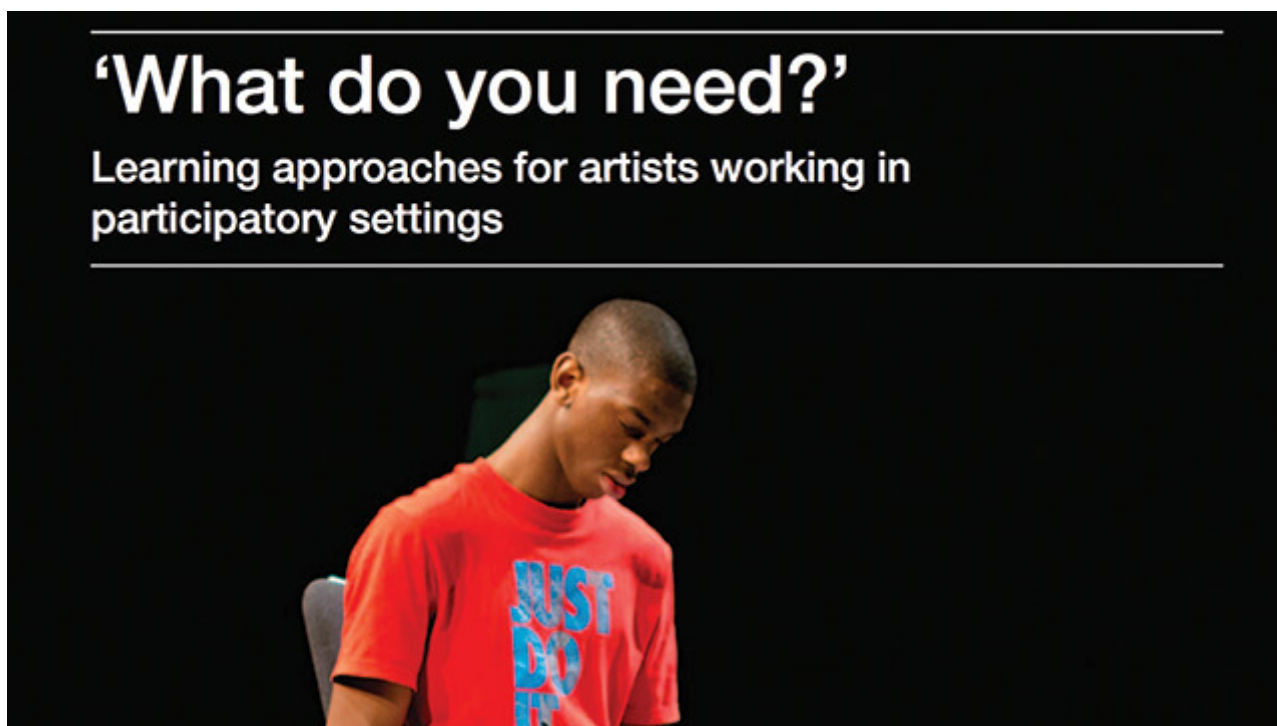
By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/what-do-you-need/>

March 27, 2019

Categories: Research, Resources

Tags: artists, collaboration, commissioners, CPD, employers, funders, further education, higher education, training



Author: Dr Susanne Burns

Publication Date: September 2014

Summary

Learning approaches for artists working in participatory settings.

Details

Identifies the key features of effective learning provision; prompts questions about the role of funders, employers and learning providers; and encourages a collaborative approach. Six case study examples show approaches in action with aims, structure, process, content and critical learning.

[Download or View Resource](#)

ArtWorks: Partnership, collaboration and communities of practice Working Paper 10

By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/artworks-partnership-collaboration-and-communities-of-practice-working-paper-10/>

March 27, 2019

Categories: Research, Resources

Tags: collaboration, partner, partnership, Pathfinder



Author: Dr Susanne Burns

Publication Date: February 2015

Summary

The impact of collaborative working across and within pathfinders.

Details

Outlines partnership working learning through the PHF ArtWorks Special Initiative, exploring the impact of a delivery mode based on collaboration and collective working on both the programme partnership as a whole and the individual Pathfinder partnerships.

[Download or View Resource](#)

ArtWorks: Reflections on Developing Practice in Participatory Settings

By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/artworks-reflections-on-developing-practice-in-participatory-settings/>

March 27, 2019

Categories: Research, Resources

Tags: artists, commissioners, CPD, employers, funders, further education, higher education, Practice, quality, training



Author: Dr Susanne Burns

Publication Date: March 2015

Summary

Overview of learning from the PHF ArtWorks Special Initiative.

Details

Sets out the 'why, 'what' and 'how' of the PHF ArtWorks Special Initiative, reviewing what was learned about the training and development needs of artists; methods for promoting quality; and creating the conditions for change. Invites those sharing a commitment to participatory arts and understanding the benefits of strengthening support for artists to join in developing a collective voice to match strong collective practice.

[Download or View Resource](#)

HE Open Lab Evaluation Report

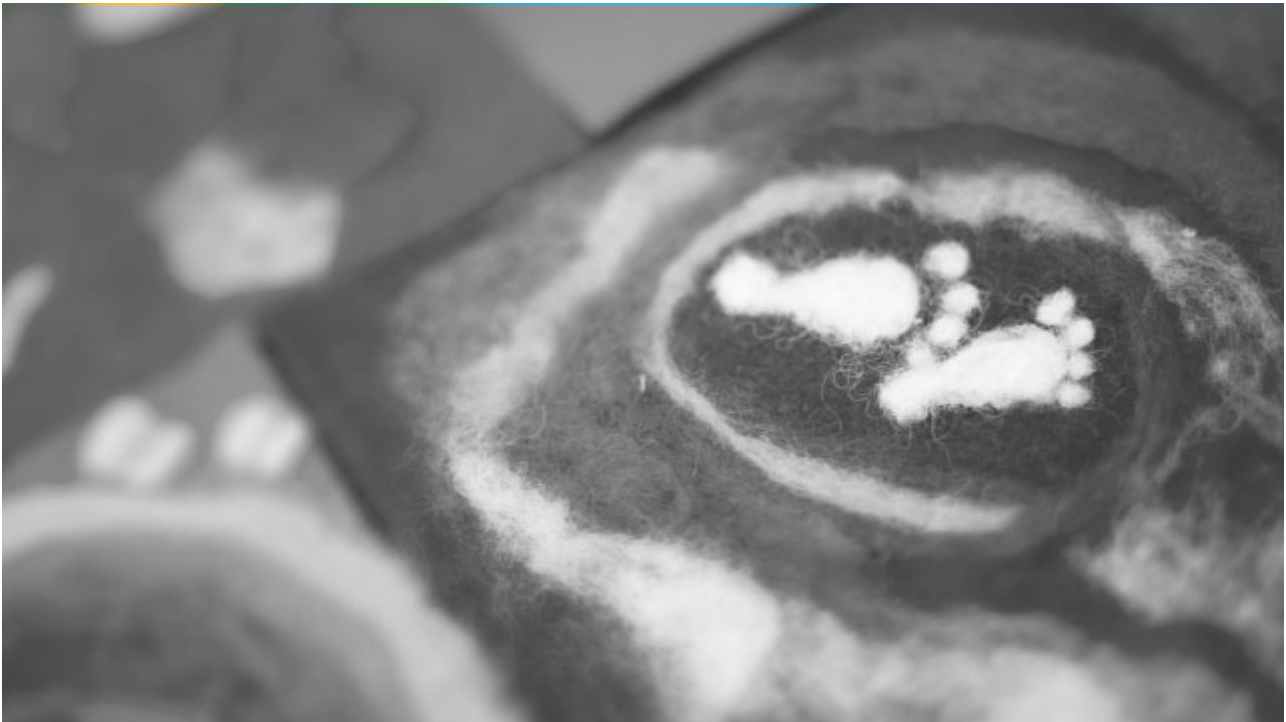
By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/he-open-lab-evaluation-report/>

March 27, 2019

Categories: Evaluations & Reports, Resources

Tags: artists, ArtWorks London, CPD, Practice, training



Author: ArtWorks London

Publication Date: April 2014

Summary

Evaluation of postgraduate students' experiences of an Open Lab.

Details

Evaluation report drawn from a survey of participants on a four-day Open Lab for postgraduate students from across art forms to explore their practice and strengthen its critical framework.

[Download or View Resource](#)

ArtWorks: A view from funders

By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/artworks-a-view-from-funders/>

March 27, 2019

Categories: Research, Resources

Tags: artists, collaboration, CPD, employers, funders, participants, quality, training

Paul Hamlyn
Foundation

Art
Works | Developing
Practice in
Participatory
Settings

ArtWorks: A view from funders

Author: Dr Susanne Burns

Publication Date: March 2015

Summary

How funders can support project embedded artists' training and CPD and quality practice.

Details

ArtWorks research has shown that funders can help raise the profile of participatory arts and promote quality by encouraging employers and funded organisations to embed paid opportunities for artists' training and CPD within projects. Four funders share what ArtWorks success could look like in five years' time: the work being properly valued; artists' development supported; a quality framework focused on the participant experience; and more joined up working.

[Download or View Resource](#)

Older People's Arts Network (OPAN) Case Studies

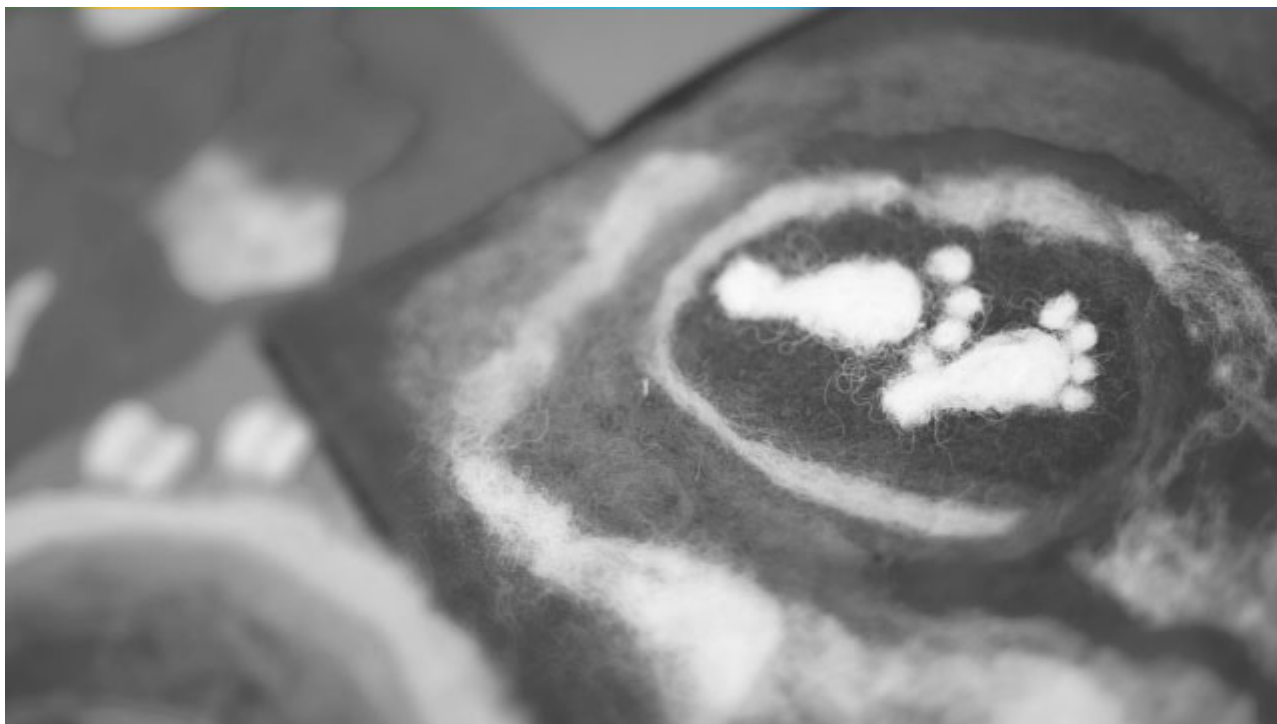
By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/older-peoples-arts-network-opan-case-studies/>

March 27, 2019

Categories: Case Studies, Resources

Tags: artists, ArtWorks London, older people, practice Download File



Author: ArtWorks London

Publication Date: April 2014

Summary

Case studies of organisations working with older people.

Details

Provides examples of work with older people in participatory settings by four organisations belonging to OPAN (Older People's Arts Network) in Lewisham. Offers a snapshot of current practice and prompt for discussion about the most effective support for artists and practitioners working in these settings.

[Download or View Resource](#)

Supporting the Self-employed Artist as Citizen

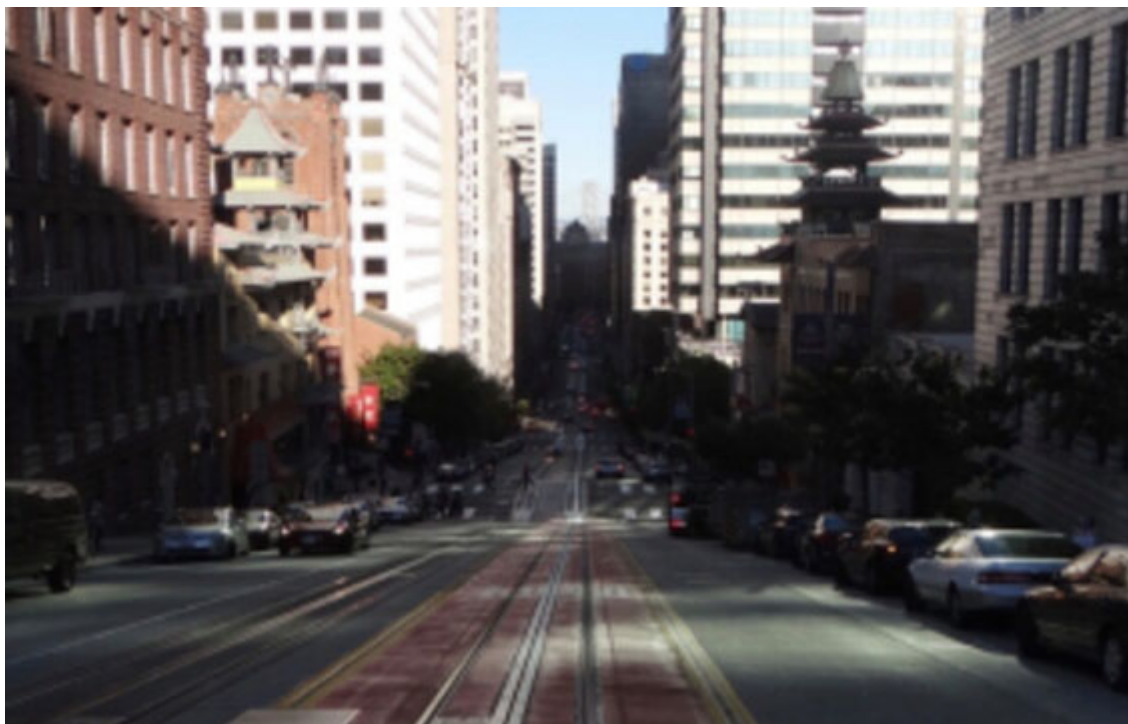
By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/supporting-the-self-employed-artist-as-citizen/>

March 27, 2019

Categories: Research, Resources

Tags: artists, collaboration, CPD, partnership working



Author: Dr Susanne Burns

Publication Date: March 2018

Summary

Learning from the USA and Australia about entrepreneurial solutions to support artists working in participatory settings.

Details

This report covers findings and subsequent recommendations arising from Susanne Burns' Winston Churchill Memorial Trust Travel Fellowship supported visit to the USA and Australia to explore entrepreneurial solutions supporting artists working in participatory settings. Artists can only play their role if they are supported by the other players in the system – the funders and policy makers, commissioners and employers and institutions. To generate the system and 'field' change needed we must generate field wide partnership working, communality, collaboration and collective action.

Download or View Resource

Evaluation of Clean Break Open Lab Development Programme

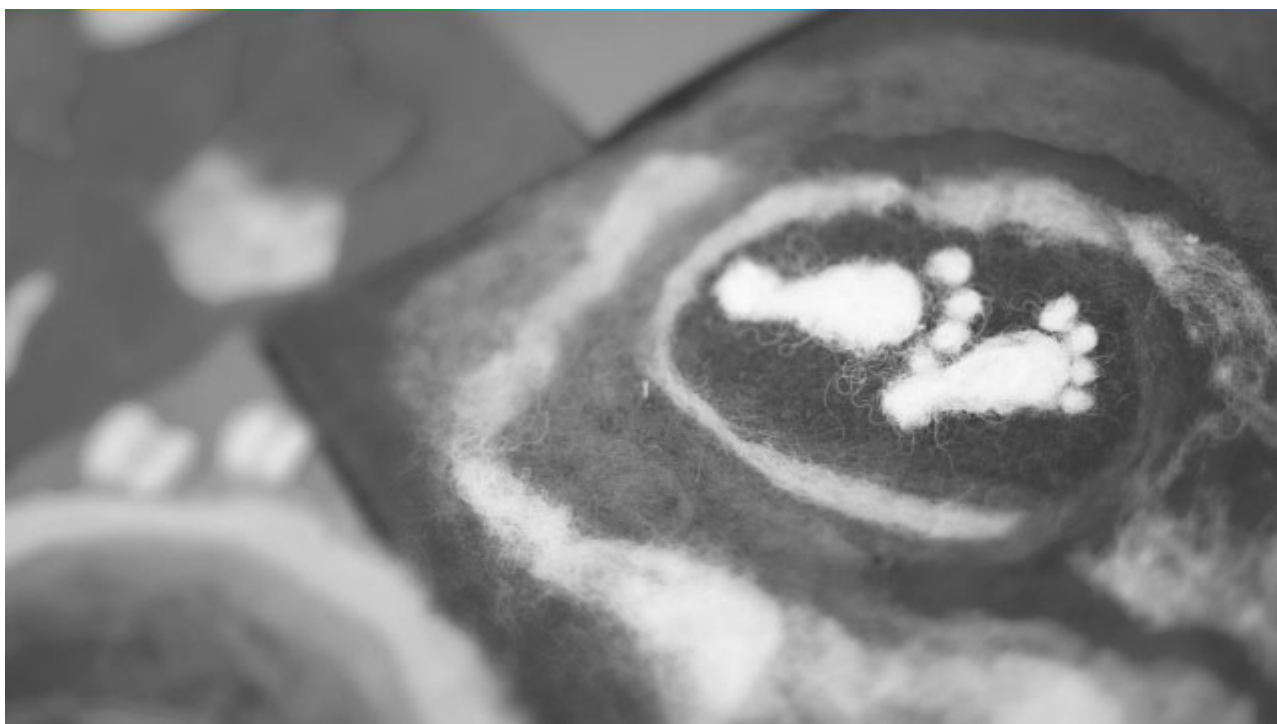
By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/evaluation-of-clean-break-open-lab-development-programme/>

March 27, 2019

Categories: Evaluations & Reports, Resources

Tags: artists, ArtWorks London, CPD, criminal justice, lab, Practice



Author: ArtWorks London

Publication Date: March 2014

Summary

Evaluation of Clean Break Theatre Company Open Lab.

Details

Evaluation report drawn from a survey of participants on the ArtWorks London and Clean Break Theatre Company Open Lab which took place between June 2013 and March 2014, enabling Clean Break to create exercises to understand the company's theatre making practices with women with experience of the criminal justice system and ArtWorks to test the Lab model.

[Download or View Resource](#)

Reprising The Conversation

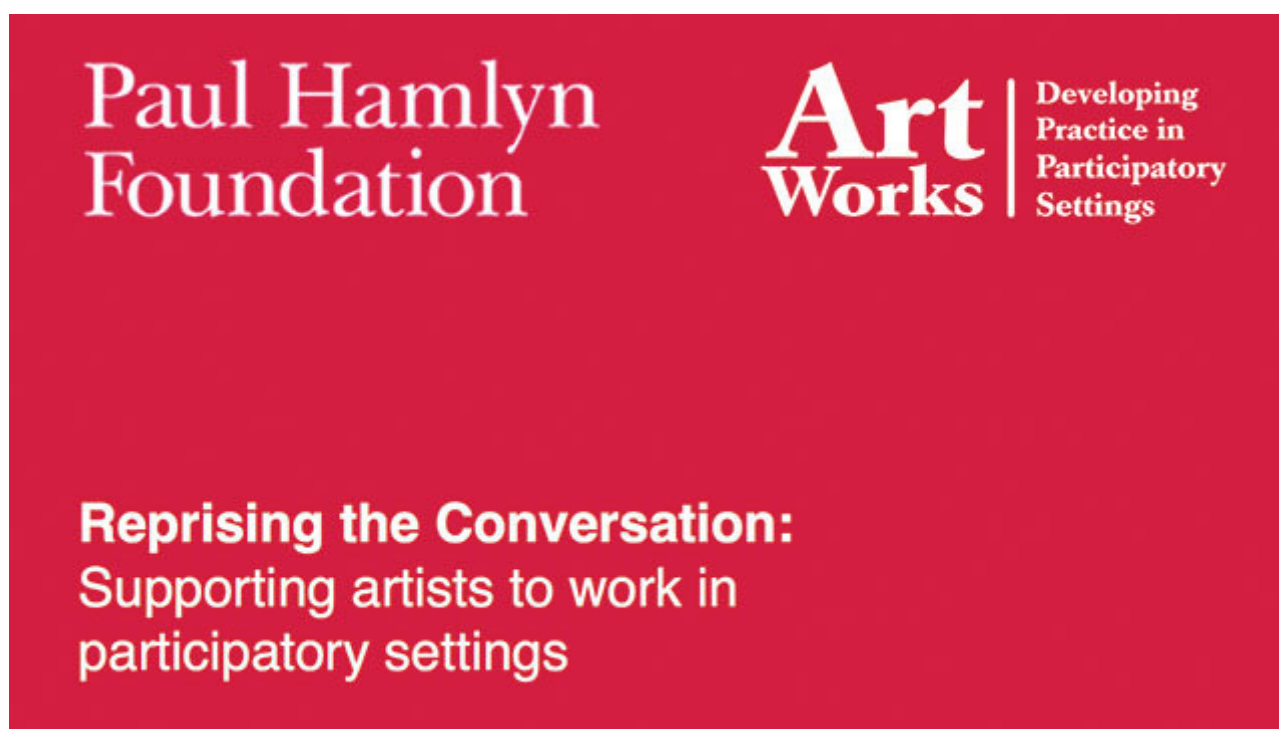
By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/reprising-the-conversation/>

March 27, 2019

Categories: Evaluations & Reports, Resources

Tags: artists, collaboration, commissioners, employers, further education, higher education, partnership



Author: Dr Susanne Burns and Tamsin Cox

Publication Date: March 2014

Summary

PHF ArtWorks 2013 Conference and development awards report.

Details

Brings together learning from Changing the Conversation, the PHF ArtWorks Special Initiative 2013 conference, and outcomes from projects supported through subsequent development awards. Reflects on the need for dispersed leadership; a collective voice; new ways of thinking and doing; and addressing sustainability in terms of future resources and responsibilities.

[Download or View Resource](#)

Evaluation of Cross Arts Professional Development Programme

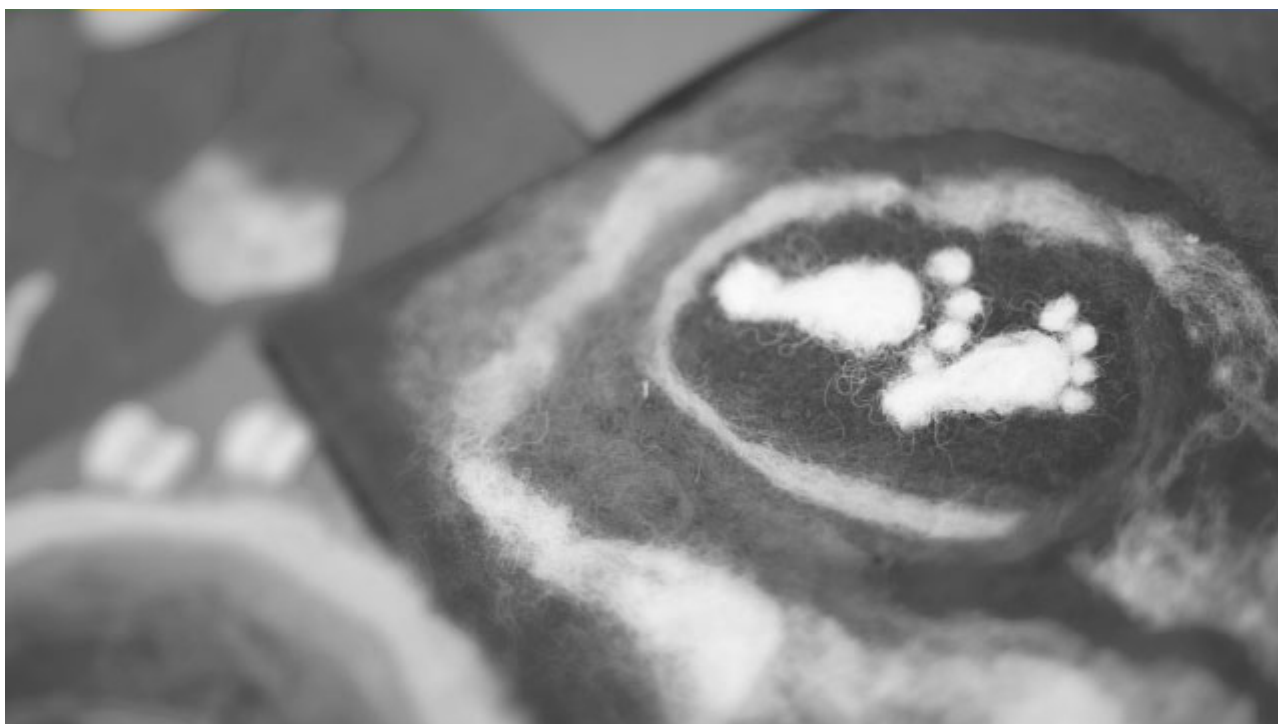
By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/evaluation-of-cross-arts-professional-development-programme/>

March 27, 2019

Categories: Evaluations & Reports, Resources

Tags: artists, ArtWorks London, CPD, early years, primary education, vulnerable adults



Author: ArtWorks London

Publication Date: February 2014

Summary

Evaluation of cross arts professional development weekends.

Details

Evaluation report drawn from survey responses by participants on an ArtWorks London and Barbican Guildhall Creative Learning professional development weekend programme taking place between September 2013 and February 2014. Two of the four single artform (music) weekends were changed into cross arts opportunities for emerging to mid-career artists working in participatory settings: with vulnerable adults and with early years/primary education.

[Download or View Resource](#)

Download or View Resource

ArtWorks Development Awards Evaluation

By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/artworks-development-awards-evaluation/>

March 27, 2019

Categories: Evaluations & Reports, Resources

Tags: artists, careers, commissioners, CPD, employers, further education, higher education, Practice, training



Author: Tamsin Cox

Publication Date: April 2014

Summary

Projects taking forward ideas from the Changing the Conversation 2013 PHF ArtWorks conference.

Details

Learning from PHF ArtWorks Development Award projects which researched a question/ proposition, tested the feasibility of a solution or piloted a solution with participants. Projects focused on artists at different career stages and working with different parts of the 'system' currently supporting and engaging artists working in participatory settings.

[Download or View Resource](#)

Knowledge Zone: Conference 2016

By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/knowledge-zone-conference-2016/>

March 27, 2019

Categories: Resources, Videos

Tags: artists, ArtWorks Cymru, partnership, quality



Author: ArtWorks Cymru

Publication Date: March 2017

Summary

Videos from the 2016 ArtWorks Cymru conference.

Details

Videos of the 2016 ArtWorks Cymru conference keynotes (English and Cymraeg), seed fund presentations, research panel discussions, quality provocations and poem.

Knowledge Zone: Conference 2016

Peer Artist Learning project report

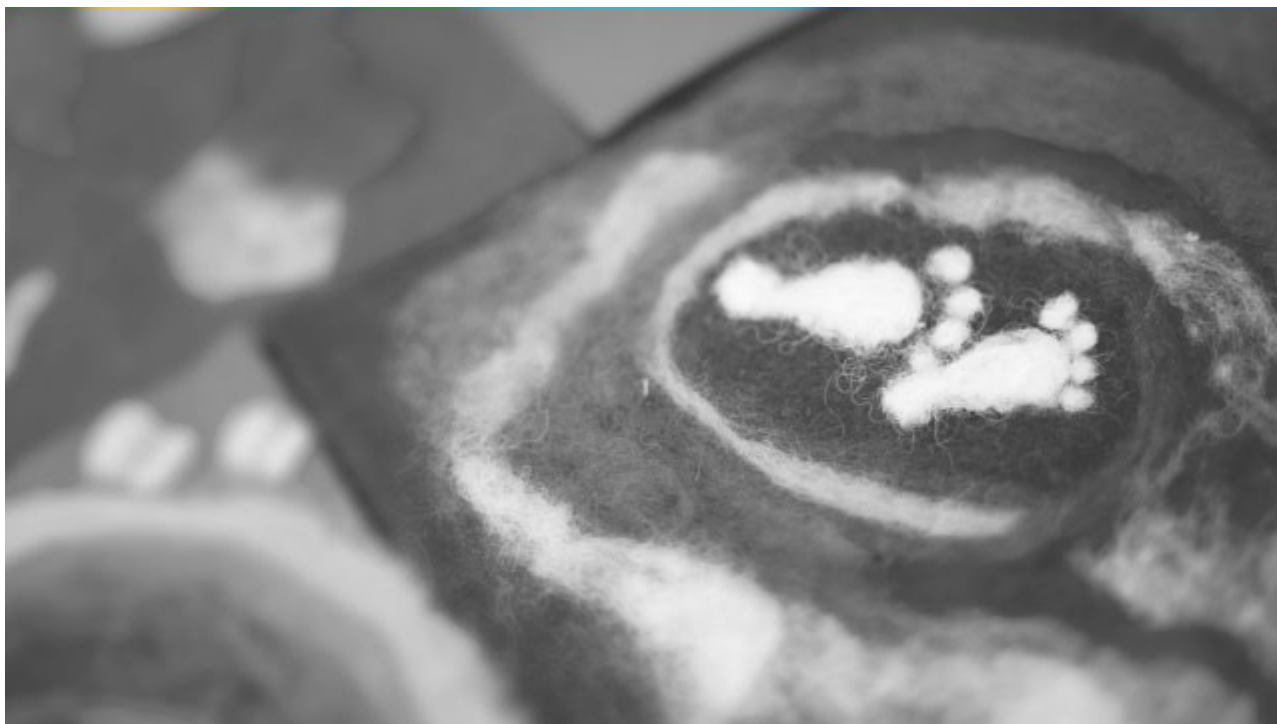
By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/peer-artist-learning-project-report/>

March 27, 2019

Categories: Evaluations & Reports, Resources

Tags: artists, ArtWorks North East, conversation, CPD, Practice, training



Author: Dave Camlin

Publication Date: July 2012

Summary

Focused conversations project providing insights for future training.

Details

Reports on an ArtWorks North East project involving 35 artists, with varied experience in participatory arts, to take part in structured opportunities to reflect with peers on their experiences, in pairs and groups (large and small). Supported by reflective journal-keeping, the artists identified a number of 'critical factors', skills and qualities they believed should inform future training design.

[Download or View Resource](#)

Skillset Research and Gap Analysis for Artists Working in Participatory Settings: Phase 1 Report

By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/skillset-research-and-gap-analysis-for-artists-working-in-participatory-settings-phase-1-report/>

March 27, 2019

Categories: Research, Resources

Tags: artists, CPD, further education, higher education, qualifications, quality, skills, training



Skillset Research and Gap Analysis for Artists Working in Participatory Settings

Phase 1 Report

Author: Consilium Research & Consultancy

Publication Date: March 2012

Summary

Artists' required skills, existing support provision and recommendations.

Details

Examines the skills, knowledge and qualities required by artists across art forms and identifies existing support provision. Includes recommendations about initial training; CPD; creating a more confident and professional sector; and quality assurance.

[Download or View Resource](#)

ArtWorks Cymru

By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/artworks-cymru/>

March 27, 2019

Categories: Case Studies, Evaluations & Reports, Research, Resources, Toolkits & Guidance, Videos

Tags: artists, ArtWorks Cymru, CPD, evaluation, participants, Practice, quality



Author: ArtWorks Cymru

Publication Date: August 2017

Summary

Developing practice in participatory settings website.

Details

ArtWorks Cymru is a two year programme based in Wales developing practice in participatory settings, and supporting the continuing professional development of artists at different stages of their career working in participatory settings. From 2015 to 2017, ArtWorks Cymru is undertaking a range of activity including a call out for artists to run Learning Groups based around different contexts, two seed fund rounds, and a range of network events.

ArtWorks Cymru website

ArtWorks Cymru Quality Principles

By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/artworks-cymru-quality-principles/>

March 27, 2019

Categories: Resources, Toolkits & Guidance

Tags: artists, ArtWorks Cymru, collaboration, participants, partnership, Practice, quality



Author: ArtWorks Cymru

Publication Date: December 2016

Summary

Quality principles for intention, activity and people.

Details

Nine best practice principles across three key areas of Intention, Activity and People offer prompts to talk about quality that can be used by everyone who is making participatory arts. The principles are designed to help think about how to make good work even better, to show the value of participatory practice and to make sure participants get the best experiences possible.

ArtWorks Cymru Quality Principles

ArtWorks Cymru Conference 2016 – Provocations on Quality

By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/artworks-cymru-conference-2016-provocations-on-quality/>

March 27, 2019

Categories: Resources, Videos

Tags: ArtWorks Cymru, quality



Author: ArtWorks Cymru

Publication Date: November 2016

Summary

Two provocations on quality.

Details

Miranda Ballin from Valleys Kids and Kathryn Deane from ArtWorks Alliance set their stalls to prompt discussion on quality frameworks.

Provocations on Quality

ArtWorks Alliance A business plan for action, 2017-2020 Summary

By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/artworks-alliance-a-business-plan-for-action-2017-2020-summary/>

March 27, 2019

Categories: Evaluations & Reports, Resources

Tags: advocacy, collaboration, partnership



Author: ArtWorks Alliance

Publication Date: November 2017

Summary

Summary of the Alliance's vision, aim, values, objectives and activities.

Details

This summary of ArtWorks Alliance's business plan written by partners outlines the Alliance's vision, aim, values, objectives and delivery activities, with its supportive operational structure, with a focus on the period October 2017 to March 2019.

[Download or View Resource](#)

ArtWorks Alliance Bibliography

By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/artworks-alliance-bibliography/>

March 27, 2019

Categories: Research, Resources

Tags: bibliography



Author: ArtWorks Alliance

Publication Date: July 2017

Summary

Bibliography of resources in the AWA Knowledge Bank.

Details

Lists in alphabetical order all the publications and other resources from the ArtWorks Paul Hamlyn Foundation special initiative, development grant funded projects and legacy programmes.

[Download or View Resource](#)

ArtWorks: A Call to Action

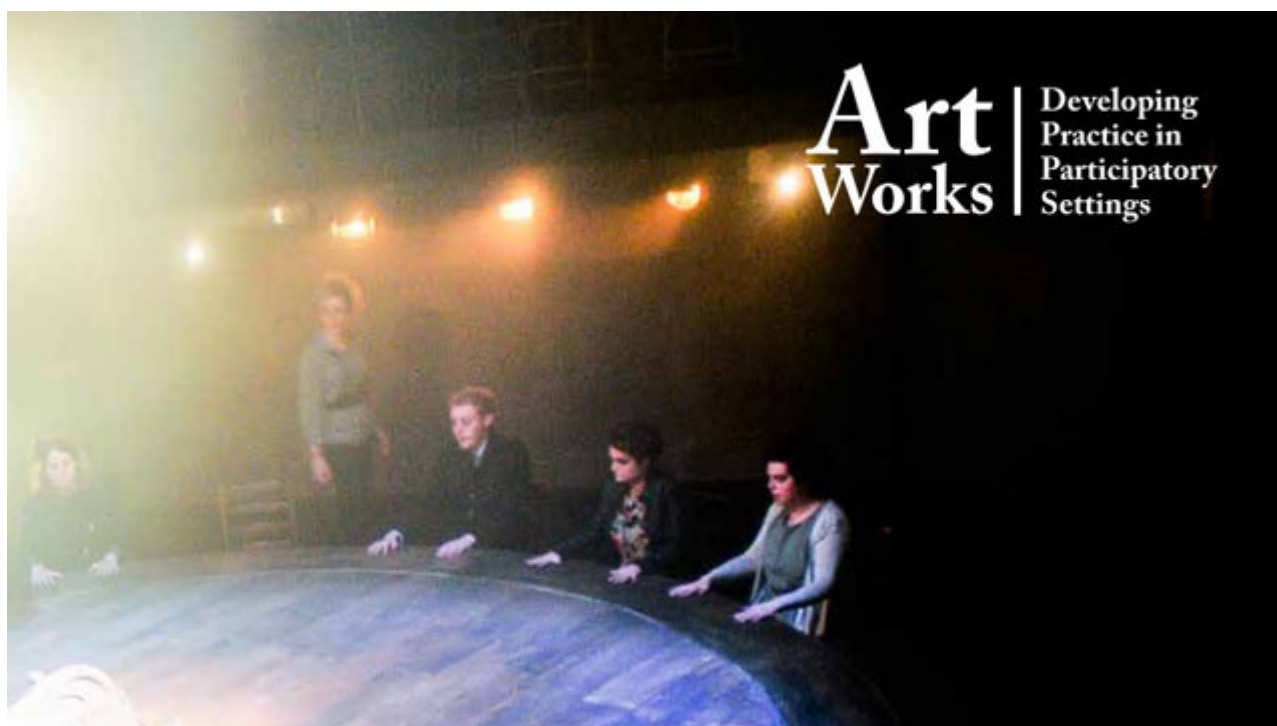
By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/artworks-a-call-to-action/>

March 27, 2019

Categories: Research, Resources

Tags: artists, commissioners, development, employers, funders, participants, Practice, quality, training



Author: ArtWorks

Publication Date: March 2015

Summary

How we can collectively strengthen practice in participatory settings.

Details

Drawing on the learning from ArtWorks, this publication calls on the sector to build on our work and create better support for artists. It sets out actions we believe must be taken if we are to see the changes our sector needs. Some of our recommendations are aimed at particular groups within the participatory arts 'system'. Others apply to us all.

[Download or View Resource](#)

A Restless Art

By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/a-restless-art/>

March 30, 2019

Categories: Research, Resources

Tags: art, artist, community, cultural democracy, history, participation, participatory, quality



Author: François Matarasso

Publication Date: January 2019

Summary

A book about participatory art and its more radical predecessor, community art.

Details

A Restless Art How participation won, and why it matters as described by John Fox:

‘At last a reliable text raising the neglected profile of community and participatory art practitioners...a scholarly reflective theory, historical insight and a passionate manifesto for ways of creating social transformation.’

You can also order a print copy for £10 [here](#).

[Download or View Resource](#)

From Small Shifts to Profound Changes

By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/from-small-shifts-to-profound-changes/>

March 31, 2019

Categories: Research, Resources

Tags: artists, commissioning, community, Practice, socially engaged



Author: Elizabeth Lynch and Miriam Nelken

Publication Date: March 2019

Summary

What works when commissioning socially engaged art.

Details

There are a range of approaches to working with artists across the 21 Creative People and Places (CPP) organisations. Research was commissioned to understand the wider impact of the programme on artistic practice and the cultural sector and is also more widely relevant to anyone involved in commissioning artists to collaborate with communities. The report captures the perspectives of artists who have been commissioned to create new work and of team members responsible for programming and working with artists and communities. Using CPP practice as the starting point, it pulls out transferable learning about what works when commissioning socially engaged art – for artists, for commissioners and for communities.

Download or View Resource

Breathing in...the oxygen of participatory arts

By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/breathing-inthe-oxygen-of-participatory-arts/>

May 16, 2019

Categories: News



Three partners from the ArtWorks Alliance Admin Group (previously known as the Leadership Group, but successful distributed leadership led to the name change...) share their experiences of collective and collaborative working for better participatory arts.

If you're thinking about whether to join in the Alliance as a supporter or partner – or just wondering how being part of the network makes a difference to people and their organisations – hear from those already making and taking the benefits it provides.

First up, Chris Stenton, Executive Director of People Dancing. People Dancing, along with a-n The Artists Information Company, ArtQuest, Engage, National Association of Writers in Education and Sound Sense, were members of ArtWorks Navigator, one of the original Paul Hamlyn Foundation *ArtWorks: developing practice in participatory settings* pathfinder projects. ArtWorks Navigator established ArtWorks Alliance to build on the legacy of ArtWorks and address the identified sector need to 'share and learn from one another's experience and better represent the interests of everyone working in the field.

'The range of experiences within the ArtWorks Alliance network is fantastically broad and diverse: engagement with it offers a fast-track to a whole host of deep knowledge and different

perspectives united by a common theme. The network's approach is based on meaningful dialogue: it is non-hierarchical, very generous and reflects the participatory arts practices we strive to represent and progress. I can't think of a single Forum or event when new knowledge or learning hasn't been gained, both personally and organisationally. We coalesce and take responsibility between us for making things happen. It is refreshing, reassuring and re-energising in equal measure.'

And this from Russell Martin, Director of Artquest, another member of the ArtWorks Navigator pathfinder.

'ArtWorks Alliance lets me tie up all the various strands of our organisation's thinking about participatory practice in one place, re-using the best thinking and experience in our programme. We don't have to begin from scratch on projects and research as we get access to how other organisations have tackled problems in the past. We can find allies – sometimes in unexpected places – to help shape and deepen our thinking by drawing from how artists work in other cultural sectors, across art forms we don't specifically cover. It's a model that's reinvigorated other partnerships we have with better ways to work.'

Finally, hear from Catherine Rogers who first got involved in the Alliance as a Board member representative of partner Arts Development UK, before it closed. She liked what she found so much, she joined up with her own organisation, Creative Leicestershire.

'ArtWorks Alliance has become something of a lifeline, connecting us to a national network of organisations who are open to new people and new ideas, who value differences and care deeply about participatory arts. We are a service that supports individual arts practitioners and small creative enterprises in our local area, so the reciprocal support of the Alliance is vital not only to us but also to the hundreds of people we work with, who sometimes feel they don't have a voice. Often participatory arts are hidden from the headlines when our sector celebrates success, but they are our oxygen. ArtWorks Alliance helps us breathe it in so we can energise the conversations that need to happen.'

From Dresden with Love

By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/from-dresden-with-love/>

May 23, 2019

Categories: News



'The Necessary Space' is the latest organisation to join ArtWorks Alliance. Here Director Simon Sharkey, who previously worked for partner National Theatre of Scotland, writes about why theatre has never been so urgent and important, calling on us to act on Martin Luther King's 'Fierce Urgency of Now'.

I'm at the Burgerbbunen (Citizens' theatre) festival in Dresden. It's also called 'Our Stage'. I was invited by director Miriam Tscholl to be part of a panel helping her curate the festival. This year, it is presented in collaboration with the European Theatre Convention. It's the festival's fourth edition and, in my opinion, one of the most exciting things on the European theatre calendar. The work is exclusively drawn from artists and organisations working in 'participatory' settings: though they, like me, might not define the work in that way, it has this ethos at its heart. Miriam, her colleagues and associates are pushing the boundaries and shaping the future of theatre in Dresden – and across Europe – with their Burgerbuhnen model.

Last night, I sat in a packed auditorium to watch a dance piece performed by dancers who are all wheelchair users, with the exception of one who has CP (cerebral palsy). Their form was completely unique and a standing ovation rattled the rafters when they were called for several bows.

The night before, I stood in another theatre, along with the rest of a packed house to applaud the En Dynamei Theatre Ensemble and Eleni Efthymiou from Greece. This eclectic troupe of artists has learning difficulties and other physical and mental health challenges. Their story – ‘The Fan Man or How to Dress an Elephant’ – looked at the often brutal and sometimes joyous ways in which their ‘disability’ was used to make them ‘other’. We stood in solidarity – all of us being ‘other’, and finding unity in diversity. It was glorious.

Later the same evening, I witnessed one of the most honest and authentic pieces of theatre I’ve ever seen. The fans of RC Lens in France have a reputation for being the most passionate in the world. They took to the stage in full fan regalia: flags, football tops, scarves, booze and mascots. They regaled us with the stories of their passion for the club and how it was a focus for their town: a steel, coal and textiles town. When the industries collapsed, the football club was an even stronger focus for social cohesion. Mothers, grandmothers, sons and daughters all appeared in the show to share a moving and politically charged narrative about how their town of socialist communist communities is shifting to the alt right because they are being ignored. Even their football team is banning behaviours that are working class. It was a complex and rousing night of theatre with drums and horns and chants and half time snacks.

I then watched a show where a mother and her son, through their mutual love of pop idol Sia, explored and navigated their way through the complexities of growing up and parenthood. This beautiful piece was made in Scotland by 21Common and has been touring the world for three years.

The rest of the festival is packed with ‘must see’ shows, talks and breakout sessions.

Tomorrow, a piece from Hungary has a homeless man play an interactive game with the audience; from Spain a piece called ‘Pending Vote’ turns the audience into the actors in debating and

shaping the future through voting; from South Africa a group of young people share their stories through dance. There is site specific work in people's houses; work from Belgium, Austria, Germany and beyond. I'm running workshops and speaking on a few panels, there's a café set up by refugees for us all to eat and share and hang out and discover the truth about each other. It is truly a celebration and festival of theatre made in participatory settings. And yet it's more.

Since leaving National Theatre of Scotland and setting up 'The Necessary Space', I have been very fortunate to be invited to talk, create work and share experience at festivals, symposia and forums across the world. What I see going on around the world and the UK is very exciting. I genuinely believe we are on the cusp of a revolution in theatre and art. It has been happening for decades, sometimes slowly in the margins and sometimes spectacularly in the bright light of the 'mainstream'. But like all revolutions, the foundations lie in years of thought and activism, of shaping and responding to shifts in society, in resistance to forces of conservatism and hierarchies, in recognising and seizing the opportunity when it comes along. That time is now. The Burgerbuhne Festival is another brilliant example of how art and theatre is shifting and moving centre stage for all to participate in. It is a brilliant example of 'seizing the opportunity'.

I was invited to talk about my new venture The Necessary Space and to expand on what I call 'Theatre of Opportunity'. In my talk, I refer to 'The Fierce Urgency of Now', a phrase coined by Martin Luther King in the midst of the civil unrest and revolution in America. I believe we are in the midst of an unprecedented paradigm change across the world and the old structures and ways of dealing with things are not working any more.

Politics doesn't work because it's broken and the idea of democracy (though always flawed) is easily undermined by social media: we saw it happen, and we see it happen again. Religion doesn't work because it's divisive and we put more faith in our algorithms than we do in our spiritual leaders: we turn to Google for answers not god. Media doesn't work – fake news, twitter, news feeds: who and what can we believe any more? Even war doesn't work, because we live in a global economy and the age of empire is over. We know that if Trump goes to war in Iran, it won't work because the market algorithms will shift and the people will be left behind. We are in a new paradigm and the old stories, hierarchies, means of expression and sharing are not serving us. Where do we go if church, parliaments, media and national institutions are failing us?

Theatre, my friends, has never been so urgent and important. We are responsible for shifting the view and creating the forums that reflect the needs, the yearning for community, identity, security, conversation, collaboration and truth. It is theatre, in all its forms, that helps us define our past and shape our futures. It is in participating in theatre that people are finding truth in their situation: finding new ways and new forms to share new stories.

The Burgerbuhnen Festival is doing this beautifully. There are signs all over the world that this shift is happening. I am aiming to create 'The Necessary Space' for this to grow in communities, both locally and globally. I've already started and am very encouraged with what is going on. I will be launching 'The Necessary Space' website at the end of June where I intend to continue this Blog and offer up other resources. I hope I'll see you there. For now, you can tune in to my Instagram which is Theatre_of_Opportunity.

From Dresden with Love

Simon

Leadership: me, you or us?

By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/leadership-me-you-or-us/>

June 20, 2019

Categories: News



Race, contest, competition... rivals, front runner, loser... knocked out, eliminated...the final battle... and the knives are out...These are the leadership words we've been hearing and reading of late.

Time to remember there's a bigger, broader and brighter picture available on other channels.

Look outwards at another country, where Jacinda Ardern the New Zealand Prime Minister led with hugs, communicated with clarity and demonstrated her integrity 'meaning what she says, saying what she means, unafraid and unbowed' and put it into action (see Suzanne Moore in *The Guardian*).

Look around at another sector, where The King's Fund Ninth Annual Leadership and Management

Summit for senior leaders in health and care organisations next month is all about compassionate and inclusive leadership.

Look across our sector, where there's not just attention to the Whose art? question but increasingly also the Who's leading? one and importantly, How?

Alongside others – like **A New Direction** and their Cultural Leadership Community programme enabling London teachers to take a leading role in cultural education, to name but one exciting initiative – ArtWorks Alliance contributes to leadership development in different ways, at different levels.

For example, **Engage** runs the Extend leadership programme for mid-career learning and participation colleagues from across the arts and cultural sector and across England, Scotland and Wales. It has a transformational effect on participants (yes, they're participants not delegates) and their sense of self as leaders. As one mentor noted about their mentee at the end of the last programme: 'They had a new level of influence, a goal to widen their leadership within the organisation and in turn to place their work and the work of their organisation in a leadership role within the sector.'

Heads Together Productions is mid-way through their innovative coaching-based programme Union –The Northern School for Creativity and Activism for emerging community artists and social activists excited about using creative approaches to achieve social change and make a better world. Trinity Laban offers Learning and Participation Fellowships supporting the professional development of individual music leaders working in any participatory music setting.

Interwoven Productions CIC's article in ArtsProfessional explains how their participatory, place-led art is not only influenced by the landscape of Exeter where they work, but also what François Matarasso calls working 'without help, without permission' where it is local people's active agency that leads and they own their art. Interwoven's hyper-local squilometre model 'runs in community perpetual motion', with support.

And looking in at itself as a network, the Alliance is exploring concepts of the decentralised organisation, deep democracy and ways of 'inhabiting participation' in how it works, as much as what it does.

There *are* different models of leadership – and leader/s – beyond the cacophony and lack of listening of the be-suited on a bar stool.

Mary Schwarz

Enhancing arts and culture in the criminal justice system: A partnership approach

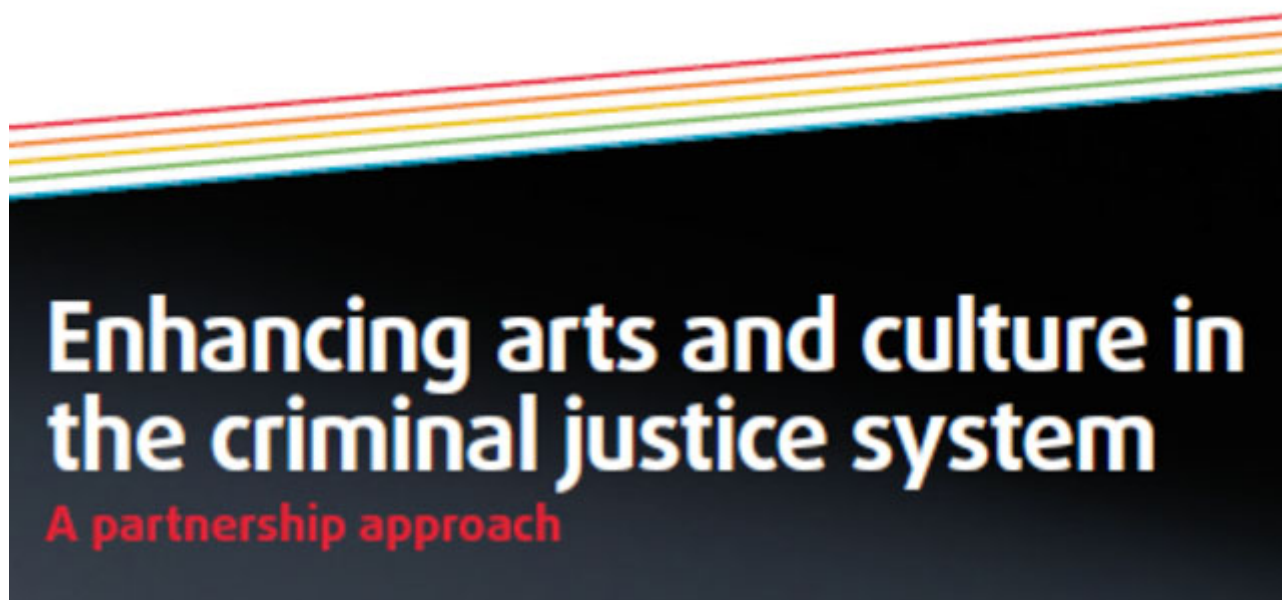
By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/enhancing-arts-and-culture-in-the-criminal-justice-system-a-partnership-approach/>

June 20, 2019

Categories: Resources, Toolkits & Guidance

Tags: artist, criminal justice, participation



Author: Jessica Plant and Dora Dixon et al

Publication Date: June 2019

Summary

Guide to working in criminal justice settings.

Details

This guide is for artists, arts organisations and cultural institutions interested in working in criminal justice settings. It is designed to assist the development of high quality arts and cultural practice in these unique environments, emphasising the practical, creative and ethical considerations.

The document outlines the complex and changing nature of the criminal justice system and makes

the case for why reaching out through the arts to those who are socially excluded is valuable, not only to the individual, but for arts and culture collectively. The toolkit provides practical information on how to deliver work in these settings. It sets out some principles of best practice, putting individuals with complex needs at the heart of effective interventions, encouraging partnership work and ensuring artistic quality.

[Download or View Resource](#)

The Sound of the Next Generation: A comprehensive review of children and young people's relationship with music

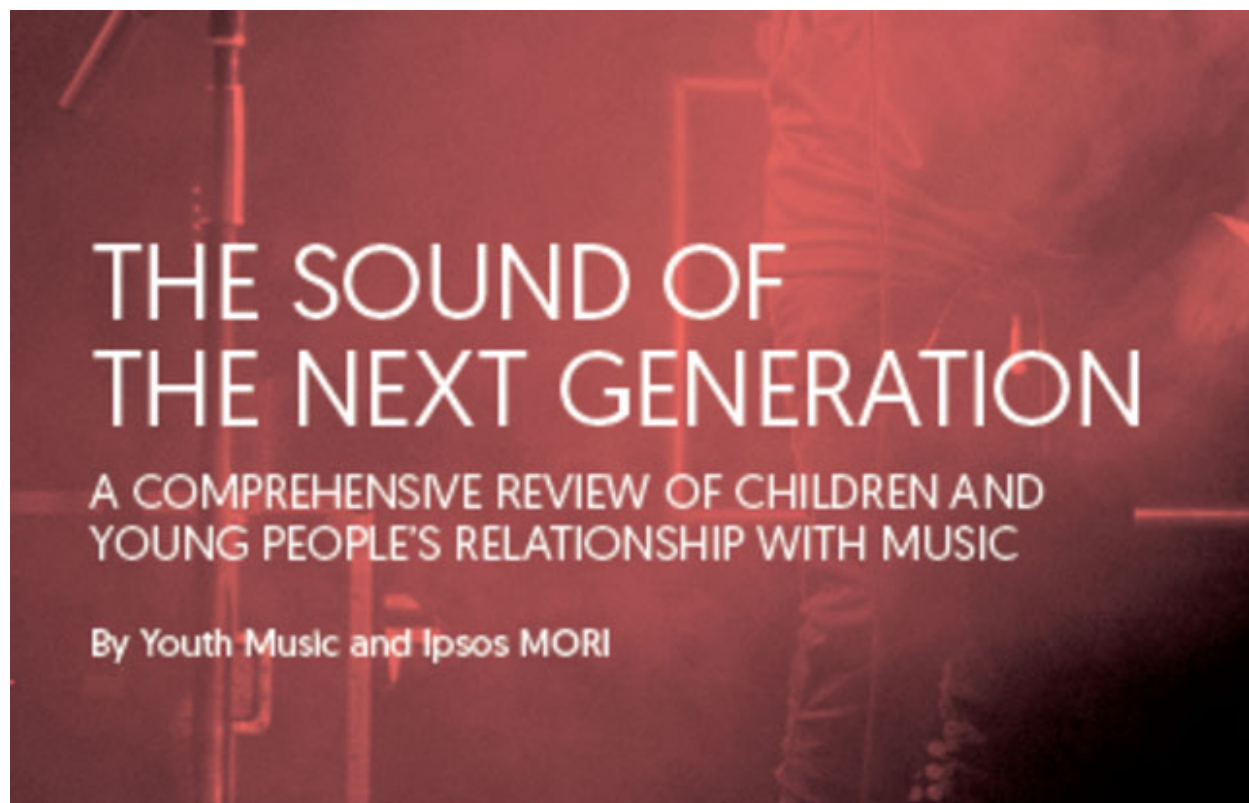
By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/the-sound-of-the-next-generation-a-comprehensive-review-of-children-and-young-peoples-relationship-with-music/>

June 20, 2019

Categories: Latest, Research, Resources

Tags: children and young people, music, participation



Author: Youth Music and Ipsos MORI

Publication Date: June 2019

Summary

Insights into young people and music-making

Details

This research offers ground-breaking insights into the diverse ways young people engage with and value music and music-making, bringing to light the positive and meaningful impact music has for them. Youth Music worked with Ipsos MORI to conduct online surveys with a representative sample of 1,000 young people aged 7 to 17 across England and create case studies of 14

participants involved in Youth Music projects. This was followed up with a series of in-depth expert interviews with industry leaders, psychologists and academics to understand the context of our findings and the wider impact of music on society.

[Download or View Resource](#)

Some thoughts after Wild Conference

By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/some-thoughts-after-wild-conference/>

July 17, 2019

Categories: News



Last week I spent two days at Wild Conference, the latest try at an Arts Council England-commissioned national arts conference, following events like State of the Arts and No Boundaries. Delivered – brilliantly – by Slung Low, led by Alan Lane, this had a very different feel and format.

It was a conference in a field. We paid what we decided, in advance. (The average came out at a perhaps surprisingly high £63. I had matched the day rate of a Slung Low member of staff, and paid £108, as it felt right to pay more than I assumed some artists might be able/want to.) It had a camp-fire going at all times. There were tents of different shapes and sizes instead of conference suites. You wore headphones with which you could listen to any of the presentations. (Side benefit: you could nip to the loo and not miss anything said.) There was a creche. You made and barbecued your own kebabs together at the first dinner break. And, perhaps most unusual of all, it was in Yorkshire and you needed sun cream. If you were one of the 100 no-shows for this sold out event, you missed a treat, and I hope your crisis has improved.

As an ageing untheatrical male prone to catching the sun, less averse than many to the 'listen to interesting speakers' type conference such as the TEDx York event where I first heard Alan Lane speak*, and often more of a lurker than a networker, I was a bit nervous to be honest. But I am happy to report it was one the most stimulating conferences I've been to in a very long time –

maybe even since the poetry conference in Grasmere when I sat behind Seamus Heaney and Melvyn Bragg. (Reader, I could have stroked Bragg's lustrous quiff but didn't, part of me regrets it to this day....)

I'm going to try and summarise the thoughts is sparked for me, around three main ideas: movement, acknowledging hurt and being human together.

If there was one speaker that struck home most for me personally, it was Penny Greenland of Jabadao, who spoke fantastically about the importance not just of 'dance' but of movement, especially the movement of play. She argued for 'movement as the core of empathy' and that 'we grow culture around how our body learns to be in the world'.

The conference was proof of this: not confined to air-conditioned rooms and uncomfortable chairs, given freedom to wander, to loll and lay down whilst listening, to talk to the old friends and comrades gathered and to new folk, not feeling too guilty you were missing something, the conversations felt freer and somehow more candid than they often are, partly because many reflected on that very 'freedom' and how to use it. There also seemed to be a lot less policing of language and thought than happens amongst disembodied selves online.

So many of our practices within culture restrict movement and shift us into our isolated heads alone, rather than our bodies sharing space. Think of how most meetings are run, let alone the differences between the seat and street experiences of theatre or dance. How might we bring mind and body together in how we work? I'll be thinking more about that when facilitating and when researching and writing. I'll also simply be moving for fun more – and if anyone gives me that 'Dad-dancing, eh?' look, I'll quote Penny Greenland on how young children move first for sensation, how it feels, not how it looks or the shape it makes.

There were some almost-practical sessions, such as that featuring a panel of people involved in Creative Civic Change projects, and more conceptual or issue-based discussions. The debate on arts education on the second day, introduced by a provocation by Erica Whyman, was especially interesting. It threw up practical ideas as well as reflection on the current difficulties. It also inspired a great interjection (shown in the photo by James Phillips above, which also happily captures my own reaction.) from Keith from Nigeria, one of the international artists and activists at the conference with the British Council, which boiled down to 'lord, you over-complicate this stuff in the Global West, just fucking relax, eh?' (*There was no delegate list so I'm afraid I don't know Keith's full name – if you do let me know and I'll edit/correct this.*) There was positivity and encouragement, but very little show-boating.

What struck me most the more I reflected afterwards was how often this positivity and commitment to new ways of working or being was articulated in relation to what I might call 'hurt' – although pain, trauma and loss are wrapped up in that term too. Whether it was the ongoing traumatic

personal, familial and structural legacy of colonialism; economic and social attack on places then forced into often clumsy regeneration; race, religion, gender or class-based exclusion or its flipside 'erasure by labels'; or the dangers felt by people identifying as LBGTQI, something in the atmosphere allowed for these experiences to be articulated and heard, attended to. That's not to say solutions were easy to find, but it felt like progress for people's experiences to be shared in this collegiate or comradely context. (Like all good conferences it also served as chance to catch up with people you feel are working on broadly the same 'project' as you.) Acknowledging hurt, let alone healing it, may not be easy but could be an important step for people working in/with culture in any kind of social context.

In a session looking forward to 2050 Florence Okoye described her approach as 'mundane futurism', which I empathised with. The session also glanced back to 1989, before many present were born. Thinking back to 1989 though, I remember a Green surge in the EU elections, and a period leading to the Berlin wall coming down, Thatcher being gone, Mandela being freed...

Maybe we need to take long views to stay optimistic rather than dystopian and to heal hurt. Some, maybe much, of our current pain has grown out of older, often hidden, hurt. Some may even represent progress tracing its slow arc forward, as what was once unacknowledged or unspeakable becomes a source of pride and identity for some but resentment for others clinging to the old world. (This is not to downplay people's current struggles in anyway.) The future may be 'intersectional' – there is a debate on how this plays out, I know – but it will also, I hope, be inter-generational. If you want to feel optimistic about this, or see why I might, watch this conversation in which a trans-girl and an older trans-women compare experiences. It contains both hurt and healing.

The final idea I took to heart, recently was something one of the speakers in the Creative Civic Change panel said, about how to do arts organisations should work in communities: Be human together. This sounds obvious, of course but it resonates with much I've been thinking about. It also sits alongside Alan Lane's mantra: Be useful. Be kind.

But so much business and cultural practice pushes people to act differently: to see people as markets, customers, providers or material rather than other humans trying to live full lives, making and passing on cultures together. The very format of the conference encouraged us to avoid this, and to take ownership of our own contributions. Looking back through my blogs on previous conferences, many of the issues remain the same. We know this, wherever we sit, stand or lay down. The challenge then is to act differently, to go with the bits that feel awkward for us as try, to be braver, more useful, more kind. And to forgive others things that may not fit our preferences –

I've concentrated on the positives here but there were niggles for me, as always, where I got frustrated with people or formats, or with myself for not just fucking relaxing as advised. You can start by forgiving this rather long, baggy blog.

Penny Greenland talked of there being two basic movement patterns. In 'reach and pull', which is encouraged in Western culture, a baby learns to grab things. Using 'yield and push' they learn to crawl and move. We may need to 'yield' a bit to hurt and trauma in order to 'push' not through but onwards, being human together. It might be fleeting, though I hope not, but I came away feeling hopeful and committed and with new stuff to consider, integrate and live up to.

**I wrote about this in 2011. Finding that link just now, I see I also said 'Can I suggest there's a sideline for theatre people in running/designing conferences, they seem to handle the 'theatrics' of them better than conference organisers.' #justsaying....*

Mark Robinson

Thinking Practice

Photo by, and used with kind permission of, James Phillips, one of a beautiful set from the two days.

Change from within, from many local actions

By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/change-from-within-from-many-local-actions/>

September 19, 2019

Categories: News



In May this year, I read an announcement to staff from the University of Central Lancashire (UCLan), that it had signed the new 'Civic University Agreement', reaffirming its commitment to Preston and its local communities. A commitment to a holistic approach to teaching, research and, perhaps most crucially for us, engagement. Six months into my new role at UCLan within the Faculty of Culture and Creative Industries, this resonated with our core ambitions as a new programme: UCLanDance. It aligned with all of the work the team here and I have done to date – that we all do in the participatory arts sector – building relationships, collaborating, cross-disciplinary working, listening and being responsive to our communities. So while I knew UCLanDance needed to be part of this university-wide movement and commitment to our city and region, first I needed to unpick what this meant a little more.

Universities have such a great presence in their town or city. They bring thousands of students to the local area and contribute greatly to the local economy. But what part do they play in the wellbeing of their communities? Alongside local authorities and the health sector, universities can be anchor institutions and, therefore, have responsibilities towards their communities: social, economic, educational, environmental and cultural.

Over the years, austerity and ambitions for global recognition and partnerships has led to a decline

in connection to the local, to place and people. That's not to say universities stopped working with communities, but now this is back at the top of the list of priorities for many, as at UCLan. Building meaningful and sustained relationships with local businesses, communities and other public sector organisations is key to ensuring this remains a genuine commitment. In Preston, we are already working to The Preston Model, an approach to community wealth-building pioneered by the City Council, so it feels like we have a strong local basis to build on.

This commitment has been formalised with the release of the agreement (mentioned at the start), following the UPP Foundation Civic University Commission. This major new enquiry into the future of the Civic University determines how universities can successfully serve their place in the 21st century within their local communities. To be truly local and rooted in their town or city. The agreement itself sets out four clear points:

- understanding and listening to the needs of local people
- a university understanding themselves and what they are able to offer
- working with other anchor institutions, businesses and community organisations in their locality
- creating a clear set of priorities with partners.

In essence, the strength in making connections and working together. As Lord Kerslake, Permanent Secretary at the Department of Communities and Local Government, has said:

'Universities have an irreplaceable and unique role in helping their host communities thrive – and their own success is bound up with the success of the places that gave birth to them.'

So as I sit at the launch of the Institute of Citizenship, Society and Change at UCLan, amongst colleagues and members of our local community, I feel encouraged that my new place of work is embracing these Civic University values. I also find myself saying, 'That's exactly what we do' to a colleague of mine at pretty much every point being made in the presentations! We're after the same thing here.

UCLanDance officially launched in November last year, following a commitment from the university to the development of an outreach programme, connecting our students to industry and communities and vice versa. A recognition that developing opportunities for collaboration, for sharing, for bringing communities together is vital.

At UCLanDance, we are nurturing the next generation of dance artists, whose work will go on to enrich the communities we live in. So we aim to empower our students to be a bold and creative driving force in our city, to have the skills, knowledge and experience to work across sectors, to bring people together and to create work which has a lasting impact.

Our work is deeply rooted in and responsive to our communities in Preston, Lancashire and the North West, across the healthcare, education, criminal justice, voluntary and community sectors. We currently have three Companies in Residence at UCLanDance; CPD series for dance artists and students; outreach activity working across the sectors mentioned above; research which supports the development and growth of the sector with evidence and impact; and performances taken out into communities at museums, train stations and local schools. We're placing access for all at the heart of our practice, with the aim of inspiring whole communities – we're playing our part in the Civic University. To-date we have already directly engaged with over 2,500 people and this is set to rise as we develop our programme through our second year.

UCLan is an important heartbeat of Preston, Lancashire and the North West region, just like other universities are in their own cities. We need to be sharing knowledge with our communities and collaboratively creating opportunities which are transformative and responsive to the here and now, to people's lives, challenges and successes.

Can we get back to the universities of the Victorian era, who were founded as expressions of civic pride? Can we reframe the landscape of Higher Education? As a witness to the commitment, passion and proactive work of UCLan, I think we can. UCLanDance is a very small part of a huge institution but our impact can be widespread, valued and integral to the university's civic responsibility.

So I finish this blog feeling even more inspired, ready to continue making our mark at UCLan and to make sure our work reaches across schools, across communities, across our city and region. I must admit that in my interview for this role I asked how big they wanted this new initiative to reach and they answered, 'As far as we can go' – which I said must mean going global!

Now, with big ambitions still part of the plan, I keep a quote at my desk from activist Grace Lee Boggs which says:

'Change takes place in living systems, not from above, but from within, from many local actions occurring simultaneously'.

Training the Community Musician

By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/training-the-community-musician/>

September 19, 2019

Categories: Evaluations & Reports, Resources

Tags: community, music, musician, participatory, participation, training

TRAINING THE COMMUNITY MUSICIAN

University of Aberdeen

18TH AND 19TH
FEBRUARY 2019



Author: Sound Sense et al

Publication Date: August 2019

Summary

Evaluation and summary report.

Details

Evaluation and summary report from the first Training the Community Musician symposium organised by Sound Sense with Edinburgh Youth Music Forum and the University of Aberdeen, held in February 2019 and attended by 50 participants – from those in training to experienced practitioner, producers, project managers and educators – from Canada, England, Ireland, Israel, Scotland, USA and Wales.

[Download or View Resource](#)

Creative People and Places Digital Engagement and Opportunities

By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/creative-people-and-places-digital-engagement-and-opportunities/>

October 16, 2019

Categories: Evaluations & Reports, Resources

Tags: audience, digital, participants, participation, Practice



Author: Audience Agency

Publication Date: May 2019

Summary

Use of digital tools & technologies.

Details

Report on how Creative People and Places projects are using digital tools and technologies and where the opportunities lie to further develop their approach. Includes examples of best practice in relation to digital engagement and development from the wider cultural and third sectors.

[Download or View Resource](#)

Participative arts and social value

By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/participative-arts-and-social-value/>

October 16, 2019

Categories: News



Dr Rob Watson shares research into social value and the opportunities presented by the 2012 Social Value Act, requiring the public sector to ensure the money it spends on services creates the greatest economic, social and environmental value for local communities.

Rob is the latest Associate to join ArtWorks Alliance, having previously represented partner Community Media Association.

It might seem like a basic question, but what do participative arts and media seek to deliver? What is it that we are trying to achieve by getting people involved in the creative process for arts and media – as co-producers – rather than just being a passive member of an audience?

Over the summer, I've spent time reading about public policy developments and the social economy, particularly the idea of social value. I'm happy to report that this is the kind of question that is increasingly being asked by social reformers from disciplines outside the participative arts

and media movements. Indeed, there is plenty of evidence that questions like this are being considered by public policymakers, administrators and planners. This might not be at a national level, but it is certainly creeping in at local levels, especially where there is devolved and autonomous decision making. My background is community media, but I believe the lessons I've learnt can be applied to creative and participatory arts practice just as readily.

Faced with a growing crisis in social wellbeing, in which record numbers of people are reporting they feel socially isolated, lonely and depressed, community radio is a good example of where ideas and practices of participation are demonstrating they can be a powerful tool. One that can play a significant role in social reform aimed at the alleviation of entrenched social problems.

There are many things community radio activists and volunteers do that can have a direct and lasting impact on people's lives. One area of increasing success in community radio is partnerships between community radio stations and public healthcare and wellbeing services. These partnerships between stations and public bodies are at an early stage of tentative development, with room for a more strategic approach to the social value role of community media clearly waiting to be explored: especially if it is informed by clear and urgent social wellbeing objectives, and founded on the principles of social value that have become rooted in the public sector procurement process since the enactment of the Social Value Act in 2012.

For example, Winchester Radio has grown from being a dedicated hospital radio station, to become an Ofcom licenced community radio station serving the city of Winchester. Nigel Dallard, a trustee of the charity that supports Winchester Radio, told me how changing needs associated with health care have transformed the station's focus. There has been a realignment of volunteers' work due to a need to address changes in people's expectations, both about radio and media services in general, and also about how people access hospital and medical services in particular. Patients are no longer staying in hospital for long periods. Instead, they are encouraged to manage their treatment by making fewer and more flexible visits to hospitals. This means the role of the traditional hospital radio service has become increasingly difficult to sustain. The solution, according to Nigel, was to apply for a community radio licence, which expanded the station's coverage and widened its social remit. Going from providing a primarily companionship service to patients in wards, the station now covers more general issues of concern in the city, while building on its legacy by advocating and developing participative media services as part of the wellbeing agenda.

Cathie Burges, who helps run Life Care Radio in Totnes, has had a similar experience. When the wired transmission systems the station used became obsolete, rather than dismantling the service, Cathie and her husband Mark with a core group of volunteers set about persuading the hospital managers they could redevelop the radio service, and in the process widen its scope. Life Care Radio now streams online, both on the internet and directly into care homes in the Totnes area,

where they provide dedicated programming to residents and their care community. Life Care Radio is a response to this change in approach, and doesn't simply *talk at* the residents from afar, but aims to *talk with* and foster a greater sense of community through the programming the volunteers produce.

The shift in patterns of healthcare services delivery has come at a time when the health promotion, or wellness, agenda, has moved to the forefront of healthcare planning. Dr Terri Eynon, a retired GP who volunteers at Hermitage FM in Coalville, has also helped champion the development of Carillon Wellbeing Radio in North West Leicestershire. Terri told me the idea is that health is not just about illness. Working with Jon Sketchley, who provides the core infrastructure and station management support for both Hermitage FM and Carillon Wellbeing Radio, Terri has endeavoured to pilot a new kind of community radio station. One that can work in close collaboration with local health and wellbeing services, local authorities and councils, as well as offering a radio service that reflects the interests and tastes of its audience. The aim of the project is to promote informed and educated decision-making about people's care and health needs.

Similarly, in Rochdale, Zahida Warriach runs a healthcare programme on Crescent Community Radio, a station aimed at people with a South Asian background living in the city and surrounding areas. Zahida's programme was initially developed in association with a local branch of the mental health charity Mind, but more recently has been supported by Greater Manchester Police and the local Commissioning and Care Group (the health care providers in the area), along with the local authority. Zahida believes that community radio, if properly supported, can play a crucial role in helping people in the community to understand health issues, while also helping those healthcare professionals and service providers to develop a deeper understanding of the people they are serving.

In Cardiff, Yvonne Murphey has been developing the Talking Shop as a research and development project in association with the National Theatre of Wales. Yvonne told me she wanted to run a project based around political and cultural engagement, but rather than working in a closed room with a select group of writers, she wanted to work with the public so she could find out what *they* think about political and cultural engagement.

She wanted to discover: what is important to them, what makes them angry, what makes them sad? The idea was to put writers in the space with the public and create, as she describes, '*collisions and collusions*'. What she found, however, was that many of the people visiting the shop were desperate for meaningful contact and opportunities to share their experiences with other people. To break their social isolation. Yvonne suggests that we need to take a different approach to our wellbeing. Rather than simply prescribing medication, we should, instead, support and champion participative arts and media, especially if this leads to creative opportunities for people to engage with one another. While the Talking Shop wasn't a radio project, it suggests that by

working closely with a wide range of creative practitioners and advocates of community development, such as people in the participatory arts movement, it will be possible to be innovative and find solutions to the wellbeing crisis that aren't top down or centrally run.

The experience of managing these relationships, however, is not straightforward. Sabrina Malik is part of the communities' team at Leicestershire County Council. She has worked with Jon and Terri at Carillon Wellbeing Radio, and has helped them to connect with other public service providers. She recognises the respect that needs to be shown to community groups for their knowledge and experience is instrumental to the success of these projects.

This is a shift in thinking for many local authorities. Lorna Dellow, who is a media and communications officer at Leicestershire County Council, notes that most authorities must focus on getting their messages out to the broadest audience using an ever-expanding set of techniques and platforms.

The challenge of working with community media projects and community radio stations, however, is significantly different, because it uses a different set of processes and values. It's not just about pushing out formal messages. Community radio has a strong emphasis on relationships, on local identity, and on local opportunities to participate and volunteer. As Jon Sketchley of Hermitage FM told me, *'The transmissions are what promote the community activities, and the community activities that the station supports, including those in the coffee shops, in turn supports the community activities. There is a level of direct accessibility as people can walk in the door and engage with people directly.'*

Attempting to take some of these ideas forward into the policy arena, Juan Pardo is a strategic policy adviser at Leicestershire County Council, who believes that while many of the changes that have taken place in local authorities over the last decade have been challenging, they are beginning to indicate that a new consensus is building around the importance of the principle of social value, and the usefulness of the 2012 Social Value Act.

The Act amended the principles on which public procurement is undertaken in England, making it much easier for councils and public bodies to explore wider social investment issues over and above the financial bottom line. As Juan told me:

'In practice this is about the way policies are explained and communicated. Changing the language from a dictation and centralised point of view that implements solutions on the community's behalf, to one that listens, and which enables communities to deliver those solutions themselves in a more collaborative fashion. Within communities is there a sense of competition rather than collaboration? This means that the local authority has to change from being the expert to be the enabler.'

The Social Value Act should be recognised, then, as an enabler of a process or change, and not as a legal framework or rule book that dictates or specifies actions and adherence to technical requirements. As Claire Mansfield points out, *'The provisions of the Act can further the wider strategic objectives of local authorities, and the communities they represent, by mobilising a council's purchasing power to support the social, environmental and economic wellbeing of a place.'*

This means the partnerships established are able to go beyond traditional models of funding, such as grants and bloc-funding, and explore the possibility of social funding, such as community shares, crowdfunding, subscriptions, or consumer business models. This is what Mansfield points to as the wider consideration of social value that helps to *'focus priorities outside procurement such as through asset transfer or access to finance'*. The benefit, as Nick Temple notes, is that the Act has the potential to be a tangible *'catalyst for action within organisations: improving procedures, providing focus, creating buy-in and helping drive new activity'*.

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Were we wrong to talk about outcomes?

By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/were-we-wrong-to-talk-about-outcomes/>

November 14, 2019

Categories: News

Were we wrong to
talk about
outcomes?

Were we wrong to talk about outcomes?

ESS loves outcomes and we are not giving them up without a fight. But there are some problems with the way we use the word. And that matters because it's getting in the way of public service improvement.

We've got the verb wrong

The postie delivers the mail. The midwife delivers the baby. No one delivers an outcome.

In fact we deliver activities that enable the people we work with to achieve outcomes. So at most the verb should be "**achieve**".

But in relation to strategic outcomes, the most appropriate word is **contribute** since no single activity or organisation can achieve those outcomes on their own.

Am I just being pedantic? Why does the verb matter?

Well because ...

Outcomes are not targets

Did I mention ESS loves outcomes? We love them because they focus attention on the difference we want to make rather than just activities or money. Outcomes help us critically question whether

we are doing the right thing to bring about the change people want. Outcomes provide a route map for measurement and learning.

But they are not targets. We should hold them lightly. We should change them if we discover, as we work, that they are not right. We should measure “what works, who for and why – or why not?” not simply how many reduced loneliness we have “delivered”.

And another thing ...

You can't commission an outcome

If you can't **deliver** an outcome you certainly can't **commission** one. “I'd like a new laptop and some increased wellbeing please.” Nonsense! Outcome-**focused** commissioning is crucial, don't get me wrong. But it's the service you commission not the outcomes. That means commissioning a **service** that has the best possible chance of achieving positive outcomes for a particular client group.

Less performance more learning

Another reason why words matter is because they drive culture. And we seem to have a public service culture where performance and accountability trumps learning almost every time. This means we know if services have been delivered but not whether these are the right services, delivered in the right way to the right people to achieve the outcomes people want. The performance culture means we know a great deal about what's going wrong and far too little about how to put it right.

Public sector activity is driven by performance measures (and by budgets). That's a problem because we do what we are measured on. So measures, rather than a focus on making the system work for people, is driving what we do.

What would happen if we had no national statistics? No local authority league tables? No HEAT targets. Would we be any worse off? I wonder.

Imagine instead if public services were only driven by local need and desired outcomes. And then we only measured whether and how we achieved those outcomes and for who, and what we have learned, then I suggest we'd be much further forward.

Most importantly where are the people?

Outcomes matter to people. We all want to be happier, healthier, smarter, sexier (or is that just me?). Anyway, when we write our outcomes we should include the “who” in the outcome. For example “care experienced young people have more positive life chances”. That way we know

who we intend to make a difference with and for, and **who** we should ask for feedback from when measuring the outcome.

Indeed the people the outcomes are for should really be involved in writing them in the first place. And people should be at the heart of measuring the outcomes approach. They – not (just) the stats – tell us whether activities are making a difference and why. That in turn means that the outcomes approach requires a rich tapestry of evidence – research, practitioner experience, lived-experience evidence; a mix of stats and stories.

So don't ditch outcomes. Let's use them properly. And the third sector can help. We don't have all the answers and we need to learn as well. But the more the third sector's experience is used to feed in, contribute, even lead public service reform the better chance we have of truly achieving outcomes. And then we'll all love them.

Steven Marwick, Director of ESS

www.evaluationsupportscotland.org.uk

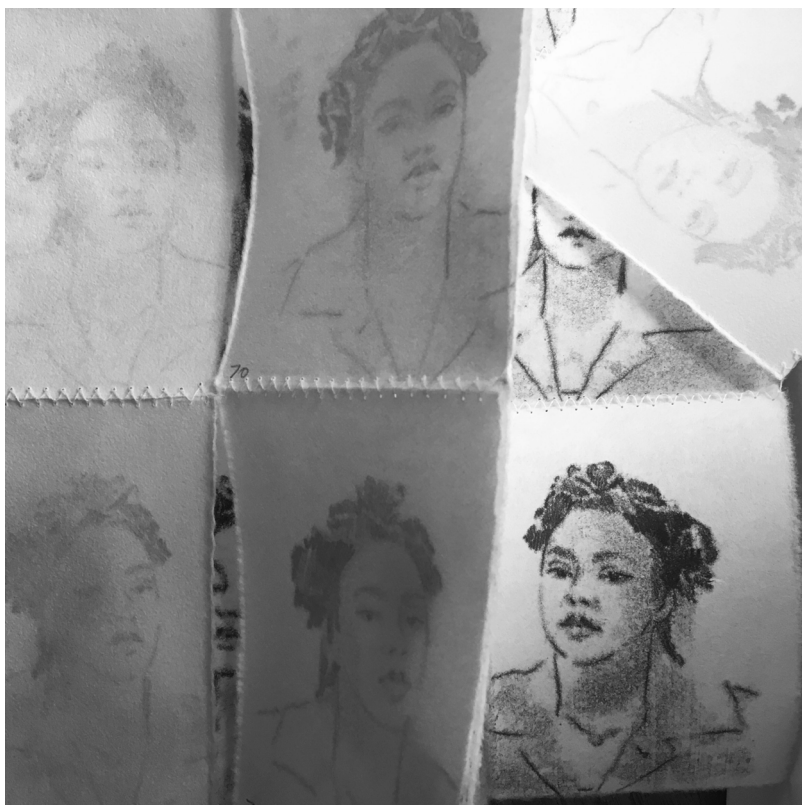
Why do research?

By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/why-do-research/>

December 10, 2019

Categories: News



I am a visual artist and this autumn I became a PhD student. In this blog I share my initial experiences and gently encourage you to consider whether formal Research (with a big 'R') could take a bigger part in your life and practice. I'll be covering the similarities between artist practice and research practice, the 'elephant in the room' that is funding, how I developed my research question and its potential benefits.

Research practice and artist practice are practically family

Research practice and artist practice are practically family. There are certain crossovers and shared characteristics such as, similar thinking processes, research determining the methodologies and, of course, practice-led PhDs where the artwork embodies the thesis.

There is a creativity in the thinking processes of research which may not be at first apparent. The thinking processes involved in making art have been likened to those involved in research, 'higher level thinking demands connections, associations, linkages of conscious and unconscious elements, memory and emotion, past, present and future merging in the processes of making meaning'. (Sullivan 2009 cited in Kara 2015).

When making, I want to ensure that the materials and processes I use enhance the message of the work. Kara says that when choosing or creating your research method(s), that they must 'flow from your research question, not the other way around' (Kara 2015). Interestingly this implies there could be as many variations of methodologies as there are research questions!

And lastly, the artwork as thesis, and the reassurance that artists as researchers are not an anomaly, 'there is increasing acceptance of the idea that artists can conduct research in the process of producing art, and that the resulting artwork can be a valid research output in itself by embodying and communicating the knowledge produced in its creation' (Biggs 2009, cited in Kara 2015)

The 'Elephant in the Room' – funding

Let's not leave the elephant in the room until the end. How can I afford to do this?

I have been funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) through the South West and Wales Doctoral Training Partnership (SWWDTP). They give me a 'stipend' (in other words, a wage) and pay the fees. The SWWDTP is one of several in the country. These partnerships consist of a network of regional universities. Applicants to the programme apply for interdisciplinary research that will make the very best use of the resources at two universities in the consortium. The programme aims to fund a new generation of outward-looking and public-engaging researchers. The antithesis of the ivory tower. I can't tell you what to apply for, but I would like to use this chance to introduce my research.

Research as 'me'search

Research as 'me'search acknowledges that we are often centrally located in our research, that our motivations are personal, even if the research itself is situated within a wider socio-political landscape.

One of the hardest things can be knowing what question you want to ask. My area came from my current focus, or so I thought. Looking back over the past 20 years of working variously as project coordinator, printmaking tutor and practising artist, I can see that both my passions as well as the current challenging times have come together to motivate my current research.

Let me briefly outline my research.

As an artist I want to be relevant to my communities and this has resulted in a career of outreach art projects and socio-political artwork. I am interested in ethics and in process. I want to know more about how artists work with people, and specifically, how we respond to, and work best with, people affected by trauma.

In my research I will be co-producing portraiture with women impacted by abuse and examining their experiences of the process. Traditionally the 'sitter' in portraiture has been passive – passive to the artist and to the viewer. How can I alter this so that the 'sitter' is assertive, both in the making and viewing? I am partnering with Devon Rape Crisis and Sexual Abuse Services and together we will be ensuring that this is a safe process, where our duty of care is paramount. Through my research I plan to outline what 'trauma-informed' working practice looks like and I will be keen to see where my research can benefit the participatory visual arts sector.

There is a shift happening in public health and frontline services to become 'trauma-informed'. This means understanding people's behaviour as a result of trauma they have suffered. I have come across little dialogue about trauma-informed practice in the visual arts sector specifically (it doesn't mean it's not happening at a local or regional level, but if it is, it's not reverberating outwards) so I want to initiate more discussion about our duty of care to people affected by trauma and what best practice looks like. The ArtWorks Alliance blog last year from the Bartol Foundation raises some interesting thoughts.

Anticipating the benefits

Doubtless this intense period of reading, thinking, writing and making will have many benefits. I can't pinpoint them yet but the experience of becoming an expert in my own field of research will, I hope, lead to alternative employment opportunities. Doing a PhD doesn't necessarily mean launching into academia, lecturing and the like, it might be starting a new business, or continuing with a more meaningful artist practice.

Wider benefits to my sector will include building a conversation about what it means to work in a trauma-informed way, to talk about the ethics of process, and to find out what's already happening in best practice. All this leads to a further professionalisation of the sector underpinning our validity in wider society. In turn this brings funding for the opportunity for further participatory arts practice, which ultimately benefits the people in our communities.

Catherine Cartwright

AHRC funding via Doctoral Training Partnerships

Kara, H. (2015) *Creative Research methods in the Social Sciences. A Practical Guide*, Bristol, Policy Press.

Multiplying Leadership in Creative Communities

By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/multiplying-leadership-in-creative-communities/>

January 16, 2020

Categories: News



Mark Robinson blogs about his leadership report for ArtWorks Alliance Partner Creative People and Places.

As trailed at the back end of last year in an Arts Professional article, Creative People and Places have just published *Multiplying Leadership in Creative Communities*, my report on leadership approaches across the CPP network. You can find it [here](#).

As distinctive and significant as I think CPP has become, at its best, I was drawn to reflect on the broader movement or tide to which it has contributed. As I say in the report, CPP is part of a progressive movement you can see all over the UK, of people developing and modelling leadership in different ways than archaic heroic, individual-centred models. I also draw some connections back to ideas from earlier programmes including Mission Models Money and Arts Council England's Cultural Leadership Programme. (The wide-ranging contributions to the Cultural Leadership Reader edited by Sue Kay and Katie Venner, with Susanne Burns and Mary Schwarz in 2010 are still highly relevant, for instance.)

I hope the report is useful in describing CPP leadership approaches, including the emphasis on developing community-led approaches including decision-making through building trust and learning from 'failure'. I also hope it serves as a provocation to the network and others.

My sense is the cultural sector needs, and is developing, new forms of leadership, despite the pressure of precedence, and that these need to take many different sorts and styles. The Multiplying Leadership framework is not a job description or person specification, nor a just-follow-the-instructions-and-success-awaits 'how-to'. Although leadership is a process not a programme, as Peter Block – whose work on stewardship and community has been an inspiration for much of my thinking – has written, it feels more appropriate to describe this as a framework for practice. And it does take practice, as those involved have found.

Writing about leadership without over-simplifying or over-complicating has felt, to me, like a wicked problem. It can easily sound as if leadership is one thing, rather than *multiple*. Even the collaborative leader can be made to sound heroic. I try to avoid that through my keyword: *multiplying*. This means diversifying not copying. The three key elements of connecting, collaborating and multiplying leadership can be done in many ways, using multiple and diverse combinations of skills, preferences and approaches. In the report I describe a broad set of potential elements – some vocabulary I hope can be used, adapted, remixed and built upon, or indeed over if appropriate. (There are things I wish I had kept in that set rather than cutting or replacing. Small prize available to the first person to email with the one I most regret cutting.)

There are also coaching-style questions relating to each element for those who disagree with the idea that 'nothing is as practical as a good theory'. These are available separately in downloadable pdf format to make cards with. As with all my work, where partners agree, it is made available via the Creative Commons framework so it can be freely adapted by others.

If the number, range and diversity of people in leadership is to increase, an argument to which CPP practice has added its voice, leadership will have to be more *multiple* and *various*, transforming a cultural sector still dominated by white men in positions of formal authority. (See recent Stage reports around theatre if you doubt the glacial pace of change.) The skills and traits used will also multiply and applications differ. To that end, parts of the report are more a set of ingredients with thoughts on what works together than menus and recipes to be followed step by step. I'm looking forward to seeing what people make of it.

Mark Robinson

Thinking Practice

Multiplying Leadership in Creative Communities

By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/multiplying-leadership-in-creative-communities-2/>

January 16, 2020

Categories: Evaluations & Reports, Resources

Tags: community, leadership, participation



Author: Mark Robinson

Publication Date: January 2020

Summary

Leadership approaches in the CPP network.

Details

The fundamental contribution of Creative People and Places has not been to add to infrastructure or arts engagement in so-called 'cold spots' but to multiply leadership within the community and systems active in places that are rich with people and ideas by building trust, being open and positive, and sharing control. Multiplying leadership means more people becoming confident in leadership work, but it also means vastly more connections between people that creates more collaborative, less patriarchal structures for informed decisions, action and learning.

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Collective thinking turns into critical writing

By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/collective-thinking-turns-into-critical-writing/>

February 13, 2020

Categories: News



Catherine Cartwright reviews *Social Works?: Open* edited by the Models of Validation Team, a partnership between Axisweb and Manchester Metropolitan University, Rebecca Senior, Mark Smith and Amanda Ravetz.

'Now is the time to instigate our collective thinking into writings, that can further help the sector, cross pollinate ideas, and strengthen the voice of the artist.' R. M. Sánchez-Camus

In this collection of new critical writing on social art practice, R. M. Sánchez-Camus, co-founder of the Social Art Network, calls our community to action. He extols us to share and reflect, to talk and promote our practice. To celebrate and collectivise social practice projects under the social media tag #SocialArtUK, as well as reach out to mainstream media. His evident passion for our sector seeks to inspire the growth of dialogue and debate between us.

Sánchez-Camus's voice is one of a gathering of practitioners brought together in *Social Works?: Open* to discuss issues on socially engaged practice. This need for critical communication was revealed through research undertaken by the Models of Validation project. When they interviewed

artists, commissioners, producers, funders, representatives of local authorities, researchers and academics, they identified several recurring issues which centred on difficulties with communication and connection, undermined by a lack of critical writing in this field.

The inaugural edition encompasses a diversity within its bright yellow and red cover and includes a range of formats from anonymous letters to participant diary excerpts. It opens with two dynamic articles that launch us into the heart of socially engaged practice.

The first highlights good and poor practice from art institutions in their response to the mainstreaming of queer culture (Claire Mead), and the second raises the worrying issue of erasure for artists of colour in Scotland who find themselves simultaneously invisible and hyper-visible (Harvey Dimond). Recurring themes are ethics (Kerry Morrison, Les Monaghan, Jody Wood), the wellbeing of practitioners (Jen Delos Rezyes, Anon) and conflicting pressures in commissioned work (Lauren Velvick, Anonymous). Last to speak are the vivid voices of the people themselves; the collaborators, the participants... the material of social practice (*They Are Here*, Les Monaghan, Joe Cotgrave).

Relative Poverty and ROUTINE are two artworks where process of the making has been captured for the journal through transcript (*Relative Poverty*, Monaghan) and diary extracts (ROUTINE *They Are Here*). With *Relative Poverty* Monaghan seeks to address the frustrating lack of media coverage given to the Joseph Rowntree Foundation report on destitution and so give a voice to Doncaster locals in poverty. Through documentary photographs installed in community settings, including libraries, churches, meeting halls and schools, Monaghan raises awareness and provokes dialogue on poverty across the community. In the article Monaghan raises the issue of informed consent and says it has 'haunted' his practice since it began, for 'photographs live on after their making. Their meaning shift through the contexts in which they are shown but also through the unknowable future prisms with which they are viewed'. His conversation with subject and participant Dave about these issues, is out there in the open for us all to read. Ideally such transparency would permeate all our practices.

ROUTINE (2018) by collaborative practitioners Helen Walker and Harun Morrison as *They Are Here*, is an artwork comprised of a series of comedy workshops and performances. Invitations to attend free comedy workshops led by professional comedian Logan Murray, were extensively distributed across London, and the people who responded given the opportunity and support to prepare and perform their own public routine. In this article, snippets of diary extracts from the comedian-participants suggest the shifting dynamics between the comedians and narrate the project. As the reader, it is a privilege to read their intimate reflections, worries and hopes.

Interwoven with the articles are letters addressed, 'Dear Social Works'. Penned by anonymous practitioners these alternative voices allow a raw immediacy to issues around working with people as material. These letters, which are printed with white text on black pages, catch your eye as the

pages flick past and are a brilliant way to pull the hesitant reader into the journal. The first of these letters, signed by 'A pasty, female in't North', reflects on a national arts conference she had recently attended where what struck her most about the event 'was that every speaker that I heard on the main stage began with a preamble about themselves' because she felt their 'intention was to distance themselves from... the modern-day baddie the stale, pale male.' Her letter is a plea for tolerance across our sector, focusing not on how we *aren't* the baddie, but instead eradicating qualities that know no boundaries, 'such as greed, arrogance, aggression and elitism'.

This book review is somewhat skewed by my interest in ethics and the dynamics between artists and the people they work with. My radar fixed onto the advice given to socially engaged artists by Kerry Morrison and Jody Wood. Morrison draws our attention to the fact that although 'socially engaged art is an actual social action' she has never once been asked about ethics. I agree with Morrison that 'ethics of practice not only appears poorly considered within socially engaged art practice, but all-too-often absent', and I very much welcome the raising of this as a central issue in our sector. University researchers have to abide by a code of ethics, the principles of research being: Autonomy, Beneficence, Non-maleficence, Confidentiality, Integrity. Why aren't we subject to similar questioning on our practice and process? As Morrison puts it, 'does this arts practice remain locked into the hierarchical Modernist agenda whereby the artist is genius?' I have no doubt that individual best practice continues but in the absence of a debate on ethics, whether a code of ethics is required and what it could look like, we threaten the validity of the sector in its lack of transparency and potential poor practice.

Particularly resonant for me were the seven lessons given by Wood. Each lesson is deeply rooted in real-life experience and Wood is clearly a practitioner who knows what she's talking about. It was tough to choose just one to share here, but I settled with Lesson #1 for its pragmatic honesty:

Showing care doesn't mean making someone's problems go away. Being present, consistent, and honest in the face of chaos, trauma, and change goes a long way in showing care. Understand that no matter how much you 'feel' for this community, you are not in their position and you can never truly relate with their reality. No one needs your pity or guilt. Recognize and accept that your limits are also your strengths – then you can offer true care.

Being party to the conversation of *Social Works?: Open* has personally enriched my practice as a socially engaged artist and I would love for there to be another gathering. The hopeful news is that the *Models of Validation* team have funding bids in progress and are in talks with artists and authors about a new series of writing commissions for another edition of *Social Works?:*.

I have my fingers crossed.

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Claire Mead *It's Trouble – Using, Misusing and Reclaiming Queer*

Harvey Dimond *(In)visibility: Black Artistic Practices in Scotland*

Jen Delos Rezyes *Tell Me How You Really Feel*

Kerry Morrison *Let's Talk About Ethics*

Lauren Velvick *A short reflection on a couple of current projects*

R.M Sánchez-Camus *Righting on Social Practice*

They Are Here *ROUTINE, 2018: Fragments of a process from the participant's perspectives*

Jody Wood *Lessons Learnt*

Les Monaghan *Relative Poverty* Artist Commission

Joe Cotgrave *POZ?* Artist Commission

Journal can be viewed online or purchased from here.

For more information on the Models of Validation project contact Lucy Wright, lucy@axisweb.org

Catherine Cartwright is a socially engaged artist and PhD student in Cultural Geography/Visual Arts at University of Exeter & University of the West of England, funded by the South West Wales Doctoral Training Partnership. Her research is on how artists work with people affected by trauma, focusing on her visual arts practice with women affected by rape and/or sexual abuse, working in partnership with Devon Rape Crisis and Sexual Abuse Services.

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ArtWorks Alliance Gathering January 2020 report

By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/artworks-alliance-gathering-january-2020-report/>

March 11, 2020

Categories: Evaluations & Reports, Resources

Tags: ArtWorks Alliance, collaboration, community, CPD, participation, Practice, quality, training



Author: ArtWorks Alliance

Publication Date: February 2020

Summary

AWA Gathering January 2020 report

Details

The report from the inaugural ArtWorks Alliance Gathering – an Open Space event which took place on 27 January 2020 hosted by Royal Liverpool Philharmonic and facilitated by Adrian Sinclair and colleagues from Heads Together Productions.

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Learning to listen

By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/learning-to-listen/>

March 12, 2020

Categories: News



Fiona Doring from AWA Partner Impact Arts introduces the Sketchy Youths and other initiatives supporting them to be a listening organisation.

With the realisation that I am now firmly in the middle aged bracket; that similarly, my Board do not share an age range with the majority of people we engage through our work; that 80-90% of the 6000 participants passing through our doors each year and engaged in Impact Arts creative learning projects are under 24 years old; I came to the conclusion that we needed to change how we listened to the voices of the children and young people we work with every day.

Impact Arts' mission is to tackle the inequalities that exist in Scotland. The people and communities we support are often the most marginalised in society – e.g. affected significantly by adverse childhood experiences, poor mental health, poor educational attainment, living in poverty, disability, lack of services, social and geographic isolation – and often feel as though they are not listened to and have few platforms for ensuring their voices are heard. This only further reflects feelings of low self-worth and disenfranchisement.

So how does an organisation learn to listen effectively to the needs of children and young people and thereby ensure projects and services authentically meet their needs?

Still firmly in the learning stage, but with a strong commitment to make change, Impact Arts' first step was to appoint a Young Creative Trustee. It felt crucial not to just play lip service, but to ensure that there was a young voice that could influence the organisation's strategic direction. We needed a young person to join the organisation at the highest level. Artist Rosa Hackett joined the Impact Arts Board and has immediately brought a new dimension to strategic discussions.

Through funding from the Corra Foundation, we were able to employ a dedicated Listening Expert, Beth Farmer. Tasked with creating an organisational listening strategy and a toolkit that will support Impact Arts' 140 employees, Beth's role is very much to help us sustain a culture of listening and to create an effective feedback loop between young people and strategic decision makers; Leadership Team and Board.

The Sketchy Youths, our group of Youth Ambassadors, was established nearly a year ago and is now supported by both our Listening Expert, Beth and our Young Trustee, Rosa. It was a challenge to gain momentum at the outset. Many young people coming through Impact Arts' programmes quickly progress on to college or employment. Trying to pin them down to regular meetings was tricky to say the least. However, now we are a few months in, we have a committed core group with sub branches of the Sketchy Youths in Edinburgh, Glasgow and Ayrshire. Beth has been working to provide them with structure and seeks to empower them in order that they are able to build their own identity and become the voice of our young participants.

Impact Arts has frequently used a co-design approach facilitated by artists and creatives to design new projects and to lead on consultations. The idea that our strategic direction should be informed, even led by our young people has felt challenging at times.

Now at the halfway stage of the two-year Listening project we have some key learnings and reflections:

1. This is not a one size fits all approach. Everyone has a different way in which they feel empowered to share their ideas and to tell their story.
2. It's important to have a safe space for listening to ensure that voices are heard.
3. Consistency in listening strategies will be key and ensuring our 100 freelance artists come on board with our listening journey.

Our plan for the next year is to create further opportunities for the Sketchy Youths to develop their role in the organisation. They are currently working hard to create platforms for other young people to share their fresh perspectives and ideas. This is a journey though, of which we are at the start, however we are hopeful that the foundations of an embedded culture of listening are now in place for us to build on.

When digital participation becomes a necessity: Online in an out-of-line world

By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/when-digital-participation-becomes-a-necessity-online-in-an-out-of-line-world/>

April 9, 2020

Categories: News



ArtWorks Alliance Digital Champion John Whall from QUAD in Derby argues that digital participation is so much broader, and so more aligned with participation and community arts, than digital.

We are currently living in an unimaginable time in our human history. Viruses have come and gone before, but never have we had such an ability to stay connected and access news, activities, education, entertainment and creative opportunities without leaving our homes.

We are now participating in activities with more people worldwide than we ever have before. In the past week, Body Coach Joe Wicks has engaged 800,000+ participants in live stream mass exercise from all over the world every day. How many of us realise that we are participating in exercise with nearly a million people all at the same time? The applause for NHS and healthcare staff was a demonstration of a mass participation soundscape, uplifting those taking part and those it was for. How many rainbows are now in our windows to show solidarity from one child to

another? We are not only participant in activities together at the same time, but are also using creativity and culture to provide positivity to others, all promoted and shared online.

I have never been a huge fan of digital participation being seen as an online activity. Digital Participation is so much broader and is more aligned with participation and community arts than it is with digital. However, I am not surprised by how online technologies have been adopted so quickly by arts and culture organisations as a means to engage audiences and to remind our communities that we are still here for you.

With so many children and young people now at home, parents and carers are finding the internet a key tool to educate and inspire, and arts organisations have risen to the challenge to be there as they always have. Online exhibitions and gallery archives, like V21 Artspace and others, have seen visitor traffic like never before. It was as if audiences instantly missed something they may not have thought about venturing out to see before being told we had to stay at home. Online resources like video tour guides, PDF learning guides, live stream group activities and more are key to giving audiences deeper experiences, and maybe boost interest in arts and culture when this is all over.

We are currently seeing new methods of doing the same thing. Engaging our communities through a screen, rather than in person. We are seeing more freedom to share knowledge. Things that would normally be reserved for bringing audiences to venues and projects are now being widely shared. We are now living in a more open world of arts and culture and it took a virus to show us what we already know: sharing creativity and culture is more than just footfall and visitor numbers, it is essential to our audiences and a contributor to wellbeing and social cohesion.

Some things have not changed. This new uptake of digital engagement doesn't take away from the fact that arts and culture has worked in this way for a number of years now. It just means that certain aspects of working have increased and in some ways become more relevant to the current situation. For example, the current #massisolation: Experiences of COVID-19 mass participation project with FORMAT International Photography Festival uses Instagram to collate photographs, videos, drawings, memes, survival tips and more from participants all over the world to document lives in our societies. FORMAT has been engaging participants in similar ways since it began in 2004 and in 2015, 3000+ participants contributed to an online and offline exhibition of photography around the subject of 'evidence'. What we're seeing now is a wider uptake of these methods of engaging and encouraging participation on mass, from our homes.

One thing that is becoming clear is that audiences are now more exposed to these methods of participation, increasing their need moving forward. Will we see a rise in visitor numbers to arts and culture organisations, now that audiences have, through their computer screens, had a glimpse of what's out there in real spaces? Will more people participate in mass experience projects instead of seeing their devices as a tool for entertainment over creativity? Or will

audiences get used to online interaction, meaning that arts and culture organisations need to re-think how they engage with their audiences more than they thought they ever would?

What is important to remember, in our current situation of uncertainty, is that while things are more upside-down than ever, we have the time, capacity and inspiration to be more creative than we ever thought we were able to in our 'normal' lives and I urge everyone to do something that they may have not given themselves time for before, digital or otherwise.

Take care everyone!

John Whall – DigitalpARTicipationis...

Participatory arts in the new paradigm

By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/participatory-arts-in-the-new-paradigm/>

May 7, 2020

Categories: News



Simon Sharkey from partner The Necessary Space has been having some fascinating conversations with fellow practitioners from across the world. In response, he wrote an essay.

Piloting through Chaos

The Covid-19 lexicon reads like a phrase book for a post-apocalyptic totalitarian state. 'Self-isolation', 'Social distancing', 'Quarantine', 'Non-essential travel', 'Daily death statistics'. George Orwell anyone? The phrase that worries me most is 'New Normal'. I baulk every time I hear it. It fills me with dread, because contained in those two words is, an assumption that 'Normal' is to be the goal and that 'New' is progress. New Normal is an oxymoron that immediately displays our biases towards hierarchy, order and control. The idea of normal allows 'abnormal' into the frame. The idea of 'new' betrays our egotistic need to frame our contribution to the randomness and chaos of the world as progress.

The etymology of 'normal' comes from the Latin for a carpenter's square which was used to 'normal' angles so that they fitted a pattern or construction. Normal means we are fitting a

designed pattern. So, what is the pattern, and who will sharpen the angles to design our future life so that we might perceive it as 'normal'?

If it's the people who have brought us to the point of extinction and created a plethora of ills and pandemics with their greed, addiction to growth and casual acceptance of crises they expect will be solved by the next generation, then we are in deep trouble. If we are complicit, as we have been for centuries, in helping design a 'New Normal' built on the same values and principles as the ones that brought us to this crossroads then we must take stock. We must be still in the chaos and see through the fog and the noise to imagine a better future than 'New Normal'.

We must think like artists.

Grayson Perry described the job of an artist as 'meaning maker'. I like that, because what artists do is find form to allow us to interpret the world and its randomness.

I like to describe artists as 'Pilots through chaos'. Humanity is striving for patterns and order and reaching to understand the chaos. Bob Dylan described art as 'The perpetual motion of illusion'. I like to think of artists like the crew of the millennium falcon, flying through the perpetual motion of the universe and all its manifestations, values, forms, and opportunities, guiding the passengers through infinite discovery and adventure. In our recent history we have tried to 'normal' the chaos and in that process have come to a point where we believe we can control it. Oh, such hubris. No wonder we are in a crisis. We cannot normalise chaos. Gleick, the father of Chaos Theory describes it as 'The science of process other than state, of becoming rather than being.'

To think like an artist, we must be alive to the processes of becoming and aware of our states of being. We must be accepting of chaos and make it our playground to find meaning and purpose. We must travel to new worlds and find forms to access collective consciousness, to co create, co devise, be responsive, be in flow, be in harmony and comfortable with disharmony, be prepared and be comfortable with shock, design and destroy, triumph and fail, be formless so we might find form, be in the now and access infinity, we must know when to be silent so the next sound we make resonates in the universe....

To be a participatory artist we must do all this in consort with our crew and guests so that we are realising our collective potential for living. We must learn and teach how to distinguish between being and becoming, between process and state and know when the interplay will serve us. In the face of Covid-19 we must be in the process of becoming. New Normal is the antithesis of becoming, it is built on our current state of being and Covid-19 has exposed that as folly.

Charles Eisenstein, discussed, at length, the effect of mankind 'normalling' nature. In his brilliant essay The Coronation he champions the need for sovereignty in our decision making about the future. He asks us to think about the many ideas, activities and ways of life that have been

deemed non-essential in the Covid crisis, and advocates that we take the time to process and explore the meaning of this journey. He suggests that Covid-19 and many other shocks to humanity are akin to an initiation. An initiation into a world not yet imagined. A world where we can 'build an intentional society on the love already shining through the cracks of the world of separation'.

Can you imagine it? An intentional society built on love.

Step forward artists, artisans and teaching artists working in participatory arts. We have been imagining and shaping such societies for millennia. From nomadic hunter gatherers to digital immersion in virtual reality the teaching artist/artisan, shamans and activists have created the space, forms, forums and journeys that allow us to 'become'. Our process is imagination, our vehicle for the journey – a liminal space our fuel – the great 'What if?'

The Great 'What if?'

'What if?' or 'The Suspension of Disbelief' has fuelled our evolution for millennia. It is a unique ability that separates us from the animal kingdom and helps us understand chaos by designing culture. There is an explicit contract between artist and audience where we agree to 'suspend our disbelief' and become complicit in the act of make believe. Let's believe these people here are not actors, that the set represents a real space, that the fourth wall can be broken or maintained, that the story reflects real life or is an abstract form that uses metaphor to lead us to catharsis and or enlightenment.

Picasso said: 'We all know art is not truth. Art is a lie that makes us realise the truth.'

The suspension of disbelief is an act of faith that has produced some of the most exquisite experiences and put us in touch with the sublime. 'What if?' has been at the root of our evolution and brought us to where we are now.

We are amid the greatest paradigm shift in the history of mankind. We are at the crossroads that lead to the precipice of an evolutionary Armageddon or enlightenment. There is potential for a cataclysmic culture of disconnect from nature, collective consciousness, and the visceral primal need for each other. There is also the possibility that we can take another route – the artists way – and follow what we know to be the truth – take flight on a course to 'becoming'. Covid-19 is a warning from a specific 'state of being' and an incitement to pause and take stock of our processes and ask, 'What if?' In doing so we must reveal the truth and point to the other lies.

Our ability to suspend our disbelief has also allowed us to 'normalise' systems of control and oppression; cultures of disconnect, individualism, otherness, avarice and the dominance of science over wonder.

We suspend our disbelief in nature to ask what if that noise in the sky is a giant with superpowers, or the wind were breath from a god – pantheistic religion is born. What if, instead, of hunting and gathering, we corralled our animals into pens, and planted the seeds and fruits we eat – agriculture is born. What if, instead of bartering our goods this coin represents this amount of grain, or wine, or effort – money and economics are born. What if we harness the forces of nature with machines that can power pumps and drills and hammers and wheels – the industrial revolution is born. What if we measure things and give them values that capture the natural laws and behaviours of the universe – maths and science and time, and algorithms are born. What if we divide the labour, mass produce and create demand – capitalism and consumerism are born. What if we place our faith in one god, or one man, or one system of government, or one corporation, or in one culture, or in borders that define where these systems are best operated? What if we label otherness so we might organise our hierarchies? What if we abstract our intelligence and memory and knowledge into zeros and ones? What if we abstract everything we have ever evolved, into systems that allow us to receive exactly what we need or want almost instantaneously, by pressing a few buttons?

What if we suspend our disbelief and avoid mortality and vulnerability – hubristic growth and progress are born and we can disconnect ourselves from the responsibility and consequences of the impact on our planet, our lives, and all humanity.

What if our suspension of disbelief could disconnect us from our physical being – avatars and emojis and dateline profiles and Instagram stories are born.

The suspension of disbelief has allowed us to abstract reality into states of being that we artists reflect and refract in galleries, theatres, cinemas, screens, print and a myriad of other forms. If Grayson Perry is right, we search for meaning in the chaos we have created. If Picasso is accurate, we are revealing the truth about our faith in our own deceptions. We are like the captives in Plato's allegory of the cave, mesmerised by the shadows we cast on the wall, while reality plays on without us, outside the cave.

In our 'post truth' era, can you feel the 'perpetual motion of illusion?'

I can. I can feel exhausted and exhilarated by our journey through the early 21st century. We have been reacting to the shifting paradigm of the technological and online revolution, globalisation, rising inequality, capitalism, consumerism, commercialisation, sustainability, misinformation, the collapse of civil society, the rise of the right and nationalism, the collapse of democracy, a mental health pandemic, the dominance of hierarchies in all their forms, rises in opioid addiction, a suicide epidemic, the commodification and commercialisation of everything... I needn't go on. The disintegration, disconnection and chaos we have created is fertile ground for artists who are meaning makers and seek out truth, but what do we do about it other than ask our audience to continue to suspend our disbelief; to watch the shadows dance?

Edward de Bono said: 'The purpose of art is to reflect new emerging values and define the heroes and heroines so that people can absorb them into their perceptions.' How do we mine the new values and who are the new heroes? How do we turn from the shadow play and step out of our cave into the bright light of becoming?

Step forward the artists, the artisans, the teaching artists, and activists who work in participatory settings. Step forward the pilots who can guide you through chaos. Step forward the artists brave enough to go beyond the suspension of disbelief and build from the suspension of disconnect.

The Suspension of Disconnect

In our post truth, information shift age, we are more connected than ever. Over five billion people have a smart phone and can access a seemingly infinite proliferation of online content, classes, zoom chats and dance meetings, TikTok memes, Facebook and Instagram stories. An explosion of online activity has happened, prompting Nicholas Berger to argue brilliantly in his essay *The Forgotten Art of Assembly* to stop it. He suggests that the central 'yearning' (I love that word) of human nature is to assemble.

The Covid-19 lockdowns deny us our assembly and neatly redirect us into the world of the algorithm. There is much to be discovered in this new world, including new forms of art and connection, and I am excited to see how it pans out, but if, as Yuval Noah Harari suggests, in his book *Homo Deus*; the algorithm, Artificial intelligence, data and online interaction replace assembly and human contact, we will be creating 'the useless class'. A class of human that has no worth.

Thank the universe that we still assemble, and our yearning will never die. Every week we assemble on our doorsteps, balconies, and rooftops to applaud the heroes and express our togetherness. In this act of connection, we are exercising our innate human need for self-actualisation through togetherness. It may not be art, but it is an act of participation played out across the globe.

As we adjust to our 'isolation' and 'social distancing' we project into a chasm of doubt, and fear. I am reminded of a quote from a shaman to a youth on their initiation:

'As you go the way of life, you will come upon a great chasm. Jump, for it is not as wide as it seems.'

So, let us take the jump. Let us leap to imagine a world that builds on the unique superpowers of participatory practitioners. Let us begin to design a new paradigm that can hold the chaos, suspend our disbelief, suspend our disconnect and deliver on the potential for enlightenment. Let us not be fearful or despondent and instead call up our superpowers. Let us not be complicit in the

design of a “new normal” and instead enter the liminal space for creation of a new consciousness.

The Necessary Space

Artists working in participatory settings have been working with people who feel isolated and socially distanced from mainstream society for quite some time. The contract they have with their participants and audiences is explicitly to suspend the disconnect. They go beyond the suspension of disbelief to collaborate in a non-hierarchical relationship and create the sublime in an act of participation. To do so, we create ‘The Necessary Space’ – both physical and metaphorical- to bring to life that which is calling for form.

In the process and evolution of that work they have found new forms, new inspiration, new contexts, new meaning, new cutting-edge hybrid multi art form collaborations, new tribes, new audiences, and new purpose for art. Some of what they have discovered and pioneered has made it into ‘mainstream’ programmes and opened traditional institutions up to the possibilities of great art, with great purpose. Some artists wouldn’t label themselves as ‘working in participatory settings’ or ‘Teaching Artists’ – Jeremy Deller and Olafur Eliason live in the world of visual art, but check out we’re here because we’re here or The Battle of Orgreave or fog tunnel.

Whether your work is in the Tate Modern Turbine Hall, a classroom, or favela, artists who work in participatory settings have built new relationships, established new processes, created new forums, new potential and new freedoms that bring release from the controls or ‘normalling’ of society. They have created liminal, equal space where it is safe to experience a live and visceral shift in consciousness so that we sense new horizons, take action, connect with ourselves beyond our ego, commune in a collective consciousness and create new pathways to sustainable harmonious living? Our ‘Necessary Space’ is a dynamic as well as a concept. Where else can we go on a journey with others to test and shape our view of the world and our place in it? Where else can we participate in ensemble devising of a collective consciousness that transcends borders, ideologies, dictates, dogmas, capitalist systems, algorithms and the best and worst of humanity. We create space where we can dream, rehearse, triumph, fail, die, be reborn, reshape our inner and outer being, suspend our disconnect and exercise our empathy. We create space, processes and activity that awakens an awareness and participation in the ultimate reality of who we are and who we can become. We create the space to live.

In my experience, great art goes beyond ‘meaning making’, ‘exposing truth’ and ‘heroes and heroines’. For me, the purpose of art is connection to a greater consciousness that offers freedom and homeostasis. In a world of chaos art is a process of becoming, of yearning, and dreaming and giving form to freedom and happiness.

The Call to Adventure

If you are familiar with Joseph Campbell's 'Hero with a thousand Faces' and his writings around the monomyth, you will recognise 'the call to adventure'. If you are unfamiliar, here is an attempt to summarise the monomyth and use it to call all artists in to adventure.....

The Hero journey has several stages: it goes something like this...

Something is wrong with our *ordinary world*; it could be a niggling internal doubt, or it could be an external existential threat. The hero notices and gets a *call to adventure*. At first, they *refuse the call*, it can't be for them. Then they *meet their mentor* – think Obe wan Kenobi, or the master figure in any martial arts film. The mentor awakens or gives *Supernatural aid (super power)* to the hero and lets them see they are the one to go on the journey.

The hero *Crosses the Threshold* from the ordinary world in to the extraordinary world – think Harry Potter crossing in to Hogwarts on the train. It is in this extraordinary world that they meet *friends and enemies*; where they are *tested and triumph* over adversity; where they learn from tricksters or seducers or malevolent forces and they survive all the tests and grow stronger until.....

They fail and enter *The Belly of the Whale*. In here they are defeated, they fight for their life and they die, not literally, but the version of themselves that they know, dies because they have to give up all notions and sense of who they were in the world or what they knew for sure was true.

It is in giving up and dying that they can be *Reborn*. In being reborn they can take up their quest anew and win the *Ultimate Boon or Reward*. They win what they sought and begin *The Journey Home*. On the journey home they are pursued by monsters, fears, and temptations from the past. Their nemesis may have been defeated but rises one more time. They race from their past and *Re-cross the Threshold* to gift the prize. Everything returns to how it should be – think hobbits in their shire. Everything is as it should be until someone else gets a call to adventure.

Covid-19 is a call to adventure. It is an existential threat to humanity and an existential threat to our way of living and practice as participatory artists. We must connect with our peers and mentors and let them awaken our superpowers (empathy, vision, playfulness, openness, togetherness, devising, confidence in chaos and ambiguity, leading, following, becoming) so that we might cross the threshold into the new paradigm, to an extraordinary world. We must be tested, and we must fail. We must enter the belly of the whale and let go of all that we thought that we were. It is here that we will discover our superpowers are not armour but intrinsic innate abilities we have developed in order to seize the prize. We may feel we are in the belly of the whale, but it is here that we must surrender to our metamorphosis and emerge stronger than before because it is our adventure. To design the 'New Normal' is a denial of the call, it keeps us firmly in our ordinary world. To step into the extraordinary world to be tested and fail, to have the courage to be vulnerable (see Brene Brown for that) and triumph through adversity will lead us to the prize. We do not know what that is yet and we don't know how or where we will find it, but if we are pilots through chaos, we will find it.

I had a call to adventure in 2005 when I was invited to be one of the founding directors of the National Theatre of Scotland. I had the privilege to lead on the design and delivery of our participatory arts programme. I travelled the world with our 'Theatre without walls' methodology and invited the world to Scotland. It was an extraordinary adventure where I forged my 'Theatre of Opportunity'. On my path I met many mentors, the most influential of whom are Eric Booth who leads the ITAC Collab and the legendary Liz Lerman. I also met inspirational fellow adventurers.

People like Fred Leone a first nations Australian who selflessly strives to preserve the dreamtime stories, dances and culture of his tribes and free them from the oppressions of poverty. Inspirational women such as Puneeta Roy – director of Yuva Ekta and Lesley Anne Welsh who is CEO of Manifesto Jamaica. Both women dedicate their lives to working with disadvantaged youth. Directors like Renato Rocha who activates and animates the favelas of Brazil and carries the legacy of Augusto Boal in to the 21st Century. Pioneers like Miriam Tscholl who created the Burgherbuhne festival of participatory arts in Dresden. Jess Pillmore (sadly now passed) whose play filled 'creatively independent' pedagogy refreshed my passion for life and art and rescued me from the belly of my whale. There are hundreds more and hundreds more examples of how our work will shape the new paradigm.

In Jess Pillmore's article for Howl Round Magazine 'From Inside the Fog', she talks about embracing the unknown:

'In the fog, we can breathe in "I don't know" and start again. In the fog, we can engage our senses, our instincts, as they override the "reality" of our gaze. In the fog, we can sit down and be fully present in the suspended liquid droplets in front of us. Suspended. How gorgeous is that? Tiny worlds of what if...? suspended all around you, each fully encapsulated.'

Whether it is a fog or the belly of the whale, we will emerge because we are alive to the power of connection and we are equipped with vision, perspective, empathy, openness playfulness and togetherness. We build The Necessary Space to become, and make a Theatre of Opportunity from the controls and normalising that surround us.

We are not alone.

Another artist expressing a sense purpose in the face of chaos in one of my favourite songs is Leonard Cohen. He is one of the best pilots I know. It's called Anthem. I think we should adopt it as ours. Listen to it and enjoy, then strap in, check your instruments, plot your course, and take flight.

Simon Sharkey

Simon Sharkey was one of the founding directors of the National Theatre of Scotland where he

pioneered the 'theatre without walls' methodologies in participatory arts. He is now Director of The Necessary Space, an independent collaborative of artists and arts mentors.

The participation revolution and pandemic resilience

By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/the-participation-revolution-and-pandemic-resilience/>

June 18, 2020

Categories: News



JoJo Spinks from member Interwoven Productions CIC explores what it means to be truly 'place-based' and how participatory practice with open, two-way communications supports ongoing relationships, even in the climate of pandemic.

We didn't set out to create a company that would be resilient in the face of a pandemic, of course. So it's natural that, right now, people should be asking us and we should be asking ourselves this question. What is it about the way that we are set up that is not only helping us maintain service but is actually opening up new opportunities for us right now?

Maybe a little history will help. Back in 2011 when we were beginning, there were clues in the literature, even in the mainstream press, to set us on a new path. Lyn Gardner, the Guardian's star theatre reviewer at the time, was writing about the need to develop an 'army of advocates'. That theatres needed to stop thinking in terms of audience and more about active participants. In 2011 Charles Eisenstein, in his *Sacred Economics*, exploded the myths of capitalism by showing us that money itself is just a construction, an agreement that we've made. At the same time the music industry was undergoing an extreme revolution and in 2013 Amanda Palmer gave her 'The art of

asking' TEDx talk explaining how she'd funded her new album simply by letting her fans pay for it directly. She showed artists, of all kinds if they were keen to see, how they could cut out the middle man and develop a direct symbiotic relationship with their fans/supporters.

Most influential to us though was Lewis Hyde's *The Gift*, republished in 2012 but, in extraordinary prescience, first written in 1983. *The Gift* is a manifesto, a beautifully poetic exposition of the transformative power of giving something away. It was through Hyde that we came to understand the meaning and power of 'community'. Hyde demonstrated that in order for gift to be transformative, it needed to be passed on. More than this, it needed to be visibly passed on. The giving had to be witnessed.

All about the Place

So, by early 2014 we had made some important decisions. We had started as a socially-engaged performance company but now we would now operate within, and serve, a specific geographic community. A defined area where the gift we offered could be witnessed as it was passed, around and around within one square kilometre of landscape – a Squilometre. It's an archaeological concept in fact, to place a square metre grid down and to study in detail what is enclosed within. We just threw the net a little wider so that we were capturing the essence of 'place'. Its heritage, landscapes – green and built – and of course its people. In all honesty, we hadn't encountered the term at the time but, thanks to Hyde, we had become truly 'place-based' even before the term was in common use in the UK.

Circularity within the square

We started by creating a performance on an ordinary suburban street, with a script inspired by the characteristics of that street. We gave the performance away to the residents and 200 of them and processed with us, taking time to stop and view it anew, together. They stayed and chatted with us at the end, popped pay-it-forward donations into a hat whilst making nominations for which street, in their Squilometre, they'd like to see celebrated next. Now, five years and nine street-based projects later, they continue to commission and support their own street celebrations. With a little help from local authority small pot grants, the first Squilometre is a completely self-sustaining, community-led creative enterprise, going around and around their square kilometre in community perpetual motion.

Travelling light

More than this, we took the important decision to be light on our feet. Again, inspired by Hyde who constantly alludes to the deep and spiritual relationship between creativity and the natural world, we understood that we needed to take our performance out of doors. To take it to suburban streets and alleyways. Not only to the green spaces but right there to where people lived – car parks,

waste ground and back alleys. If we wanted to make a real social difference, we had to help people re-imagine and re-connect with their own spaces.

So, we've always fought the pressure to maintain premises for rehearsal or performance. We've never insisted that people come to us, we go to them. We don't keep equipment and we work with our communities to beg, borrow (not steal!) and re-purpose what we need. We've always said that if the script calls for a sunset – then go out of doors when the sun goes down! The pressure to have a building of your own is immense of course. It's a classic sign of success in the old capitalist construct. The bigger your palace, the greater you are. Resisting that pull and becoming inured to the judgement of others takes patience but, of course, we have come to realise that this is one of the most important decisions, for sustainability, that we have ever made.

Constant communion

Taking to the streets in this way, where there really is no barrier between you and your community, teaches you many things – you learn very quickly to let go of the creative ego. If your community is not enjoying what you do, they simply won't come. Or they'll walk up to you on the street and tell you – in that sense, evaluation is very easy! You'll soon know if you're not doing it right. To get it right, you have to maintain a constant conversation. This conversation is part of your art. This is the other reason that it is so important to define and restrict your community – to make effective two-way conversation possible. Very early on we established an online open forum where we chat daily. Our relationship is ongoing, not timebound. Our communications are open and two-way. Again, in this climate of pandemic, this has turned out to be incredibly important. Our service to our communities (there are now four separate Squilometres – with four separate online forums) has been seamless and uninterrupted.

Releasing the creative ego

You've guessed it – we quickly learned too that performance, and certainly scripted performance, isn't the best way to work within communities. At the beginning we were socially-engaged but we weren't participatory. In truth we had to learn that. We explored Boal, of course, and tested some of those practices within our communities but, in the end, nothing less than bowing completely into service would do. We came to see at local grassroots, as others had nationally (Fun Palaces, Creative People and Places and ArtWorks Alliance) that culture already sits firmly within our communities. They don't need to be taught what it is, they don't need to be engaged with someone else's vision of it or to have their stories re-framed and they have every right to express it how they please. Now, when we start a street project we never know how the creative expression will look. Our role is simply to facilitate and, if asked, hook communities up with an appropriate artist or expert to help fulfil their vision. And every once in a while, they ask us to help them perform! Finally in 2019, through Matarasso's beautifully crafted clarification of participatory practice, we came to recognise ourselves as operating at grassroots 'without help and without permission'.

We'd slid under the radar and established a direct relationship with our supporters, our communities. In this new world there is a levelling between audience, volunteer, funder, partner and artist. It means releasing your creative ego but it is what some are calling a 'Participation Revolution' or 'New Power'.

So what of the future?

And what of these 'new opportunities' mentioned at the outset? Well, we have long planned to extend our networks online. To create place-based resources that allow people to connect with their neighbours and their neighbourhoods and to give those resources away for free in order to build community, just as we did with our early performances. We also planned to create an online portal, where that gift can be witnessed and passed on and where communities can upload the product of their place-based creativity. More than this, a place where each Squilometre community can connect easily with the product of others. From Beijing to Turin and Adelaide to Aberdeen, a beautiful, open access expression of acting local but thinking global. But we believed that was blue-sky thinking, something far way off into the future. Because of Covid19 though we now have the resources and most importantly the networks to start making this happen. The first two Resource Packs have already been distributed with an online reach of around 10,000. Most extraordinarily, new funding opportunities for the online portal are opening up. It seems that our blue-sky vision is now shared by others.

Interwoven Productions CIC

Civic society is good news. Art is good news. How do we collaborate?

By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/civic-society-is-the-good-news-art-is-good-news-how-do-we-collaborate/>

July 16, 2020

Categories: News



Freelance participatory theatre maker and AWA member Rachel Griffiths explores how artistic practice can combine with community organising to make a lasting, positive difference.

“Imagination lets us glimpse a world that has not yet materialized and move mentally back and forth between what was and what is, and what is, and what might be.”

There’s been a lot of talk about imagining and re-imagining over the past few months. Like me, you’ll undoubtedly have been on many a Zoom with other participatory arts practitioners and organisations, lamenting and dreaming, often with complete strangers, into the alien safety of your laptop screen.

It’s not a new concept. The participatory arts sector has perpetually been asking itself how to shift from “for” to “with”, in our work with communities. And many succeed in co-creating beautiful, meaningful processes.

But now we are imagining with a new urgency. The food banks are busier; the education gaps wider; the job prospects fewer; the budgets tighter. We're going to need more than a mask. We know our work can make a difference; we know it can give voice. But can we offer assurance to the people we engage, that the artistic practice provides a language and a pathway to tangible, lasting change? Beyond the life-giving essentials of increased confidence, self-actualisation, agency, and group cohesion?

Well, artistic practice alone may not achieve this. But I believe that, combined with the methodology of community organising it will. I have spent the last three years learning the practice of organising through training with Citizens UK, and in particular my local chapter, Lambeth Citizens. In 2017 I co-founded a voluntary neighbourhood group called Herne Hill Welcomes Refugees to embark on the government's Community Sponsorship scheme which enables community groups to prepare for and welcome a refugee family to live and become integrated in their locality. Just a bunch of neighbours, we needed to formalise our status so we joined Citizens UK, who were leaders in the campaign to persuade David Cameron's government to welcome 20,000 refugees from the Middle East from 2015 to 2020.

My first local chapter meeting was the stuff participation departments dream of. Me, a white, middle aged, theatre practitioner; Christian by faith, there to represent a non-faith group; sitting under fluorescent lights in a classroom of the local Islamic school, dunking my biscuit into the tea I was offered as I arrived, in the company of a leader from a local mosque; a Muslim head teacher; a couple of C of E vicars – male and female; a young, female liberal rabbi from the synagogue down the road and two young adults from a local charity which teaches campaigning and activism for social change. I had the feeling I'd been waiting for this moment, this gathering all my life and I hadn't even realised it. And the leader? Well there was a professional organiser there, but true to the methodology of organising, the leaders were all of us. Diverse in age, ethnicity, faith, and life experience; united in our desire to seek the common good.

The gift that community organising gives people is POWER. Power to bring change where it is most longed for. And this power is not automatically allocated to individuals who attract it naturally – the articulate, connected, highly educated. Those people might be well intended and valuable supporters! But they aren't the focus. Rather, power is built among those most affected by the issues they want to address. The non-networked people who are fully qualified to speak on behalf of themselves and their neighbours or families; it's just that society hasn't identified them as powerful before.

This power is not placed in the hands of individuals. It belongs to groups: to alliances of institutions: faith groups, schools, colleges, trades unions, refugee support groups. This eclectic gathering of people faces common concerns, and it is into their – our – collective ache that organising can reach. Now imagine if publicly funded theatres, museums and art galleries also

belonged to these alliances. How could organising make a difference to their community work, outreach initiatives, education programmes?

Well to begin with, arts organisations who make meaningful, participatory art *with*, not *for* their local community are already aligned with one of the key tenets of organising: never do for someone what they can do for themselves. Yet organising offers an even greater power shift than that. By conducting a listening campaign with members – which in the case of an arts organisation might be their youth theatre, elders' company, schools, teachers, residents (the list is long and rich) – to establish what issues concern them most, the arts organisation doesn't waste time and resource creating work on a topic which isn't at the top of local peoples' agenda. In addition to the communities they are already in relationship with, membership of a local organising chapter provides relationship with a far broader spectrum of the community, such as the faith, neighbourhood, education and other groups I met at my first meeting. So the listening process ensures that from the conception of a project, the community determines the subject matter – they become authors from the get-go. Consequently, as the community decides the issue they want to creatively explore, then inevitably their engagement in the process will be authentic. Referring to people as “hard to reach” could be a thing of the past if arts institutions spent time listening to them. Chrissie Tiller, in her extensive think piece on the Creative People and Places programme, “Power Up”, reminds us we work in a sector “where hierarchies impact at every turn...”, and by way of suggested antidote, goes on to quote John Berger:

“Listening is what is important. The listening to a story is always primary, the listening is always primary.”

So what next? As Saidul Saeed of Birmingham Citizens explains, “community organising ... is preoccupied with the importance of people being able to participate in public life and affect decisions affecting their lives.” Reminiscent of Boal's Legislative Theatre, the methodology of community organising ensures the public become the change-makers. How many participatory arts projects have we experienced where good, meaningful, work takes place; lives are touch and affected; a profound experience is shared, but nothing changes in the social landscape? Of course if that is not the intended outcome of an artistic initiative then there's nothing to worry about. But many of us are committed to this work *because* we believe it brings transformation. And if anything is needed now, it is hope. Hope that in difficult days ahead, society need not languish while waiting for the economics to improve or the powers that be to bring some good news. Civic society is the good news. Art is good news. How do we collaborate?

Having listened, we take action. In a participatory arts project, action might mean a performance, an exhibition, a concert or a festival – a means to express feelings, issues and a challenge. We know the power of these moments. However, community organising never leads to an action without first identifying what the intended *reaction* will be. In arts funding speak, its “outcomes”.

The difference here is that the reaction is not the audience response, or the participants' experience. It is the reaction of the individual or individuals in positions of authority who can make decisions which will bring change. For example, the local authority banning 'idling' outside a primary school's gates; or the mayor of London agreeing to fund a centralised online resource for English learners who need to know where classes take place; when; whether childcare is provided.

Key to the process is the understanding that the big request might not be granted, but a smaller request might be. And that leads to a community feeling emboldened to continue to work for the greater win. The role of the artist and arts organisation here, could be to co-create a dynamic performative piece with the community – an 'action' in organising terms – which in itself will generate the intended reaction from the audience. I imagine meeting rooms in local authorities becoming platforms for spoken word creations in place of power point presentations; Head Teachers' offices becoming socially-distanced (for now at least) theatres; badly-lit paths being transformed into exhibition spaces, curated by the people who fear walking at night. Our theatres, galleries and concert halls are closed. As are many civic buildings. But our streets are not. Nor are our parks, our pavements. And if my experience of facilitating workshops online tells me anything, the screen can usefully serve as our civic square.

Imagine an evaluation being not just a list of outcomes on a form, but a photo of a woman smiling beneath a streetlamp as she walks home at night, following a series of artworks she'd helped make to show her fear; or a letter from a parent saying their child's asthma has improved since the idling stopped, thanks to the school community choir writing and performing a song to exhibit their anxieties; or a Snap from a young person showing off the laptop they have been given since they made that piece of theatre exposing the digital divide.

The way I see it, community organising and socially engaged arts practice are natural collaborators. There is a shortage of shows on stages; and a shortage of funding. But there is no shortage of need for hope; nor of people to bring it into being. So let's organise.

To find out how your institution can join Citizens UK, go to <https://www.citizensuk.org/>

Rachel Griffiths can be contacted at racheltgriffiths@gmail.com or on Twitter at [@rae_griffiths](https://twitter.com/rae_griffiths)

Photo: Members from Herne Hill Welcomes Refugees campaigning for a property to be offered to a refugee family, in our local Herne Hill Market (2018).

Chambers, Edward T (2010) *Roots for Radicals*. p23. Bloomsbury.

Tiller, C. (2017) *Power Up*. p33. Creative People and Places <https://artworksalliance.uk/awa-resource/power-up/>

Black, L. (2016) *Academic Diary: Or Why Higher Education Still Matters*. Goldsmiths Press

Saidul, S. (2020) *Migrant Community Business Organise*. https://www.citizensuk.org/migrant_biz_organise

Guidance on the guidance

By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/guidance-on-the-guidance/>

August 10, 2020

Categories: Covid-19



We've been including all sorts of information and resources around Covid-19 in our monthly newsletters and will now be posting updates here to support you and your work in participatory arts.

We start with a reminder 'guidance about the guidance' round-up from across the UK.

England

Guidance for DCMS sectors in relation to coronavirus (COVID-19)

Includes performing arts, outdoor events, libraries, museums, heritage, youth sector, sport & recreation, gyms/leisure facilities

Protective measures for holiday or after-school clubs and other out-of-school settings for children during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak

COVID-19: Guidance for the safe use of multi-purpose community facilities (including community centres and village halls)

Wales

AWA Member ArtWorks Cymru has a dedicated page here bringing together official guidance: from the Welsh Government for culture and heritage destinations and venues for a phased return; for people who work in performing arts, including arts organisations, venue operators and participants;

and for re-opening village and community halls (the latter from Third Sector Support Wales).

Scotland

The Scottish Government guidance documents are set out here including for creative studios and shared workspaces; events; museums, galleries and heritage attractions; libraries; and community learning and development sector. Plus there's a culture and creative support document.

Northern Ireland

Arts Council NI have a page for coronavirus advice that's regularly updated here.

Being human – the art of relevance

By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/being-human-the-art-of-relevance/>

August 13, 2020

Categories: News



Kim Wide describes how Take a Part responded to the rapid changes that happened when Covid-19 hit and what they did to support local communities, already living precarious and stressful lives.

It is really simple to find narratives that back up your approach, your outcomes, your relationships. You can talk about relevance with a lot of lenses on it. Dress it up. But what about care, support, kindness and being human? Those raw and instinctive approaches are what is needed right now in this world. Being human is the best way to be relevant.

Take A Part has been working for a long time with people in their communities where they live. We are an organisation that is about community-led place making, co-creation and co-production. Our approach is to listen to community experts and creatively support them to realise their ambitions. We make art where people live.

We are based in Plymouth but work across the UK and beyond to support integrated approaches to creativity where people have agency over the art they choose to engage with. We use creativity

as a means to re-address social injustice and support community cohesion. To amplify places forgotten and advocate for them to have more.

The rapid changes that happened when COVID hit were astounding and continue to deepen. We saw our communities, already living precarious and stressful lives, in a state of grief and worry. People on zero hour contracts having to continue to work at the height of lockdown. Houses with only one smart phone having to navigate online learning for their children. Isolated people stuck in homes in places with poor access to healthy food. Loneliness.

People were cut off. Services were being offered away from the community. Online. In non-analogue ways and it was getting isolating and inaccessible.

So we firstly went to local schools working with frontline worker families and those in receipt of school dinners. Families under stress. Families who needed something to help them cohes and to relieve stress. We partnered with schools to create art packs (with all the basics included) and used them as a way to communicate with communities. The art packs asked families to map their daily socially distanced walks, so you could choose to take a walk someone else does and see the world from their perspective.

Then we commissioned a community magazine written by local residents who are paid for their articles and time. Giving a little employability back when people have lost jobs. Allowing people with little or no access to digital to communicate about their local area better and signpost to services and opportunities too.

We also started to go back to the community to check in. To door knock, to do a beach clean, to share some ideas and find out more about what they need. We invited moments of joy in. Community planting days, photography walks, acoustic performances.

Being there. Doing things. This allowed us to listen better. To see more people and to bring them in.

In this time when everything is precarious, it feels like our work and the work of socially engaged and participatory art has been most relevant and had to alter the least. We were already on the ground with people. We had the relationships. We only had to reach out a little more to ask what people needed and offer it up. This was not about taking 3-4 months to reshape a business plan. This was about responding. Being relevant. CARING.

In life, we have one shot at being human and we need to take that approach every day and in every way.

As the cultural sector moves forward. Being human is going to be the most important approach to ensure relevance, care and ultimately – survival. This is about funding development time, not

projects. Investing in people and not outcomes.

FUND TIME NOT OUTCOMES.

FUND IDEAS NOT RESULTS.

FUND AMBITION.

FUND LOCAL.

FUND CARE.

BE HUMAN.

Delivering Participatory Theatre During Social Distancing: What's Working?

By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/delivering-participatory-theatre-during-social-distancing-whats-working-2/>

August 13, 2020

Categories: Evaluations & Reports, Resources

Tags: Covid-19, participatory theatre, social distancing



Author: Collective Encounters

Publication Date: July 2020

Summary

How participatory theatre is responding to COVID-19 and adopting different models of socially distanced practice.

Details

Collective Encounters' report on how the participatory theatre sector is responding to COVID-19, and adopting different models of socially distanced practice. The report explores the challenges of this, and some of the unexpected benefits.

Throughout June 2020 Collective Encounters ran a series of free events exploring how the participatory theatre sector was responding to COVID-19 and the effect lockdown and social distancing was having on participants, participatory theatre makers and their practice.

The events were attended by over 320 participatory theatre makers, creative learning managers, engagement managers, choreographers, drama teachers, lecturers, HE course leads, artistic directors, producers, choir leaders and researchers.

[Download or View Resource](#)

Proof of the Pudding

By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/proof-of-the-pudding/>

August 13, 2020

Categories: Resources, Toolkits & Guidance

Tags: artists, evaluation, evidence, funding, impact, participatory practice, partnership working



Author: People Dancing and ArtWorks Alliance

Publication Date: July 2020

Summary

Participatory arts evidence toolkit for artists

Details

Proof of the Pudding is a toolkit resource for artists to help them demonstrate the value and impact of participatory arts and develop partnerships for funding work. It comprises three online downloadable documents and three complementary webinars.

Proof of the Pudding: Part One covers **Insight:** *Locating your work in a wider context*; **Impacts:** *Telling the difference through 'stats and stories'*; and **Images:** *Showing the difference through images*

Proof of the Pudding: Part Two is a Marketing & Communications pack supporting you to get

your message across.

Proof of the Pudding: Part Three is a set of Case Studies contributed by members of ArtWorks Alliance or members of the individual alliance organisations.

These documents can be downloaded from the People Dancing website [here](#), where you'll also find recordings of the first two webinars and a Powerpoint and notes from the third.

Delivering Participatory Theatre During Social Distancing: What's Working?

By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/delivering-participatory-theatre-during-social-distancing-whats-working/>

August 13, 2020

Categories: Covid-19



This publication grew out of conversations Collective Encounters had with 320 representatives from participatory theatre, creative learning departments, HE/FE, directors and actors through their 'Social Distancing & Participatory Theatre' events. The report highlights the challenges and unexpected benefits of delivering digital and socially distanced participatory theatre and pays particular attention to digital inclusion; safeguarding; activities; performance and working in a hybrid capacity (from zoom to room). It also provides links to other available advice and resources.

Also, check out a wealth of resources in Collective Encounters' Centre for Excellence in Participatory Theatre Library: social distancing gathered from a wide range of participatory arts organisations and artists from across the UK and beyond.

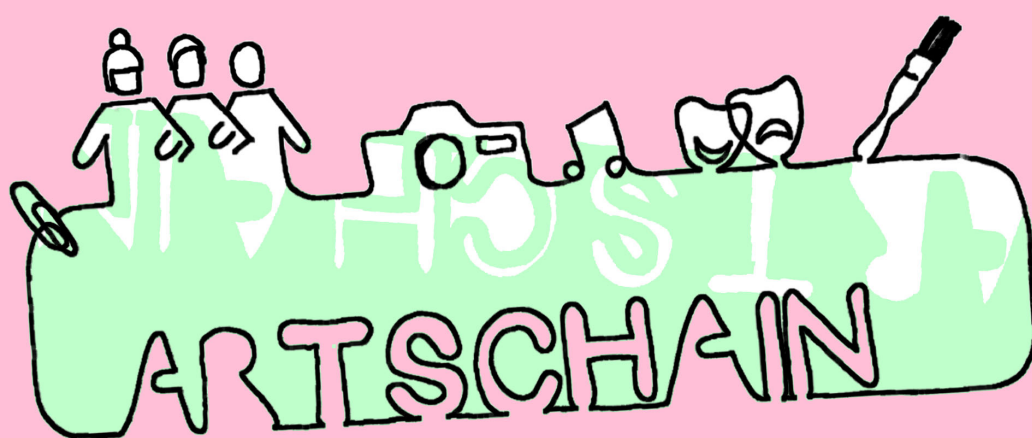
Building the future for and through participatory arts

By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/building-the-future-for-and-through-participatory-arts/>

September 10, 2020

Categories: News



AWA member Gerri Moriarty sets out the research ArtsChain carried out over the summer, in order to better understand the current needs of the participatory arts sector, and the three proposals made to Arts Council England with their initial reflections.

As part of its campaign to advocate for participatory arts (see the Open Letter and responses to the letter at www.artschain.co.uk), ArtsChain met recently with Rebecca Blackman (Arts Council England Director for Engagement and Audiences) and Catherine Mitchell (Interim Director, Combined Arts and the North). We were joined by Artworks Alliance members Adrian Sinclair and Sarah Thornton, and by Abdul Shayek (Artistic Director and CEO, Tara Arts) and Pragya Kumar (visual artist, founder of Cultural Connections), both of whom are London-based.

This piece sets out the research ArtsChain carried out over the summer, in order to better understand the current needs of the sector, the three proposals we made to Arts Council England and initial reflections from Rebecca and Catherine.

As a small, unresourced network, there are inevitable limitations to what ArtsChain can do. We hope that all those who care about participatory arts – and especially members and supporters of Artworks Alliance – will continue with the work of influencing decision-makers of all kinds at local,

regional and national level.

As the Brazilian philosopher and activist Paolo Freire said *'The future isn't something hidden in a corner. The future is something we build in the present.'*

Research findings

ArtsChain presented findings based on a survey of freelance practitioners and participatory organisations (170 respondents), our National Workshop which was attended by 89 people and in-depth qualitative interviews. These findings are indicative, rather than definitive but highlight:

- concern about loss of connection with participants and the subsequent impact for individuals and communities.
- concern about the loss of income for both organisations and freelance practitioners.
- a strong belief that issues of equality and diversity (for example Black Lives Matter and digital exclusion) needed to be addressed even more urgently
- a desire for recognition for the sector and for flexible funding approaches
- a need for space/time for organisations to plan for real change, not just adapt

Underpinning all of these issues is a strong feeling of uncertainty about the future. We also commented on the clear risk to the mental health and wellbeing of practitioners, given the uncertainties they were facing personally and professionally and the fact that they are on the front-line of listening and responding to communities deeply affected by Covid-19 and the current economic crisis. We also raised the issue of exclusion because of digital poverty

Three Proposals

Our group made three proposals to Arts Council England, linked to these findings:

Proposal 1. Recognition of the Participatory Arts Sector

'Participatory Arts in England has a rich history and is currently practised by groups of committed individuals and organisations in every region of the country. It has its own sets of skills and competencies and is a distinct sub-set of the arts in the same way that the theatre sector or the visual arts sector is. And very well placed to support communities following COVID...

The Arts Council's new strategy, Let's Create, aims to: *"recognise and champion the creative activities and cultural experiences of every person in every town, village and city in this country, and to ensure that, over the next 10 years, we support more people to express and develop their creativity..."*

Participatory Arts is the flag-bearer and role model for this ambition. As the Participatory Arts

sector organises itself locally, regionally, nationally and internationally we have a simple ask from the Arts Council: for the first time **to recognise Participatory Arts as a sector in its own right**. And that means the Arts Council developing structures and processes to deal with us as a sector.'

This proposal was presented by Adrian Sinclair (Heads Together) and supported by Hannah Whitlow (Blaze Arts), who talked about why this proposal was important for young artists in the early stages of developing their careers and Sarah Thornton (Collective Encounters) who pointed out that recognition of the sector would mean:

- supporting the collective voice of the participatory arts sector
- ensuring organisations and individuals have breathing space to adapt to new and
- ever-changing circumstances e.g. through a flexible approach to targets and by reducing administration
- encouraging the sharing of information gathered through monitoring and evaluation to support learning and build evidence of impact and value of the sector
- Helping to make participatory arts better. Focus on improving quality.

Proposal 2 A new £15 million Arts Council England funding programme

'A radical new programme which is targeted at communities and individuals who have been worst affected by Covid-19 and are also likely to suffer most in the economic crisis

- Hyper-local, co-designed, participatory arts-focused, led primarily by communities and partnerships rather than artists.
- Individual grants in the region of £10,000 – £35,000, with a total fund of £15 million set aside specifically. Applications would be encouraged from the breadth of organisations who work in the youth, community and voluntary sector, with arts and cultural organisations as partners but not applicants and including strong links with the Voluntary sector.
- The application process would be light touch to encourage community led projects to apply, and would be proactively supported by Arts Council including offering feedback to – unsuccessful applicants to strengthen resubmission

In addition, we would propose that this funding programme has a strong mental health, well-being and loneliness focus. It would be a great signal of ACE's commitment to one of the key outcomes of 'Let's Create' – that everyone can develop and express creativity throughout their lives.

We know this is an area where participatory arts has both expertise and experience and the crossover between other sectors beyond the arts feels like it is going to be even more significant as we start to rebuild programmes and develop practice over the next 2-5 years.'

This proposal was presented by Ben Turner (freelance producer with specialist experience in community engagement) and supported by Pragya Kumar (Eltham Arts and Cultural Connections).

Proposal 3 Developing the workforce and leadership and becoming more diverse.

‘We need ring-fenced resources for experienced and emerging freelance practitioners to develop their participatory practice and navigate and progress in the sector. This targeted support for CPD for participatory artists should come through substantial ring-fenced funding from the ‘Developing Your Creative Practice’ funding stream. The support needs of emerging practitioners need to be met through this fund if they are to develop their skills and remain in the sector.

The sector also needs ACE support for a national, joined up approach to leadership in the sector to ensure future diversity and the high ethical standards in artistic practice and employment necessary for good communities’ work. This might be the subject of a future national three-year funding bid from a consortium of organisations already providing some sector support and would develop a needs-responsive, sector-led, inclusive CPD offer and reflective learning opportunities for freelancers and micro-organisations. We are asking ACE to consider setting aside strategic funds for this Sector Leadership work.’

This proposal was presented by Stella Barnes (Community Arts North West) and supported by Cara Looij (freelance practitioner) who spoke about why CPD is important for emerging participatory arts practitioners and argued that a strategic approach to CPD would build a confidently equipped freelance work force. Reece Williams (poet, performer and community engagement manager for Manchester City of Literature) contrasted artists’ truly disheartening experiences with some organisations in the cultural sector to the benefits which have flowed from working with organisations that demonstrate best practice in leadership.

Cecilia Wee, who was not able to be at the meeting, had sent comments arguing for the need to *‘recognise the diverse leadership that already exists within the participatory /community arts sector. I feel there are many leaders already in our midst in our many communities and the response needed is to ensure that these people have the agency and resources to act, to progress and to carry out their creative leadership – through a mixture of bursaries, peer mentoring opportunities and skills development. This is hugely important, because without such opportunities, diverse (whether that is Black people or people of colour or disabled or working class) practitioners are those who are more frequently under financial pressure to leave the arts sector. This is compounded by experiences of marginalisation in terms of discrimination, less development opportunities, and lack of visibility. ‘*

Sue Caudle (DIY Theatre) summed up, saying that the participatory arts sector needs support to resource and establish a tailored, strategic approach to Professional Development, underpinned by a strong ethical framework which supports and drives our agendas of inclusion and diversity.

Initial responses from Rebecca Blackman and Catherine Mitchell

The concerns that ArtsChain highlighted are in alignment with those of Arts Council England (ACE); they resonate with other discussions and findings. ACE remain completely committed to the “Let’s Create” strategy but are reviewing it to ensure that it is fit for purpose, given Covid-19.

With regard to Proposal 1, ACE does value participatory arts as a specialist sector and aims to reflect this in its strategies – but Rebecca acknowledged that this may need to be made more visible. She expressed an interest in Proposal 2, as it appeared to have similarities to the “Creative People and Places” programme but would aim to make smaller scale project funding available to community groups. She thought there could be an opportunity for peer learning as a possible approach to CPD.

Catherine felt that Arts Council England would be happy to continue conversations around quality principles, without trying to apply a prescriptive and limiting framework.

Arts Council England are currently collecting examples of practice that has been delivered non-digitally with communities during the pandemic, as they recognise the issues we highlighted around digital exclusion. Rebecca thought that if ACE were to develop an initiative to support the mental health and wellbeing, it was more likely to do something that would be relevant across the whole cultural sector. Much depended on the outcome of the Government’s Comprehensive Spending Review.

Rebecca and Catherine urged those attending the meeting to continue to talk to them as they were open to hearing that they need to do more.

And finally.....

Reece Williams brought the meeting to a close with his spoken word piece ‘Despite Covid-19’, which was inspired by reading the messages of support sent by signatories to the ArtsChain Open Letter. Here is an extract from it.

‘As we look to this new normal,

Meet head on the new challenges,

We need to take the opportunity to address the imbalances,

We need to continue talking,

Then take it beyond conversation.

Without a balanced dialogue,

How can there be stabilisation?.....

And talk is cheap

without the means to make it happen,

We need ACE specific funds to revolutionise the pattern,

Funds to support practitioners, develop leadership and insight,

Coz it's a travesty when an artist changes career

Instead of changing lives.

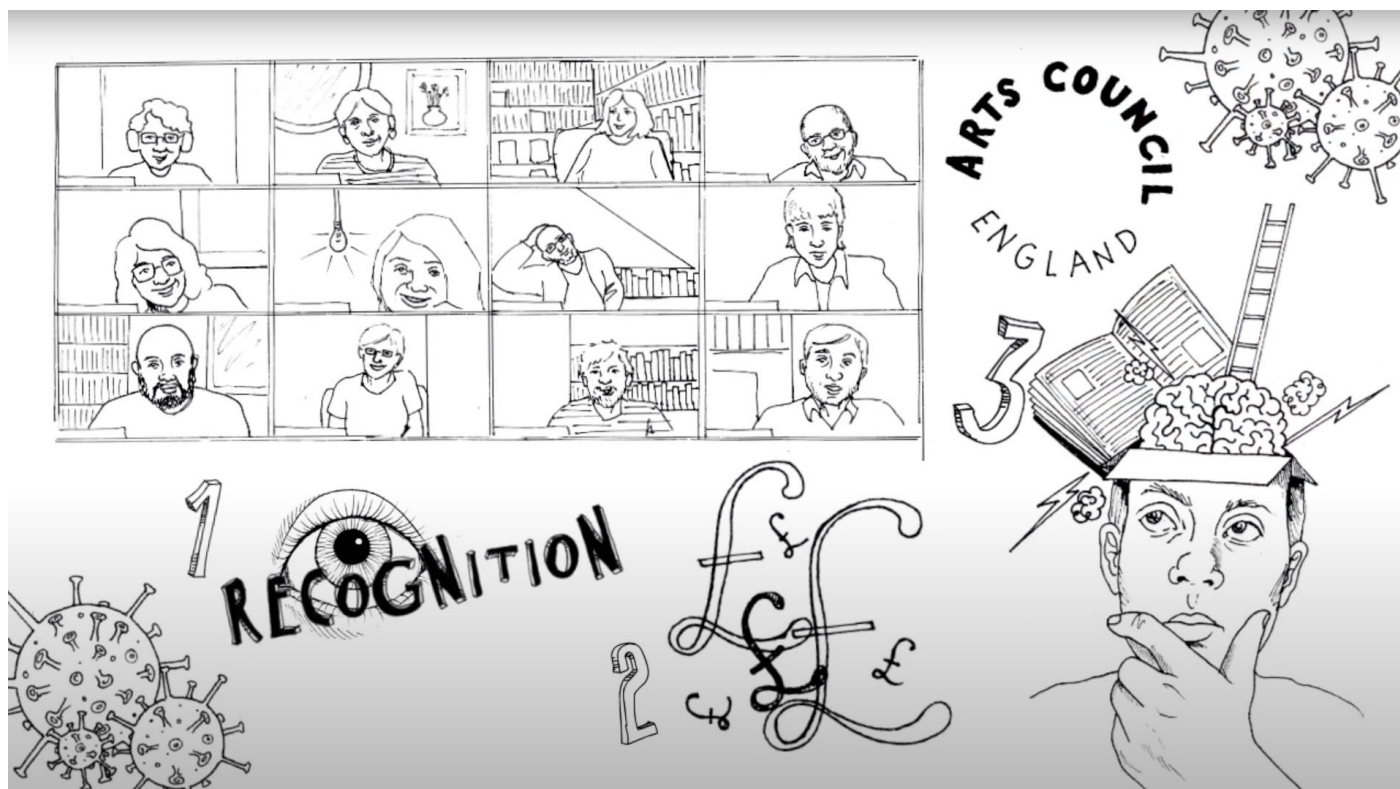
Shall we create then?

By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/shall-we-create-then/>

October 15, 2020

Categories: News



Adrian Sinclair, from the AWA Advocacy Action Group, takes up the *What next?* question following last month's blog from Gerri Moriarty of ArtsChain, to explore how we can organise and advocate for participatory arts.

In her blog last month Gerri Moriarty talked about the work done by ArtsChain in campaigning on behalf of the Participatory Arts sector. You can see the initial Open Letter to Nicolas Serota at www.artschain.co.uk, the support and range of responses it elicited. Now you can find out what happened when ArtsChain met the Arts Council via an animation (not quite When Harry met Sally but we are nothing if not creative in our desire to communicate better!).

I've been part of the ArtsChain initiative (which has been a really positive experience) as well as being involved in the new-ish Artworks Alliance Advocacy Action Group. All good but...

...what next?

ArtsChain have done a great job in taking this on and have had a positive response from Arts Council England. But how to turn that empathetic response ie *Yes, we know what you mean...* into

something that actually makes a difference?

From their research and conversations with the sector, ArtsChain made three clear proposals to Arts Council England.

- That ACE recognise Participatory Arts as a distinct sector with its own skills, competencies and needs
- That there is a radical £15 million funding programme targeted at the communities and individuals who have been worst affected by Covid-19 and are also likely to suffer most in the economic crisis
- That ACE identify ring-fenced resources dedicated to developing a Participatory Arts workforce and leadership that is skilled, supported, and diverse

I think they are all simple clear asks and, let's not forget, this is in the context of the Arts Council's own 10-year *Let's Create* Strategy.

which, even though it completely fails to mention Participatory Arts by name, is all about Creative People, Cultural Communities and a Creative and Cultural Country. Indeed it states that, through the *Let's Create* strategy, the Arts Council will “*recognise and champion the creative activities and cultural experiences of every person in every town, village and city in this country, and ensure that... we support more people to express and develop their creativity...*”

If that is not a rallying cry that our work and their ambitions align, then I don't know what is?

But how come then that, in the 79-page report, the term Participatory Arts doesn't feature at all (and neither Community Arts nor the Arts Council's current preferred term Social Arts)? And does that matter?

Maybe there is a bigger question to answer first ...are we a sector at all?

In the recent Alliance online Gathering it was pointed out that we are all so different (different artforms, rural/urban, freelance/organisation etc etc) and maybe that makes it difficult to advocate as a sector. Indeed, with recent membership changes, the Alliance will include everything from young freelancers who dedicate part of their working lives to participatory practice, to small rural

organisations who have participation as their *modus operandi*, to larger urban arts organisations who may have a department who has participation at their core.

But is that not the same as every sector, in every industry from manufacturing to education? There are times when it is right to celebrate that difference and maybe organise separately and there are times when we need to focus on what we have in common and act as an alliance.

I've often thought that Artworks Alliance has done a great job of allowing a range of different people and organisations to come together. As an alliance it can be something loose enough not to have rules of membership but to allow people to self-define a desire to be part of it. And part of what? Something with a mission simply to achieve *better participatory arts*.

But maybe that isn't quite enough. And I am not talking about endless discussions about what is participatory/community arts (although I do think Francois Matarasso did a good enough job of defining the difference in *A Restless Art*) and we can point to the rich 60 years of history to help us define what we are talking about thanks to the work documenting that history by people like Francois, and Alison Jeffers and Gerri Moriarty in *Culture, Democracy and the Right to Make Art: The British Community Arts Movement*.

In Wales, ArtWorks Cymru partners are working on a Manifesto for Participatory Arts. Maybe we do need something to convince ourselves that, to quote the late Jo Cox MP from her maiden parliamentary speech (admittedly completely out of context!) *"While we celebrate our diversity, what surprises me time and time again... is that we are far more united and have far more in common with each other than things that divide us."*

Maybe it isn't so complicated either. Looking back at that *Let's Create* quote, would it help if we were able to state that:

"The Participatory Arts sector recognises and champions the creative activities and cultural experiences of every person in every town, village and city in this country, and aims to ensure that... it supports more people to express and develop their creativity..."

Maybe...

Anyway, back to my question: What Next?

Well, ArtsChain have made their offer, but have also indicated that they can't carry on doing this without help. As Gerri explains *"We really do need other organisations and groupings to carry on the lobbying work, in their own ways. What we did over the summer was exceptional, I think, but we haven't got the resources (financial or human) to sustain things at that level."*

Meanwhile the latest missive from Nicholas Serota to ArtsChain includes the following:

“...your concerns and proposals chime well with the ideas that we are developing for inclusion in the Delivery Plan for ‘Let’s Create’. We aim to publish early in 2021, but no doubt you will continue the conversation ... in the meantime as your experience and ideas can help us shape an even more effective route map for a future that must address some difficult challenges.”

So, that’s where we are at the moment. The door may be a little ajar but it could close unless we do something and the opportunity is, to a certain extent, time-limited.

One of the suggestions from the Advocacy Action Group at Artworks Alliance was that we might be able to organise some lobbying at a regional level in England whilst recognising the differing circumstances in the other nations of the UK and plan advocacy accordingly. Participatory Arts Yorkshire, for example, have already met with the regional ACE Director who had himself identified that *Let’s Create* was a great opportunity for the participatory arts sector.

Has anyone else been having those kinds of discussions at a regional level already?

Does anyone have the energy to do it at this challenging time or is the door ajar at a time when it is really difficult to look forward and push it open?

Answers on a postcard (oh wouldn’t that be nice!).

Any other thoughts or if you would just be interested in getting involved with the Advocacy Action Group at Artworks Alliance then feel free to contact adrian@headstogether.org

Artwork by Cara Looij

Working with artists through lockdown

By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/working-with-artists-through-lockdown/>

November 12, 2020

Categories: Case Studies, Latest, Resources

Tags: artists, community, Covid-19, CPD, participation



Author: Kathryn Welch

Publication Date: November 2020

Summary

Creative People and Places case study

Details

In order to support more people to take a lead in choosing, creating and taking part in arts and culture experiences in their local area, Places in the Creative People and Places programme needed to rethink how they could work alongside artists, as well as with communities, within the COVID-19 context.

www.creativepeopleplaces.org.uk/case-studies

[Download or View Resource](#)

The role of digital engagement in place-based projects

By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/the-role-of-digital-engagement-in-place-based-projects/>

November 12, 2020

Categories: Case Studies, Latest, Resources

Tags: Covid-19, digital, engagement, participation



Author: Kathryn Welch

Publication Date: November 2020

Summary

Creative People and Places case study

Details

As COVID-19 forced us into physical distance from one another, digital tools and online engagement became key to maintaining connection, communication and friendship. For many Creative People and Places, what followed was a steep learning curve – an intense live experiment in the online delivery of creative projects.

www.creativepeopleplaces.org.uk/case-studies

Download or View Resource

The power of congruent networking

By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/the-power-of-congruent-networking/>

November 12, 2020

Categories: News



Dr Sue Kay reflects on the impact of cultural networks from research and personal resonances. She explores how their value lies not only in what they do, but also in how they do it – and how for the Alliance, process can be congruent with the principles and practices of participatory arts.

Today is the twelfth day of renewed lockdown here in France. Whenever I leave the house, I must have a permit with me, detailing the reason why I am going out (daily exercise, visiting a sick relative, food shopping, work necessarily conducted away from home) and I cannot meet indoors with anyone I do not live with. Cafes and bars are closed and everything has become small and quiet, despite the unseasonably good weather. Much of my work is on pause; I am acutely aware of the dire situation for artists and arts organisations back home; and I can feel the anxiety rising. To be writing about networks and networking when the walls are closing in seems plain weird.

Yet it is no exaggeration to say, that networks and networking have brought me here, giving me both the courage and the means – as a committed European – to take the risk and relocate. After thirty five years in the UK cultural sector, I now work as an educator, trainer, facilitator and coach with cultural operators in Central and Eastern Europe, Nordic Baltic countries, and the Southern

Mediterranean (North Africa and the Middle East). And the seeds of that were planted in 1997, when, as a lecturer in cultural management at (the former) Dartington College of Arts, a colleague suggested a trip to the annual conference of ENCATC (the European network of cultural management and policy) in Bilbao, Spain.

That gathering – the first of many over the years – brought me into contact with people I would never otherwise have met. The connections made then and since have enabled me to ‘earn, learn, trade and travel’ (McCarthy, Miller and Skidmore, 2004) in ways I could never have predicted or indeed imagined. More than that, they have led to challenges, opportunities, collaborations and friendships that have been cumulatively life changing. And I am far from alone. Just yesterday, a Bulgarian friend and colleague reminded me that seven years ago we were working together in Crimea, only months before the Russian government’s illegal annexation of the Black Sea Peninsula and Ukraine’s Maidan Revolution. Below an image of the two of us – at the end of a three day workshop with inspirational cultural managers from the region – she posted: “2013: looks like a photo from another life when we used to travel, meet globally, laugh face-to-face and have a glass of wine in a restaurant...It was....splendid!!” How the world has changed since then, with those changes accelerating at frightening speed over the past few months.

And now I sit here wondering...what is it about our experience of cultural *networks* that can be so formative and how does the activity of *networking* actually work? What is it about **ArtsWork Alliance** that makes it an effective network? What are the implications, now, of drastically reduced mobility, the sudden curtailing of face-to-face contact, and the irrevocable movement of so much networking *online*?

Clearly there is something about **cultural networks**. The last 25 years has seen an explosion of them. Today the number in Europe totals over three hundred, covering a multitude of art forms, disciplines, organisations, countries and professions and spanning a wide range of activities ranging from information exchange, education, management and mobility of artists, to research, joint projects, new forms of creation and international cooperation. With their origins in the 1970s, as Mary Ann De Vlieg has documented (2011), these ‘non-hierarchical, non-bureaucratic, horizontal frameworks’ have subsequently met with the paradox of formalisation in return for funding, an exponential growth in opportunities to exchange and collaborate outside those provided by formal networks, the connective, all pervasive power of new technology, the advent of the ‘network society’ (Castells, 2004), and a growing awareness of the environmental damage caused by travel to network gatherings in real time and space. Not surprisingly, flexibility and constant learning have long been guiding principles:

There is no ideologically pure, ‘model’ of cultural network. All true networks are in a continuous process of change and adaptation...They make constant readjustments to their working methods as the world in which they operate throws up new challenges and conflicts (Staines, 1996 as

quoted in Davies, 2016).

For many of us the appeal of cultural networks is that they are:

...common 'spaces' where diverse ideas can be aired, leading to mutual challenging and (ideally) a range of transformations (Davies, 2016).

In this way, not only are networks perceived as vehicles for collaboration and change, they also offer a structure, ethos and methodology for addressing shared issues, which challenges that of more conventional hierarchical or bureaucratic organisations. Their value lies not only in what they do, but also in how they do it.

Not that that is without its challenges. There is an inevitable tension and fragility to a network as a 'holding' structure. Too little organisation and the network could become diffuse; too much, and the life and the important element of chance could get squeezed out. Too small or too narrow in focus and membership, and the lack of diversity could lead to exclusion and groupthink; too big and communications might become blocked and the integration of new members more challenging. A paucity of resourcing, and good ideas might fall by the wayside; a more generous pot and bureaucracy creeps in, with an increased burden of responsibility transferred away from the membership and towards the centre.

Woven through this delicate and complex balancing act, however, is the fundamental point that networks, as communication structures, enable **networking**: 'the process of making connections' (Davies, 2016).

The very first scientific study of 'how networking works' in the cultural field was commissioned by IETM (the international network for contemporary performing arts) at the end of the nineties. All these years later, it still captures, for me, the powerful effects of actually *doing* it: the plethora of individual and working group/sub-network pathways, intersecting and interacting to constitute the whole; the freedom to communicate autonomously on an equal, horizontal footing with others regardless of status or position; encounters with different value systems which force questions about one's own; identifying – often in serendipitous ways – new opportunities for collaboration and cooperation and novel ways of developing professionally; the fizz of face-to-face meetings, subsequently sustained by ongoing circulation of information and continuous exchange; the feeling that – with others who are sufficiently similar *and* different – it is possible make a real difference.

In that same report, the network meeting or gathering – the main medium for face-to-face connection – was likened to a 'medieval market square':

...where rare and exotic goods could be found alongside the common, all of which was destined for perusal by travellers, jugglers, artisans and soldiers alike. Transactions among individuals dealt

not only with goods to be sold or purchased; the square was not a supermarket. It was a meeting point, a point of discovery of new streets, new cities, strange customs. It was a place to be married, to hear about the unicorn and learn from others' gestures. Items were bought and items were sold, of course. But above all, the squares were the place for participation in civil life (Dal Pozzollo and Bachella, 2001).

However fanciful and indeed questionable that analogy may seem now, it vividly captures the power of a network as a porous space which provides 'a context in which ideas, exchanges, collaborations and opportunities emerge' (De Vlieg, in Dal Pozzollo and Bacchella, 2001).

All of above is apparent in the mission, values and working practice of **ArtsWorks Alliance**:

'We're a network, not an organisation. We get together at (Virtual) Forums to discuss and action what needs doing to make a difference in participatory arts.'

And the benefits for members?

- 'Opportunities to meet, talk, share and learn and have your ideas validated by people who know what you're talking about is rare. So we're in'
- 'I can network with people I'd otherwise not get to meet'
- 'I get to be a serious influencer'
- 'We're the go-to place'
- 'I get to make progress on the really difficult issues'
- 'I'm more efficient in my work'
- 'The more the better'

Aside from the strength and clarity of all this, however, there are two things – as an interested observer – I find particularly striking: first, the seeming ease/relative speed with which ArtsWork Alliance took **form** as a network among its (now) membership; and second, the facility with which the network has moved its Forum activities **online** in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic. I have no scientific basis for what I'm about to suggest, but this is a blog and not a research paper, so please bear with me while I riff on a couple of ideas.

Way back in 2012, I had the opportunity to reflect on the research conducted during the first year of the original Paul Hamlyn Foundation ArtWorks special initiative (Kay, 2012). One of the observations was that while a high degree of importance was attached to artform knowledge, skill and professionalism in the field, artists also felt they needed and exercised a broad range of interpersonal and participant-orientated skills and attributes:

The ability to communicate with others, trust people, and be flexible... (Sellers, 2012b).

Skills such as flexibility, communication skills, and teaching/tutoring skills... Personal attributes such as empathy, a desire to work with the community, and confidence are also seen as important... knowledge of the participants/communities that are involved, and experience of working in participatory settings (Sellers, 2012c).

Artists responded that ...needed to develop excellent interpersonal skills... the ability to communicate with others...to manage a room, to put people at ease. Participatory artists also need to build trust in order to create a safe environment... participants could creatively explore and 'play' (Sellers, 2012a)

It is interesting to me now that all the above would sit quite happily and appropriately in a good practice guide to effective networking.

In addition, I remember the notion that

...what *artists* say they want and get from their work: enjoyment, inspiration, new skills and knowledge through participation and reflection, the energy that develops within a group, a sense of empowerment, increased self-confidence, shared ownership, a safe place to develop and exercise skills, make mistakes and give and get feedback...resonate with the benefits *participants* say they derive from . The traffic is evidently two way between practitioner and participant: these are artists who like to receive as they give. And these same artists are clear that they want to build these relationships with each other too (Kay, 2012).

So the first idea is this. Could it be that ArtsWorks Alliance members, through their practice, are already particularly well 'primed' for effective networking, such that the creation of the network itself was a culturally logical next step, no big deal...just another example of process being congruent with the principles and practices of participatory arts?

In similar vein (and this is the second idea), could it be that the transition from networking 'in person' to Zoom Forums has been considerably eased by the fact that 'digital participation' has been a key activity/enquiry strand for ArtWorks since July 2018 (with John Whall from AWA member QUAD as digital participation champion and The Digital Participation Expedition undertaken in partnership with EMPAF)? Is it too fanciful to wonder if the 'magic moment' experienced by network members at the October 2020 Zoom Forum is just as valid an example of 'participation digital' as other good practice initiatives highlighted through the Digital Participation Expedition? Congruence again – and the same pattern emerges when considering the ArtWorks Quality in Action and Fellowship initiatives. It's good to receive as you give: what's good for the goose is also good for the gander.

My point here is not to paint an idealised and uncritical picture of ArtsWork Alliance as a cultural network; rather it is to suggest that the dialogical nature of participatory arts is a critical factor in

the success of the network *and* that the dialogical nature of the network (still in early days) has the potential, considerably, to strengthen participatory arts, both in substance and profile. A bit like a Mobius Strip...

And the implications of all this, now?

2020 is still not over, and yet in a short few months we have experienced world-changing and paradigm shifting events, not least through the Coronavirus pandemic. Francois Matarasso sees the situation in cultural terms (2020)

Whatever world will emerge from this catastrophic health crisis, it will be one traumatised by grief and fear. It will be poorer and preoccupied by the effort of recovery and reconstruction. It might seem, after all, that this is not a time to talk about culture. Nothing could be further from the truth.

The pandemic was created by culture, from the sale of wildlife in Chinese food markets to the frequency of international travel for business and pleasure. It was experienced culturally, as people lost the pleasures of café and football match, but turned to books and films, internet conversations and singing to each other from their balconies. And the recovery will equally be defined by culture – by the science applied to understanding and overcoming the disease, by the stories that help people make sense of their experience, by the imagined futures that frighten them or give them hope...

And after sounding a warning about continuing inequalities between the Global North and the Global South which – if unchecked – can only impede any meaningful recovery, he continues:

Culture cannot be a solution to these immense problems, but it is a territory where solutions can be found, where trauma can be acknowledged and healed, and where new ways of living will be imagined.

In facing outwards from a position of strength-through-congruence, ArtWorks Alliance, through its members in the participatory arts sector, has a crucial role to play in supporting communities to do just that.

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Networking: then and now

By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/networking-then-and-now/>

December 10, 2020

Categories: News

THE FREELANCE NETWORK

With the arts ecology so dependent on freelancers and a significant growth this year of networks for independents, we asked **June Gamble** to share her experiences of working collaboratively as a network. Hear her journey from card file systems 'back in the day' to creating safe spaces on Zoom.

In October 2020, I celebrated being a self-employed Arts Manager and Consultant for 30 years. As just one person who is part of such a significant freelance workforce, over that time I've booked or managed more than 20 national and international tours; delivered over 1000 coaching and mentoring sessions and over 500 training and facilitation days; raised over £3.5 million for dance and theatre projects; lectured and produced; and been the founding member of three Strategic Development Organisations.

However, this year, thanks to COVID-19, my experience of networking and working collaboratively surpassed all previous experiences of networking and working collaboratively.

To put this into context, in the 1990s, I was the first Coordinator of the Association of Dance of the African Diaspora (ADAD) – an artist led consortia. At the time, I had to create a database from scratch (a card file system) and write, print and post regular newsletters to the members of ADAD. We arranged occasional meetings and enabled various projects. After being the Coordinator, I

joined the Steering Committee.

In the 2000s, I was a co-founder of the Independent Dance Management Network and over the years was a Coordinator and a member of the Executive Steering Committee. The database was a spreadsheet and newsletters were emailed. Regular meetings and events were organised.

In June 2020, I was sponsored by the Theatre Royal Plymouth to be one of the 160+ members of the Freelance Task Force (FTF). My experience, in truth, was the stuff of dreams and nightmares. Fortunately, the dreams outweighed the nightmares, and I learnt a lot about myself and others from both.

In the first two weeks, I joined 29 others as facilitators, and we endeavoured to set up systems of communication and attempted to enable Zoom meetings to happen. During this time, I met, virtually, a handful of new contacts that went on to become and continue to be intrinsic to the rest of my FTF adventure. Two of these people, I had briefly met before (dancers/choreographers) but never worked with and the other two were strangers and people that I would never probably have met in any other circumstances (a Theatre Designer and a Stage Manager).

Additionally, I started to work with someone who I knew from my work in Plymouth but had not had the opportunity to work with before – a young Theatre practitioner who had been sponsored by the Barbican Theatre. We very quickly joined forces and decided to invite freelancers in Plymouth and Devon to sign up to a database so that we could keep them informed via a weekly emailed newsletter.

We all quickly identified that we are 'soulmates' or 'kindred spirits', as we rapidly realised that we shared the same language, values and beliefs, whilst having extended video chats, navigating the ups and downs of the FTF.

At the end of the first two weeks, I joined others in the South West FTF (including three of my compadres) and the FTF Dance Group (including two of my compadres). All five of my soulmates and all of the members of the SW FTF and FTFDG agreed that our individual and collective purpose was to act as conduits between the non-FTF freelancers and the sector organisations, collecting data and information and enabling all to be kept informed and updated. As a result, the Plymouth & Devon database was part of a South West web of databases and social media connections, whilst the FTF Dance Group created the first and largest database of freelance dance professionals (400+) and also curated and emailed weekly newsletters, as well as managing Twitter and Facebook accounts.

At the end of the 13-week contract, a series of local, regional and dance specific open Zoom meetings were held to share our work and to consult on future needs.

Alongside these two groups, I joined forces with one of my kindred spirits and we enabled and facilitated a series of FTF Zoom meetings (60+) for those who wished to discuss the 7 FTF Working Points.

POINT 1: The Guiding Principles for a Freelancers Fair Engagement Agreement

POINT 2: Citizen Advice Bureau – Non Union

POINT 3: Anti-discriminatory Inclusivity and Diversity Pledge for Freelancers and Arts organisations.

POINT 4: Freelancers Industry Meetings / Organisational Representation

POINT 5: Pay Structures

POINT 6: National Portfolio Individual / National Portfolio Artist

POINT 7: A creation of a longer lasting network for freelancers

The SW FTF, FTFDG and the 7 Working Points initiative were recognised within and outside of the FTF as being three of the most productive sub-groups of the FTF and my observation is that this was because of the shared purpose, the focus on action, the communication systems and regular contact established and maintained with freelancers inside and outside of the groups.

In addition, the SW FTF and FTFDG consisted of individuals from a range of practices and backgrounds and were diverse in respect of gender, age and ethnicity. In my opinion, both groups had mutual respect, kindness, care, consideration and professionalism at the heart of every online meeting and all email correspondence. Sadly, these values were not necessarily my experience or the experience of others when engaging with the wider FTF which resulted in the nightmares.

These negative experiences ultimately led me to join up with four of my five 'soulmates' and after the FTF 13-week contract, we set up The Freelance Network – a hub and spoke model that enables individual and groups of freelancers to meet on a monthly basis to share their work and discuss shared issues. Find this on Facebook @TheFreelanceNetworkUK and Twitter @FreelanceNW.

So, what did I learn about myself?

Technically, I learnt how to use Zoom to facilitate meetings and how to properly use Gmail and Tasks. I already had a grasp of Google Chrome and I became nicknamed the Google Drive Queen! This meant that I set up and managed lots of Google Documents and Spreadsheets and managed the living and archived folders of the various groups that I was involved with. I think it is

safe to say that my old-school, general administration skills were revealed to be of a high standard.

On a personal level, I had to realise that on screen, I was perceived as a white middle class, middle aged woman and on occasions, treated with contempt as a result of assumptions being made based on stereotypes (again, the stuff of nightmares). As a result, I found myself re-assessing my own witting and unwitting prejudices and trying to understand how I am perceived as a facilitator by individuals on a Zoom call who have never met or worked with me before. In 'real' life, I have a reputation for my honest, direct and transparent approach when facilitating meetings and training sessions, that has resulted in many long term professional relationships with individuals and organisations. However, during my FTF experience, I realised that in this 'brave new world' that we now find ourselves in, we need to be even more aware of each other's sensitivities and the need to create a safe space within the parameters of communicating via a screen.

In conclusion, the dreams were the opportunity and honour of meeting and working with a range of individuals that I would probably never have met in 'real' life. The Freelance Network, the Plymouth & Devon FTF, SW FTF and the FTFDG continue to work together and as we do so, the experience gets richer and richer and the outcomes become stronger and more impactful. I am excited about continuing my adventure as part of these networks and have no doubt that our shared purpose will result in us continuing to make a difference to the lives and work of freelancers in the UK.

June Gamble

www.junegamble.co.uk

A holistic approach for quality in participatory arts: Impacts on practice experienced by artists in Scotland, Wales and Portugal

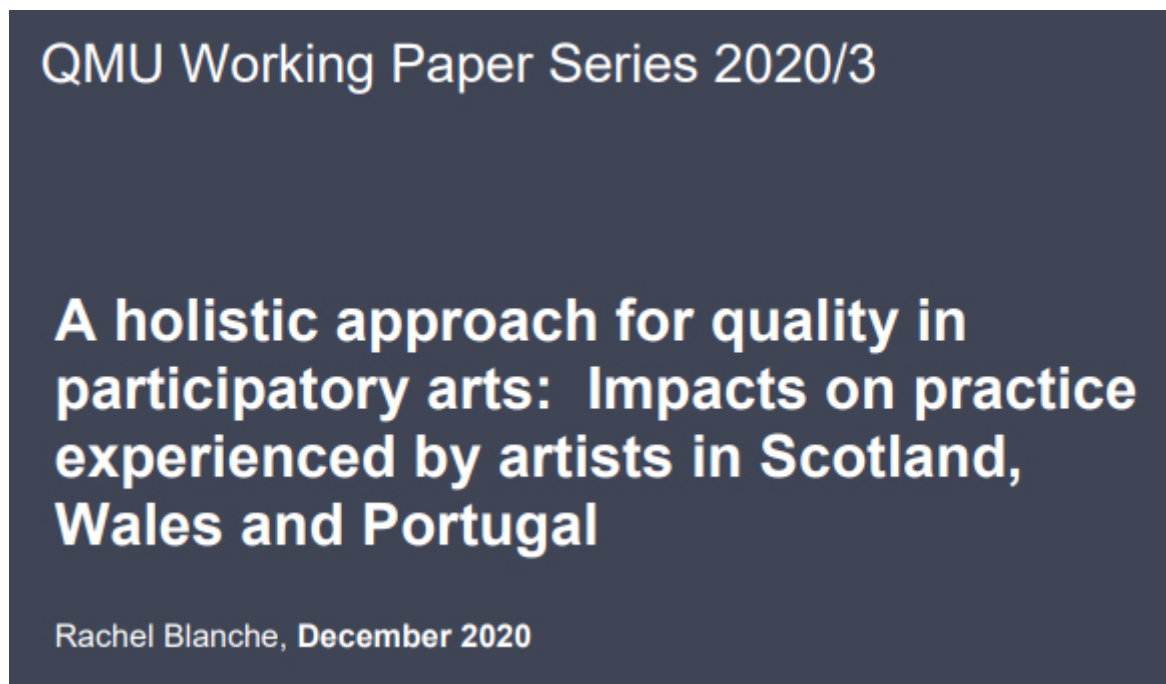
By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/a-holistic-approach-for-quality-in-participatory-arts-impacts-on-practice-experienced-by-artists-in-scotland-wales-and-portugal/>

January 20, 2021

Categories: Research, Resources, Toolkits & Guidance

Tags: participatory arts, quality



Author: Rachel Blanche

Publication Date: December 2020

Summary

Using quality models.

Details

This working paper presents interim findings from a study of how participatory arts practitioners have applied a new holistic model, developed by Rachel Blanche of Queen Margaret University to support quality, that has been implemented in the form of the Is This The Best It Can Be? toolkit and framework in Scotland and the Quality Principles for Wales. Evidence gathering for this study is ongoing across three countries where the model has been implemented: Scotland, Wales and Portugal. In due course a full analysis and discussion of the findings will be presented in an

academic journal publication.

[Download or View Resource](#)

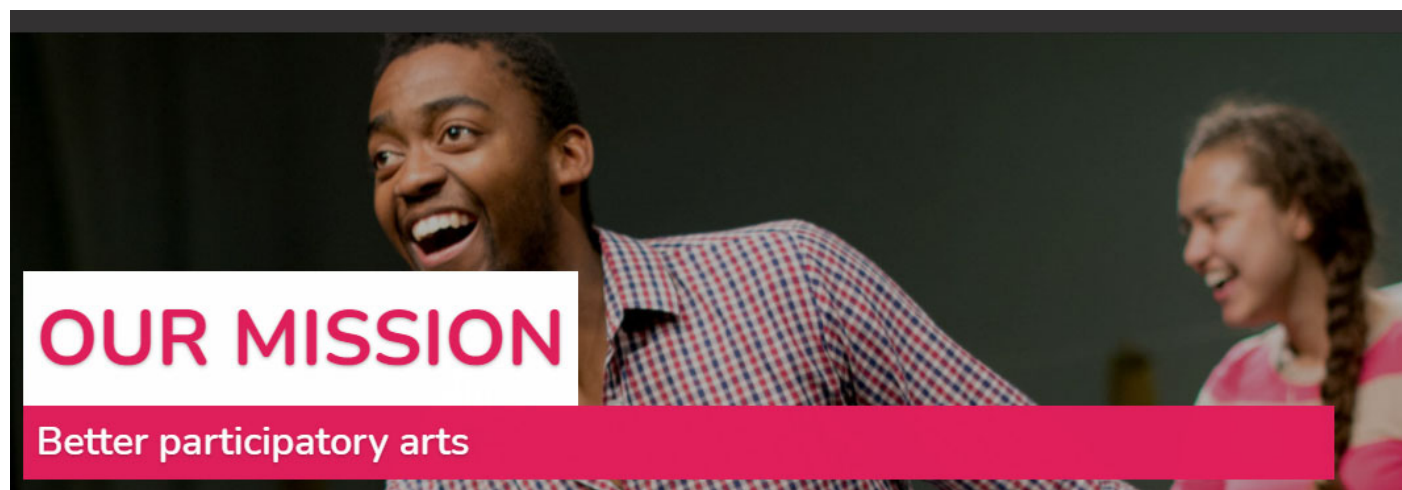
Deep impact

By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/deep-impact/>

January 21, 2021

Categories: News



From a disaster movie, past the New Year's Honours list and on to a care home. Some reflections on the profile, purpose and impact of participatory artists and arts organisations from the network's Secretariat.

I'm not usually a great fan of disaster movies, and especially not now in times of a pandemic. But I was still drawn to watching *Deep Impact* once more during the Christmas holiday, just to hear the following lines again:

'It is only prudent that we now take cautionary steps to ensure the continuation of our way of life, to guarantee that there will be enough of us left to rebuild a new world in the unlikely event that the comets do strike the Earth. So, in the soft limestone of Missouri, we've been preparing a network of immense caves, and they're almost finished. And we can put a million people in them. And that million people can survive there, underground, for two years, until the air clears, and the dust settles. Now the cave is more than a dormitory. It's our new Noah's Ark. We're storing seeds and seedlings, plants, animals, enough to start over. On August 10, a computer will randomly select 800,000 Americans, to join the 200,000 scientists, doctors, engineers, teachers, soldiers and artists who have already been chosen.'

While we might be prompted to be cynical and think about the real-world context in which US crisis leadership – up until yesterday – has felt like a horror movie made real, at least this science fiction gives space to imagine a better future in the most challenging of times. Artists have been chosen as key to re-building a new world. What a profile to have. What a purpose. What a potential

impact. And while I know not everyone watching the film will have heard the word ‘artists’ with such excitement as me, I like to think that the underlying reach of the message through this creative medium is wider than an editorial and some letters in *The Guardian*...

Back in the ‘here and now’ at the start of 2021, there has been other profiling of artists and arts organisations that helps reveal a narrative of positive purpose and impact in our particular sector. This is so important to note in the coronavirus context of sadness and stress. Here are just a few examples.

Kim Wide, from member Take a Part, was awarded an MBE in the New Year’s Honours ‘for services to social engagement in the arts in South West England’. You can read her blog about this here, in which she describes her mix of thoughts about accepting this. It’s almost 20 years since Tina Glover, then Director of Junction Arts and who so sadly passed away last month, received her MBE for ‘services to art’. This was heralded then as the first time someone working in participatory arts was recognised in this way. Junction Arts is now over 40 years old, still going strong and another AWA member.

It is interesting to wonder how the change of terminology from services to ‘art’ to ‘social engagement in the arts’ may help our sector gain recognition. Interesting too, how perspectives may change through Alan Lane, Artistic Director of Slung Low, being awarded a BEM for ‘services to the community in South Leeds during Covid-19’. No mention of art there.

The Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation has just announced the 10 organisations shortlisted for the Award for Civic Arts Organisations, the panel for which included Fiona Doring from Impact Arts. One of the organisations is Eden Court Highlands in Inverness, in recognition that they:

...formed a partnership with the Highland Council and re-purposed their staff team and facilities as the humanitarian aid centre for the region. Their work with the community included activities for children of keyworkers, packing and distributing thousands of food parcels each week, and turning the venue’s restaurant windows into a temporary community exhibition site to display a collection of Black Lives Matters banners.

Chief Executive James Mackenzie-Blackman talked last week to the alumni of Extend, the cultural leadership programme run by Engage for mid-career participation, learning and education colleagues from across the cultural sector. Lots of leadership learning passed on amongst that community of practice about keeping to your values and thinking nimbly about the wider community role of a physical centre for arts.

And of course, it’s not all about the high profile, the organisations and the arts buildings. Participatory artists live their purpose and impact through all sorts of ‘significant acts of kindness’. That freelance community musician is still standing outside the care home singing with residents

through the window. Keeping near while keeping apart and keeping close even though they are no longer all there.

Mary Schwarz

Adapting around Covid

By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/adapting-around-covid/>

January 21, 2021

Categories: Covid-19



Gem Smith from Take a Part shares something positive and creative to focus on...

At the start of 2020 I was really excited: Take A Part had collaborated with our core partner Efford High View School to support them in applying for their own Arts Council England (ACE) funds. The proposed project was a reflection/learning point in relation to all the great work we'd been able to do together over the past 11 years. An 11 years of exploring, testing, taking risks, sometimes failing but ALWAYS learning. The project, entitled the very catchy 'CECE' (Centre Of Excellence in Creative Education) would see High View sharing the models and practices that have enabled them to risk-take and collaborate with artists, their community, arts organisations and venues to:

- deliver the curriculum in creative ways
- achieve excellence in teaching and learning
- undertake artist in residence programmes
- run family-led art groups
- connect with and deliver on community projects, and
- support developing community audiences for art in the city with partner schools.

A MASSIVE opportunity, and a great and new exciting project for me to get stuck into, plus the first time, we think, a school had applied for an ACE grant.

People tend to be really aware of the great work we do at TAP with communities: engaging people at grass roots level, co-creating projects and upskilling community members are all part of the way we work. The Creative Education strand of our work has always sat alongside this work, complementing and connecting into projects, but it has never really had its own moment to shine and be a project in its own right.

I was EXCITED, and then Covid...

We spoke with ACE and were grateful to be able to shift our timelines. Planning moved to autumn term 2020 with delivery kicking off in January 2021, but even that felt risky and now with another lockdown in full swing continuing to navigate project deliver has been challenging. But it's also been surprising and powerful.

CECE's first in person sessions were booked in for the start of March and after conversations with staff, they still will be delivered then, with the Educare students engaging with our artists if not the full cohort. And this sort of decision making is why High View excel at Creative Education and projects and why ACE supported this project.

Rather than trying to further shift the timeline or make an offer from the artists via home schooling we're finding (Covid safe) ways to push forward with project plans. The learning from the artist project will still be shared with our project partners but via film and Zoom Q&A sessions rather than in person observation. Rather than Covid stopping delivery, we are adapting around it, continuing to offer the children of that school opportunities to be creative and continuing to find different ways to enable sharing and learning between schools to take place.

The schools have been so incredibly responsive and proactive in a time where it would be easier to not do additional things, not to make that extra effort, to find that additional energy and time. They still want to push forward with an exciting new project and take time to value the arts, collaborate with artists and each other to share learning and be creative during such an odd time and it's so nice to have something positive and creative to focus on during these very strange times!

Photo credit: Gem Smith for Take a Part

Trinity Laban L&P Covid-19 Community Response

By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/trinity-laban-lp-covid-19-community-response/>

February 11, 2021

Categories: Covid-19



Flora Faith-Kelly, Project Coordinator for Trinity Laban's Learning and Participation's Community and Professional Development (Music) Team, gives an update on delivery in the coronavirus context.

Trinity Laban's Learning and Participation team are responsible for an array of public-facing music and dance programmes for people of all ages. Our staff tailor programmes for children and young people, for adults and for schools, as well as operating our Junior Trinity department and the Centre for Advanced Training (CAT).

We have had to make considerable adjustments to our programmes this year in order to find Covid-secure avenues for sharing high quality creative engagement. We endeavoured to move as much of our activity online as quickly as possible following the first lockdown in March 2020, with artists and participants alike rapidly familiarising themselves with Zoom and/or MS Teams and testing their creative capabilities.

The CAT programme shifted online in April 2020, with students participating in weekly Zoom, Instagram Live and pre-recorded Vimeo classes. Alongside their technical training, students continued to engage in creative tasks to explore and celebrate the digital dance revolution.

Similarly, since January, Junior Trinity has moved all music programmes back online, taking what was learnt about online learning during the first lockdown and adapting teaching and learning methods to be as engaging as possible. There have also been virtual weekly students' concerts,

with students submitting video recordings from their homes to share with students and staff, as well as virtual masterclasses during half-term featuring some of the top musicians in the UK.

The teaching team in the Dance department have established digital dance classes for children and young people as well as moving their vast range of popular adult classes onto Zoom, continuing to provide people with opportunities to move and feel good whilst stuck at home.

As well as continuing our regular adults groups, dance classes and activities, we created free and accessible resources for adults and young people wishing to Take Part at Home, adapting our existing offers to fit an online environment and identifying areas where new content could be of use to the public, with a particular new focus on health and wellbeing. Mindfulness has become a key part of our offer now, not just in weekly online sessions of health groups Singing For Lung Health and Dancing for Health, but in all of our work.

With regards to our older adults music and dance programme, Inspired not Tired, we are truly grateful for the number of group members who, despite being unfamiliar with the daunting world of online video conferencing, took the leap of faith with us. Our freelance artists have worked tirelessly to support the regularly meeting groups in both our Inspired not Tired and Health Programmes in continuing to come together and create. You can read some of their reflections on this period of delivery on the Pause and Replay blog created by two of our Inspired not Tired programme music artists, Natasha Lohan and Zoe Gilmour with features from Dance artists and group members. Our groups have settled into both socialising and creating online, now comfortable in their digital environment and exploring the collaborative potential allowed by remote connection.

Cross-group collaboration with older adults groups Voices in Motion, The Befrienders, Boundless, Young at Heart and health group Singing For Lung Health resulted in the composition of a beautiful response to the times we find ourselves in called 'What is Hope?'. In the past year there have so far also been collaborations with Trinity Laban students, Merry Neets with Cumbrian choirs, socially conscious creative discussions with Queens House, and even a feature on The Albany's Meet Me Radio on 2 February 2021.

Group participants are also further embracing their individual creative abilities, increasingly bringing their own poetry, song lyrics and melodies to share and develop. Online delivery has allowed past group members who had left London and family members from far away to join sessions, offering opportunities for reconnection. Newsletters, creative postal packs and phone calls have allowed us to stay in touch with those who have not made the move online, such as members of our Young at Heart group who we hope to bring together for group calls via Skype this term.

Our new youth engagement project Intersections also had to be adapted to work online this year,

with TL Alumnus Garrett Snedeker and a small group of Trinity Laban students partnering with local charity METRO to provide online music workshops to local LGBTQ+ youth groups. Despite these students being completely new to musical facilitation and much being required of them to adapt to the new circumstance, the project has been extremely successful in an online format, allowing the group time to focus on process rather than outcome.

Our Animate Orchestra programme moved online with two successful creative music projects for young people, the participants generating music and film content from scratch as an ensemble, expertly guided by our tutor teams led by Sarah Freestone. Exploring and embracing the audio lag in this music making, and quickly sharing scores, sound files and sketches to enable instantaneous private rehearsal and the elaboration of ideas, they resulted in a couple of highly original resulting films which could then be shared widely.

We also had to transform our Young Musicians' Summer School into an online offer, engaging with over 60 young people across four days in late July, with projects in songwriting, music technology, writing music for film and a virtual orchestra, the latter giving the young musicians the opportunity to remotely perform alongside artist Ayanna Witter-Johnson. Similarly, running our Girls and Young Women in Jazz Day as an online event enabled us – despite the huge limitations of not gathering in the same space to make music together – to bring some high profile artists from across the UK onto the Zoom platform, and sharing insights with the young people involved.

Incredibly, through moving dates around at short notice and working with social distancing guidelines and changing states of lockdown, we managed to start a new project collaboration with Tomorrow's Warriors, recruiting a great new cohort of young people through a series of face-to-face sessions, which acutely demonstrated the appetite and urgent need for those young musicians to be making music and socialising together again. The project continues online, but hopefully not for much longer...

Very little has had to stop in Learning & Participation at Trinity Laban, rather new methods have been found and made to fit the needs of our community and of that we are exceptionally proud. To see more of what we've been up to visit www.trinitylaban.ac.uk/takepart.

Diversity is what diversity does

By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/diversity-is-what-diversity-does/>

February 11, 2021

Categories: News



'How diverse are we really?' is a research project commissioned through the CPP National Peer Learning and Communications programme with funding from Arts Council England. Dawn Cameron looks out of her lockdown window at the start of her fieldwork and describes what she sees.

Creative People and Places (CPP) is about creativity and people and places. As I look forward to starting the fieldwork for its new research – *How diverse are we, really?* – it's place that I've found myself thinking about most. This may be because the places we inhabit have shrunk over the past several months. The last time I used the Trainline app was in early March 2020. I've become an expert in what's happening outside my window. I imagine I'm not alone in this.

It turns out that the world outside my living room window tells separate but interconnected stories of diversity, equality, second wave feminism, immigration and asylum stretching back to just after the Second World War.

In South Chapel Allerton or North Chapeltown (depending on who you want to impress and why)

my first Zoom meeting with the CPP Research Advisory Group concludes and I decide to take a break before my next screen-enabled meeting. It's the first heavy snow of the year and because I live on an incline which in normal weather goes unnoticed by everyone but cyclists labouring around the bend in the wrong gear, motorists are getting into all sorts of trouble trying to negotiate the wide curve to the Harrogate Road lights.

Right opposite my living room, a crowd gathers at the gate of the Polish Church. Black traffic bollards are placed on the road signifying a funeral. The crowd is large and represents the overflow from the Church itself, numbers being restricted in places of worship during these Covid-constricted times.

When I first moved here the church felt as if it was on its last legs. The congregation was diminishing and the largest events were funerals for first generation Polish people some of whom will have arrived in Leeds as displaced people under the provisions of the 1947 Polish Resettlement Act.

Then, a second wave of Polish people arrived in the 2000s and the place was reinvigorated. The mean age of the congregation dropped by a good four decades or more. An impressive church bell was purchased which announced services, the busiest of which were broadcast by PA to overflow crowds. When lockdown started and we were all applauding NHS heroes, the bells rang for minutes on end on a Thursday evening.

The church's northern neighbour is an imposing detached building which is home to a Muslim Girls' School and which for a few years housed East Leeds Women's Workshop, an organisation founded in 1981 and developed by feminists who sought to address the under representation of women in trades such as joinery, carpentry and bricklaying. The Workshops gave priority to women who were particularly marginalised: Black women, Asian women, disabled women and lesbians amongst others. We'd call that intersectionality now.

There's a blue plaque on the wall of the school. It tells us that before it was the Muslim Girls School and before it was East Leeds Women's Workshop, the building had been the ORT Technical School which was a school for Jewish boys who had fled Berlin during the Second World War.

The ORT charity had operated schools across Europe since it was founded in 1880. The Berlin school was closed by the Gestapo in 1943 and 106 of the pupils – along with seven teachers and their wives – managed to flee Germany and ended up in Leeds where they opened the Leeds ORT School right opposite what would become my home. The 109 boys and teachers who were unable to flee were sent to concentration camps.

Funerals remain fairly frequent occurrences at the Polish Church but they have been superseded

– in congregation size – by first communions, Christmas and Easter services and other holy days sometimes involving elaborate banners. They draw people from across the city.

The funeral today is unusual both for its size and for the demographics of its attendees. Those outside are mainly young – lads mainly – and many wear a sweatshirt with an image of a similarly aged boy across the chest: a red and white image on black and a name I can't make out through the snow and from this distance. I assume he must be of Polish descent. Many of the mourners are Black and Asian. They're likely school friends. Maybe they played in the same football team. There's no way of knowing anything other than that they must have cared for him a great deal to stand outside in heavy, swirling snow for so very long. They're mainly in parkas with fur-lined hoods and mainly masked against the pandemic.

Motorists continue to find themselves in trouble outside my house. A group of three or four lads peel away from the funeral crowd and start pushing cars around the most treacherous bit of the bend. When they've moved one, they move on to the next. A couple of other young men join them. I don't know where they came from. One wears a yellow sweatshirt which becomes sodden as time passes. The sweatshirt is yellow with *Kodak* emblazoned across the chest. He's not wearing gloves and the fact that I notice this shows my age.

It's a view from a window. What it tells me is firstly that I really like where I live and I'm fortunate in that. It tells me that things change, that they must and that the trick is to find a way of looking forward instead of making the past a halcyon place where all was perfect. It also tells me that diversity is what diversity does. Outside my window it's survival and self-help and activism and friendship and faiths co existing and shared grief and immigration stories. Over the next few months, I hope to find out what diversity is and what it does across the CPP places. I can't wait.

Dawn Cameron

<https://explore.library.leeds.ac.uk/special-collections-explore/477004>

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-leeds-22142605>

Photo credit: Back to Bransholme @JeromeWhittingham2

Stitching Together: Good Practice Guidelines

By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/stitching-together-good-practice-guidelines/>

March 11, 2021

Categories: Latest, Resources, Toolkits & Guidance

Tags: artists, participants, participatory, textiles, workshops



Author: Amy Twigger Holroyd and Emma Shercliff

Publication Date: November 2020

Summary

Advice for facilitators of participatory textile making workshops and projects.

Details

Provides advice for facilitators of participatory textile making workshops and projects, including professional textile practitioners, artists, academic researchers, people working within museums and galleries, community activists and amateur enthusiasts.

Structured via four principles and eight sections of guidance, the publication aims to highlight all the aspects of a participatory textile making project that need to be considered in order for it to work well from the point of view of the participants, the facilitator and any partner organisation or funder.

[Download or View Resource](#)

When nature meets arts: Creating resilience in the outdoors

By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/when-nature-meets-arts-creating-resilience-in-the-outdoors/>

March 11, 2021

Categories: Covid-19, News



Genevieve Rudd reflects on Covid context life and work as a Community Artist and exploring the benefits of nature on wellbeing and creativity through the Yarmouth Springs Eternal project.

I've stared out at my back garden from my desk in Gorleston-on-sea almost every day since March 2020. It's usually the place I make plans before travelling elsewhere in the region to lead Community Arts projects. Whilst indoors under 'Stay at Home' orders, I look out and notice rows of packed terrace houses with square windows looking back at me, blocks of dense leylandii hedge and intersections of alleyways. I can see shed roofs in weathered shades of brown and grey, every so often featuring a prowling cat. Birds zip from tree to tree and clouds swirl in ever-changing formations against skies of pink, blue, grey and white.

As you can tell from the description, this suburban view isn't a nature reserve and if I search for images of a 'nature view' online, the acid green hills and waterfalls don't resemble what I see! These idealised perceptions of nature can give distorted expectations and unhelpfully separate us from feeling part of the natural world. For me, the Lockdown experience has highlighted that

‘experiencing the natural world’ isn’t a phenomenon happening elsewhere in vast conservation-managed pastoral landscapes, it’s also the vernacular view from my desk window and found on daily walks around town.

In fact, studies have shown that simply looking at nature through a window can help boost wellbeing and aid recovery from illness. Even if we are lucky enough to live on the doorstep of a National Park, there are many access barriers. Friends of the Earth research has highlighted ‘green space deprivation’ and how this can be addressed through an intersectional UK-wide approach, recognising the correlation between low income and ethnicity and access to green spaces. It can take shifts in government level policy to make significant large-scale changes to communities, but I believe there is a place for nurturing small, personal and ‘grass-roots’ (quite literally!) experiences with nature, whatever that might look like in your area.

As the first Lockdown began last year, three days after the Spring Equinox, I’d already spent many days at my desk replying to cancellation emails and crossing out dates in my diary. Community Arts work is precarious at the best of times, but having to shift my participatory practice online and eventually finding out I was ineligible for any government financial support during the pandemic was tough.

For the first time since starting my career in the arts 10 years ago, I felt like giving up. Digging deep and calling upon reserves of resilience is a privilege. Whilst my income and wellbeing have been negatively affected by this experience, my basic core needs were still intact. I’ve been fortunate to have the security of a safe home, access to food and supportive relationships to sustain me during the toughest times.

I’ve also been incredibly grateful to have a garden, which is more of a ‘studio’ to me than the room where my desk and art materials live. It’s a relatively small patch, but it’s a truly multi-functional space: it’s where I explore my seasonally-connected arts practice, grow food, compost and build wildlife-friendly habitats. It’s a place I grow and nurture, give and receive, and a restorative place to escape from Zoom calls and emails. And, when I can’t escape the e-meetings, I can daydream out of my window for some brief respite.

Last summer, research found that 12% of people in the UK have no access to a private or shared garden, and that Black people in England are nearly four times as likely as White people to have no access to outdoor space at home. The Co-op’s Community Wellbeing Index confirmed a correlation between living close to green spaces and a community’s overall wellbeing, including impact on equality and economic health. Great Yarmouth’s own Community Wellbeing Index score has a low 32-point rating for ‘Housing, space and environment’ (including rating the prevalence of green spaces) which is 20 points below the national average. Fields in Trust’s Green Space Index found that 2.7 million people don’t have access to parks or fields within 10 minutes walk from their home. This is something that Natural England are starting to address with their new Nature

Networks programme which recognises the inequality of access and important role of towns and cities. In a very sad turn of events locally, Community Roots, a Great Yarmouth horticulture space run by Norfolk & Waveney Mind, has sadly announced that it will permanently close this month due to significantly reduced funding.

Reading this information on inequality exacerbated by the crisis has hit me hard, but not as hard as those weathering this injustice every day. In Community Arts, it's not your identity as an artist that drives you (although they're skills and tools you use) but instead, your capacity for empathy in your role as facilitator. When my own reserves were low, I didn't always have the energy to 'make art' and I sometimes felt a disconnect from the communities I was remotely engaging with, but I kept it simple, using my photographic eye on daily walks to notice the small things: wildflowers growing in the pavement cracks, brickwork patterns, leaf shapes, shadows, bird spotting and amusing garden ornaments. Having my work reduced without choice gave me time to consider my own situation and time to listen to others' experiences, which is how Yarmouth Springs Eternal came together.

The overall ethos of Yarmouth Springs Eternal is exploring personal relationships to the natural world through contemporary arts, highlighting the 'overlooked' and 'everyday interactions' with nature from diverse perspectives. We'll explore nature found on Great Yarmouth streets through the arts, whilst encouraging the recommended weekly health-giving 'dose' of 120 minutes outside. I recognise that this project alone cannot influence the amount of local green space available, but I aim to support some of the most vulnerable individuals to benefit from the wellbeing-boosting impact of experiencing nature and making art. It's a short-term funded project but I have ambitions to establish long-term relationships.

The project will be led in partnership with Great Yarmouth-based arts charity originalprojects;. We'll be based at PRIMEyarc, their new creative space in Market Gates Shopping Centre, Great Yarmouth. I was initially awarded funding from Norfolk & Norwich Festival's Creative Individuals Norfolk fund in 2020 to build and develop this project, which has since attracted additional funding from Arts Council England, East Anglia Art Fund, Norfolk County Council and Better Together Norfolk. As well as covering the project costs, this funding has given me six months of income after a difficult year and paid opportunities for more than 10 other arts practitioners.

Follow the project on Instagram, Twitter, Facebook and find out more on my website. Photo credit: Pete Oram

Edited from an original piece in the Norfolk & Norwich Festival 2021 Blog.

Let's change our minds about change

By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/lets-change-our-minds-about-change/>

April 1, 2021

Categories: News



JoJo Spinks from Interwoven Productions CIC explores the Capability Approach for measuring quality of life from participatory arts work as a push back against prescribed outcomes such as improved health, wellbeing and environment.

I've been thinking a lot about this. About the Theory of Change for Interwoven Productions CIC and how to design our Impact Assessment. Something kept sticking in my craw though and it's taken a while to understand it.

I signed up to quite a few discussions about impact measurement in the arts and looked at some great example reports but, in the end, I realised my reservations weren't about how to measure or assess change. It was about the change that I felt under pressure to deliver.

It got messy because, truth is, like most participatory practitioners, it's not at all hard to find evidence to support the notion that we do in fact improve health, well-being and have a positive impact on the environment. But, it's like those three things are the lodestones, the go-to, the trigger that all funders are looking for, isn't it? As I sat with our social enterprise advisor to design

our Theory of Change it was variations on those themes that I kept being steered towards as outcomes of our work, but there's a real problem here for the participatory arts. Let me try and explain ...

If we accept that pull towards those magnets of prescribed change – improved health, well-being and environment – then we accept an entire, implicit and imposed worldview. That is, that our communities need to be fixed, improved and upgraded in some way. A worldview that elderly, sick and disabled people are needy – by definition; that if ordinary working-class people don't present as needy then they have no use for creative expression and no culture of their own; that being green should be top of everyone's priorities, regardless of their circumstances; that health and wellbeing take precedence over personal safety and self-protection.

In other words, those outcomes are the worldview of individuals who don't feel personally threatened all the time, who aren't totally exhausted, running two or three jobs, who don't have to balance the immediate lift to be gained from a cigarette or a drink against a life on the streets. It makes a whole set of assumptions about the life circumstances of others and the things that might lead them to, quite legitimately, make other choices. And one of those choices, as we all know, may well be to opt out of participation. Are they "hard-to-reach" or simply marginalised by this worldview?

Even worse than this, it takes no regard of their equity of opportunity; the power they have to design and make their own change. I was recently introduced to the work of Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum, two academic philosophers and economists who developed the Capability Approach. One of their strongest incentives was to find an alternative to the Gross Domestic Product as a measure of the quality of life. Go on, Google it, read, research and assess for yourself but what struck me profoundly was that these understandings are OUT THERE; being published, taught and discussed at the highest levels. So, why are we all still being pushed towards the unholy trinity of improved health, well-being and environment?

Well, I guess, because those are the things that cost the state money and actually, as participatory artists, working directly with individuals with all kinds of other priorities we've become used to walking that unsteady tightrope between differing worldviews. But I think it's time to out it, that pressure to conform. It's time to change our minds about change.

The Capability Approach for measuring quality of life has been adopted by successive international committees including the United Nations and here's the thing – it absolutely does not say that we should be measuring outcomes for improved health, well-being and environment.

It says instead that we should be taking full account of the capability of an individual to design and affect their own change. That, if we must measure, then it should be evidence of the things that they do, express and become that are meaningful to them. NOT prescribed for them.

Now, that is a measure that I can believe in.

So Interwoven has adjusted its Theory of Change to show that we'll be collecting and measuring evidence of how we have helped to animate citizenship, i.e. number of individuals actively seeking learning or undertaking investigative photo-journalism (I see people going out to ask questions, filming/taking images to represent their own lives); how many are organising events, solving local problems, starting their own projects, helping neighbours – even protesting!

It's a shift that shows that there's a really important stage in "change" that we are far too often encouraged to skip and that's asking people what change is meaningful to them!

www.interwovenproductions.com

Historical parallels and contemporary considerations

By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/historical-parallels-and-contemporary-considerations/>

May 6, 2021

Categories: News



Amy Twigger Holroyd and Emma Shercliff, coordinators of the Stitching Together network, discuss the long history of participatory textile making projects and outline some of the benefits and challenges encountered when making textiles with others today.

The Bayeux Tapestry, an eleventh-century embroidery that recounts the Norman conquest of England across more than 70m of embroidered cloth, must be one of the most widely recognised examples of collective stitching effort. The American 'quilting bee', another well-known form of collaborative making which emerged in the early nineteenth century within colonial communities, brought people together to complete the making of patchwork bed quilts. Such archetypal examples of collective endeavour are referenced in later large-scale community-oriented textile initiatives, perhaps most notably the NAMES Project AIDS Memorial Quilt, which was conceived in 1985 by American AIDS activist Cleve Jones and now consists of over 48,000 stitched panels commemorating the lives of the many who have died of the syndrome. The resonance can also be felt in undertakings such as the Great Tapestry of Scotland, a vast community project completed in 2013 that was initiated by artist Andrew Crummy, writer Alexander McCall Smith and historian Alistair Moffat, and involved more than 1000 volunteer stitchers, coordinated by Dorie Wilkie, from

across Scotland.

Throughout these varied historical and cultural contexts, we can find people stitching together: such examples demonstrate that collective textile making is a well-established practice with a long history. The recruitment of many hands, brains and bodies to create a large textile spreads the load, enabling the creation of a complex, bulky or large-scale work that would be difficult, or even impossible, for an individual maker to manage alone.

Stitching with others in the twenty-first century therefore cannot help but connect with a legacy of traditional stitching groups and practices that privilege social encounter and exchange as a format for learning new skills, creating friendships and consolidating shared interests. Yet contemporary participatory textile activities are highly diverse in terms of context, format and intention, from drop-in workshops where participants spend a few minutes having a go at a specified stitching task to open-ended creative projects that might extend for months, or even years. Digital platforms present another dimension of textile making activity, which has rapidly expanded as the Covid-19 pandemic has restricted opportunities for stitching together in person.

Why is textile making so frequently chosen as a way to bring people together in participatory and community-based projects? The familiarity and flexibility of textile making processes such as knitting, sewing and weaving must be key factors. Stitch-crafts are familiar within many social and cultural contexts; even where such processes are not fully embedded in the day-to-day life of a community, their popularity means that participants are often strongly motivated to take part. Projects can often be set up in such a way that participants do not need to have specialist expertise in order to join in, and opportunities to learn can be offered on site. Readily available tools and materials, combined with easily transportable projects, mean the work can be flexibly slotted in around other tasks or events.

Another benefit is the quality of the experience afforded by textile making. The slow pace of hands-on making in the company of other people creates space for rich shared experiences such as the learning of new skills or new understandings of habitual experiences; a gentle exploration of difficult-to-raise topics; a ready opportunity to communicate with others, or even quiet contemplation. Sewing and knitting, for example, occupy the hands in a sufficiently detailed and precise task to require the focused attention for productive activity, but with short and repeatable

bursts of activity which allow for moments of distraction.

Yet the everyday familiarity which gives textiles such a wide reach can have its downsides: in some spheres, textile-making activities are taken for granted or dismissed as a frivolity.

Furthermore, textiles have deep cultural and political associations, including stereotypical ideas of who should, and who should not, engage in textile crafts. If these activities are used without critical awareness, some participants may find that their individual interests and concerns are overlooked because of an assumption that textiles will naturally appeal to them, while those deemed to be unlikely textile practitioners – because of their race, disability, gender, sexuality or other factor – may be subject to microaggressions or outright hostility.

It was with these issues in mind, and the desire to share ideas and experiences between practitioners working in diverse settings, that we published the *Stitching Together Good Practice Guidelines*. The publication aims to highlight all the aspects of a participatory textile making project that need to be considered in order for it to work well from the point of view of the participants, the facilitator and any partner organisation or funder. Of course, there cannot be a single 'right' way to run a workshop/project given the diversity described above, and this is reflected in the flexible language and format of the guidelines.

Although we wrote the guidelines with the participatory textiles context in mind, we have a hunch that they may be of use beyond our immediate sphere! We'd love to hear feedback from anyone who has used the document, whether to support textile making or other kinds of creative participatory activities.

Elements of this post are edited from 'Stitching Together: Participatory textile making as an emerging methodological approach to research', Journal of Arts & Communities 10(1-2), pp.5–18.

Image credit: R&A Collaborations.

Let's focus on the future

By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/lets-focus-on-the-future/>

June 10, 2021

Categories: News



Ben Vleminckx, Chief Executive of member Evolve Music, shares how they're working with emerging and established music leaders on workforce development and invites you to contribute to the conversation about best practice.

As a sector we rely heavily on our freelance workforce. In fact, without them it wouldn't exist. We are very aware that the last 12 months have left freelancers unsupported and floundering with no work. Organisations now need to invest in the support of our freelance workforce as we begin to rebuild, recover and move forward.

Earlier this year ACE set out their first stage of their 'Let's Create' delivery plan which focuses on five themes. Theme two 'Supporting Individuals', highlights the need for organisations to shift focus and invest in workforce development following the impact of COVID-19. So many individual freelancers have left the creative industries over the past year and there is already evidence emerging that the younger generations have lost confidence and are pursuing other career pathways.

As founder and now CEO of Evolve Music I have always kept workforce development and training high up on our agenda, having been a freelance musician and music leader myself. When the pandemic hit, this gave us the time and space to launch our sector and workforce development programme 'Evolution'.

We began the process through consultation with our small freelance workforce and external leaders in our sector. Providing a virtual space to openly discuss rates of pay, individuals' training needs and ideas for future programmes was a pivotal point for us. This has not only improved our relationship with our team of freelance music leaders, but also reassured them that their needs are central to our planning and something that feeds our vision and ambition to be a truly authentic co-creation centred organisation. This is an ongoing journey to which we are dedicated to providing time, energy and resources.

As a small organisation, we are aware that we can't be everything to everyone, but we have tried to establish tools which will enable us to support as many people as we can. Our Evolution programme is divided into two strands: training and networking. The Evolution Network offers both formal and informal events for any music leader/music educator to learn, share and connect with others. We believe that we need to invest in the whole community music workforce, not just our own, to continue to push, innovate and challenge.

Our Evolution Music Leader Training Programme runs alongside this and is a new six-month training programme for emerging music leaders to hone their skills. This training is experiential, focusing on individuals' professional development and tailored to their needs and interests. The lack of opportunities like this in the South West is alarming and we felt that as a growing regional organisation, we were well placed to develop something. Unlike with most training opportunities, we pay our trainees to work on our creative music programmes during their six months with us. They are also assigned an experienced mentor who will observe their practice, provide constructive feedback and meet with them regularly to work through their individual goals.

Partner support is also fundamental. We benefit from the support of a range of external partners including music education hubs and other community music organisations who share expertise and provide opportunities to learn about community music practice.

Embedded within our workforce development programme are specific equality, diversity and inclusion goals. This includes increasing the diversity of 25% of our annual trainee cohort and ensuring we profile work from diverse community musicians and organisations. Our long-term ambition is to support diverse individuals through coaching, mentoring and paid work to gain experience and pathways to working at a senior leadership level.

As our Government continues to squeeze and cut funds for cultural education within our formal education system, I see it as the role of cultural organisations like ours to yet again step in. We

have a responsibility to support the next generation and our talent and workforce development programmes are vital to the growth and continued success of our world class arts and culture sector.

I would love to hear from other organisations about what their strategic plans are around investing in workforce development and enable conversations to begin around sharing best practice.

Ben Vleminckx

Chief Executive, Evolve Music

Photo credit: Martin Tompkins

Now more than ever

By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/now-more-than-ever/>

July 15, 2021

Categories: News



AWA member Roxane Permar from the University of the Highlands and Islands explores why we need MA courses for participatory artists now more than ever and proposes an archipelagic perspective for thinking about social art practice and higher education.

We need MA courses for participatory arts practices now more than ever. Postgraduate study for creative practitioners can strengthen the field of participatory arts practice, contributing to nurturing better practitioners, building networks and improving the quality of experience for everyone: participants, creative practitioners and organisations alike.

I base this view on my experience of creating and developing the Art and Social Practice MA programme at the University of the Highlands and Islands in Scotland, for which I became programme leader and where I am privileged to work with a fantastic team of lecturers and a diverse group of practitioners who join our course at various stages in their careers. The course took its first intake in September 2017 and has grown exponentially each year, demonstrating need and demand. While we designed the course with visual artists, curators, cultural producers and gallery and museum practitioners in mind, we are receiving increasing numbers of applications from creative practitioners in other fields.

In this piece I will consider what postgraduate courses such as ours can offer and how they can

work. I'll use examples largely from our programme, but which are also common to other courses, to look at ways this level of study can work and consider factors which might lessen barriers to higher education. In conclusion, I'll propose an archipelagic perspective for thinking about social art practice and higher education. Note that I will primarily use the terms 'social art practice' and 'socially engaged art' throughout the text, although equally the term 'participatory arts' could be used.

Background

My art practice is embedded in Shetland. I started working in fine art (sculpture and installation) in the 1980s. I lived and worked in London for over 20 years, first coming to the Shetland Islands in 1985 and relocating here permanently at the end of 2000. Having begun working in collaborative and participatory ways back in the 1980s, I've always also worked part-time in education – community, further and higher sectors. My teaching and art practices are wholly integrated.

Currently, I am based in the Centre for Island Creativity at Shetland College, University of the Highlands and Islands, where I am a Research Fellow. I am acutely aware that I am very fortunate as, after many years working as a freelance artist and part-time educator, I have reached a point in my career where I can do what I love best, teaching and working as an artist researcher, without the constant pressure of seeking, securing and sustaining opportunities for earning my livelihood.

Why do creative practitioners need a taught postgraduate course?

Creative practitioners who have studied on conventional undergraduate arts courses have not usually been formally taught how to work with people as active participants and genuine collaborative partners or to develop and manage participatory projects. While there have been, and continue to be, some opportunities for undergraduate arts students to learn about working with people in social contexts, generally undergraduate training for creative practitioners focuses on artistic output, whether an object or a performance, rather than the process of making or creative engagement with participants. In conventional art schools, for example, students are traditionally taught to practice as a singular author, that is, one who works to their own criteria and does not share creative vision or ownership with others.

Unfortunately, creative practitioners, like me, who want to work with people as creative or

collaborative participants have largely needed to learn 'on the job'. The ethos, knowledge and skills offered in most conventional undergraduate arts programmes don't prepare students to work with people in social contexts. While there are exceptions, the conventional curriculum is not relevant to participatory work. It does not include practical skills for working with people, such as collaborative and listening skills. The history of contextual art practice, community arts or participatory practices is usually missing, unless a student is lucky to encounter a lecturer who has experience of this kind of practice. Suitable theoretical tools such as those relating to ideas of place or community are absent, despite the importance of these themes in developing deeper understanding of the contexts in which we practice. There is rarely opportunity in conventional undergraduate programmes to learn about, or engage in, issues and debates relevant to participatory arts, nor to meet professional practitioners.

We need postgraduate programmes for graduates who want to work with people because they need appropriate skills and knowledge to enable them to respond imaginatively, and effectively, to situations and issues facing communities. Postgraduate study can help build confidence while introducing concrete ways forward to help smooth the way to forming positive and fruitful relationships. Established practitioners who are well experienced in working with people can also benefit from the opportunity to improve their ways of working by giving themselves time to refresh, re-evaluate and recalibrate their practice as they gain deeper understanding of their skills and qualities, achievements and aspirations. During postgraduate study, practitioners engage with, and actively learn from, other professionals in the field; gain in-depth knowledge of the histories and theories of this practice; and, perhaps most importantly, reflect on their position, look at their practices more holistically and consider how best they can move forward with renewed conviction.

Creative practitioners in the participatory arts are also often, especially in my region, working in isolation from other practitioners who share similar approaches to practice, core values and aspirations. Taking part in an MA programme offers a new peer network of diverse practitioners that can open new doors, expand horizons and provide mutual support that is crucial within a new context of learning and discovery. Coming together differently brings fresh perspectives that ultimately benefit the participatory arts sector.

The coronavirus pandemic has affected all of us. It has intensified wider awareness of the social benefits artists can bring to their communities and heightened the need for artists to work in social contexts. Postgraduate study can support a shift in thinking away from conventional ideas about where art practices are located and how we work. In fact, I believe this field is better suited to

postgraduate rather than undergraduate study. Working with people isn't easy: it is messy and complicated. Practitioners in participatory arts often face challenging situations. Postgraduate students have more life experience, self awareness and maturity. They bring a range of well-formed skills in their discipline which enables them to work with a level of confidence as they test forms of creative engagement with people. Many already have the added benefit of experience working in the field, or at least know that they really want to work with people, and have discovered they enjoy it, and can do it well. The increased experience, knowledge and maturity of postgraduate students frees them to focus on the issues of social practice, allowing them to dig deeper to find the direction, contexts and ways of working which suit them.

I believe the most successful MA courses in this field mirror best practice in social art practice, which is founded on non-hierarchical, open and inclusive education environments generated through teamwork and student centred learning. In our programme, we use collaborative and relational approaches to teaching that not only facilitate agency, and a sense of shared ownership and responsibility for teaching and learning, but also provide models of practice for working with people. Students learn from each other, sharing and testing practice within a safe and mutually supportive environment. Our programme is assertively student centred and has evolved in response to students' needs in order to create relevant learning experiences, striving for the qualities of responsiveness and reflection that characterise participatory work.

Some students describe our programme as 'life changing' and others call it transformational. Mutual support among students and between current students and alumni not only encourages learning but also contributes to the formation of collaborative partnerships and strong, hopefully lifelong, relationships. We encourage students to experiment and take risks, just as they are accustomed to do in their own practices. We remain flexible so that we can try new approaches, content and structures in order to evolve in response to changes in society, global and local issues, shifts in contemporary art practices and education, and, most recently, the upheavals caused by the Coronavirus pandemic. Our aspiration to create a supportive and vibrant community of practice has the potential to spread, like ripples in water, and contribute to strengthening the wider participatory arts sector.

In addition to the learning and teaching approaches that postgraduate students encounter during their studies, the nature of the curriculum is also crucial to the transformational potential a course can offer. Programme Leaders, including myself, have learnt what social art practitioners need in terms of advanced education and training through a combination of our own trial and error,

research findings from research undertaken by the ArtWorks initiative and ArtWorks Scotland, student feedback, peer networks and our own experience of practice and undergraduate teaching.

Postgraduate study for social art practice requires interdisciplinarity, diversity and plurality of practice in curriculum content. Our values in relation to curriculum design and approaches to teaching and learning help make the MA Art and Social Practice successful and distinctive. In our MA programme, for example, we have embedded new subject content into the curriculum that is unusual for conventional arts education, including reflective practice, ethical engagement and decolonisation. Each module of study is positioned to hone different skillsets and bodies of knowledge and understanding. Students gain deeper understanding and skills in relation to the professional context for social art practitioners and the research skills and methods appropriate to our field. We also consider island and rural issues, bringing firsthand experience of living and working in small and/or geographically remote communities to a field that has until recently been dominated by urban practice.

MA courses in social art practice draw on different theoretical tools from those found in conventional arts education. Students interrogate their practice and position in relation to the theories, concepts and critical debates that characterise dialogical, social and relational practices. Our programme is distinctive for offering core theoretical studies drawn from social anthropology through a module called Communities of Practice. Students work together to develop a collaborative assignment before looking at their own landscape of practice. This latter study is transformative for many, and ultimately is seminal in gaining new understanding of their practice.

Increasing access through virtual learning

A key factor in the MA Art and Social Practice at the University of the Highlands and Islands is the importance of virtual learning for students in our region, and even more widely across the UK and internationally. It provides an important means to facilitate access to higher education, especially for those who would not be able to seek a higher degree otherwise. The university was in fact founded on the premise that new technologies would enable the populations of the sparsely populated and remote areas of the region to pursue higher education never before possible without traveling far from home communities.

Virtual tools have indeed transformed the way we work, creating a diverse community that uses

virtuality to advantage, reducing barriers to education and providing opportunities for those who are geographically remote or cannot leave home, for example due to childcare responsibilities, mobility issues or chronic illness. We also recognise prior learning, which means that students who do not have a first degree may be able to join our course based on their previous experience.

As far as I am aware, our MA programme is the first in this subject designed to be delivered remotely in its entirety. Artists develop their projects within their locale and join live seminars, tutorials and virtual student spaces from anywhere in the world. Their learning experience is enriched by working with students who live in different contexts. To date, the majority of the students are based in Scotland, although we have students from North America, Europe and the rest of the UK.

Working virtually has many advantages. Alongside flexibility for students, it facilitates networking among practitioners in the field, regionally, nationally and internationally, including bringing them into our educational context. Students meet guest speakers from all over the world, including the Mentors they choose in the final stage of the programme. Our annual Virtual Symposium is international and also provides opportunity to meet with MA students in the field from other countries and contexts. All this supports the sharing and development of innovative approaches to education and creative community engagement.

Virtual learning has liberated us from traditional forms of teaching, assessment and exhibition that are practiced in conventional art departments. Without the constraints of a physical building, we don't have a degree show and students have to find alternative ways to go public, which has led to original and innovative outcomes. Students acquire a more advanced level of digital skills as well. They have been well equipped to cope with the mass move to virtual teaching, learning and living during the Covid pandemic.

Archipelagic perspective

When we look at the history of participatory art practices, or socially engaged art, we can see the emergence of practices which are locally grounded and at the same time involved in a matrix of cultural relationships beyond the local. These practices generate networks of social and cultural interchange which contribute to changing social relations not only within their local communities but also in relation to other places.

An archipelagic perspective is where there is no fixed centre, but a multiplicity of place-based cultures, interrelations and overlaps that employ immersion, openness, connection, relational process and 'fluid movement across porous margins.' (Thompson, 2017). I must credit Dr Glenn Loughran from the Technological University Dublin for sparking my interest in the archipelagic as a way of looking at what I do in both my art and educational practices. When I invited him to speak to our MA students about the course he leads in visual arts on Sherkin Island off the West coast of Ireland, he told me he wanted to speak about Glissant's ideas around the archipelagic in relation to what they were doing there. Then he told me that of course we are already doing that and from that moment I have been wondering how we are being archipelagic.

Living and working on an island impacts on the way you live and work but also your attitudes and perceptions of yourself and your work in relation to the rest of the world. Making connections is important and islanders have always used the sea to link with the rest of the world. One of the qualities I like most about social art practice, or participatory practice, is the way it involves connections. Social art practice is relational. It is open and it is place-based.

I see examples of these qualities all the time in our students' work. In fact, I see our whole MA programme as being archipelagic. Our core values encourage openness, sharing and flexibility, which create fluidity across individual and collective practices. Our teaching approach is collaborative and relational, in turn contributing to openness.

Because our programme is virtual, it has no fixed centre. Students can study from anywhere in the world if their time zone permits them to attend live seminars, lectures and tutorials. Students live and work in their communities, giving our programme the character of dispersed locations. And we thus engage with a multiplicity of place-based cultures, inter-relations and overlaps. Students come together through the programme, and thus move fluidly across their different locations, across margins or boundaries made porous by means of virtual tools.

What we do on our programme is in step with the view that other MA programmes in our field hold. We believe that creative practice should extend beyond the institution and encourage students to build on their own interests, networks and communities. This idea echoes that of the artist Jen Delos Reyes who has proposed a rather convincing series of reasons why we shouldn't attempt to

teach socially engaged art in universities (Delos Reyas, 2018). She suggests students should remain in their own locations rather than uprooting to study at the physical site of the art institution. Virtual tools enable us to work with the best of all worlds.

MA courses in social art practice generate networks of social and cultural interchange at many levels, from the local engagement students generate to the national and transnational networks that emerge through the institutional frameworks they encounter in their courses. Local, national and international connections emerge which can only strengthen the participatory arts sector.

Roxane Permar

Photo: 'Brush Composition', Amy Dunnachie, from the project "*An Aye for an Aye*" during the MA Art and Social Practice, University of the Highlands and Islands (2020)

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How diverse are we, really?

By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/how-diverse-are-we-really/>

September 16, 2021

Categories: Latest, Research, Resources

Tags: artists, audiences, diversity, participants



Author: Dawn Cameron

Publication Date: September 2021

Summary

A new perspective on diversity in CPP projects

Details

Creative People and Places (CPP) commissioned writer and researcher Dawn Cameron to explore the question *How diverse are we, really?*

Dawn responded to this 'disarmingly simple' question through conversation and semi-structured interviews with CPP staff and representatives, focus groups with audience members, advisers and participants alongside analysis of quantitative data provided by Arts Council England and the CPP Places. The result is a multi-faceted and layered exploration of the core question, brought to life with stories and examples from the network itself.

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Climate activism

By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/climate-activism/>

September 16, 2021

Categories: News



Culture declares emergency... we interviewed a young climate activist who has found the power of participation in creative activity as part of Extinction Rebellion protests.

AWA: What creative protesting have you taken part in?

I have been involved with art installations, performance art, dance and street theatre. I helped a friend make a giant mixed material Earth, weighing 400kg, to be locked onto as part of occupying central London. It included ash branches from trees which have died of ash dieback disease.

I also took part in the 'Faceless Financers' performance, walking solemnly with blood on our hands and placards reading 'Fossil fuel finance is killing the Earth'. And dressed in scrubs, with the Earth on a stretcher, I was a 'Planet Medic', performing a skit with an ominous soundtrack of medical beeps and a voiceover describing how the Earth is dying.

I have also been involved in flash mobs and mass participation dances such as 'Disobedience' and a 'Burning Ballroom'.

AWA: What did you experience when taking part in these actions?

While performing, locking on or doing outreach, I was moved by what we were communicating, the atmosphere we created, and the creativity and love we put out into the world.

While locked on to the Earth, I felt on top of the world (in all its meanings), seeing both friendly faces and strangers sending me and my team so much love and gratitude. And seeing other activists' art filled me with gratitude for their efforts.

There was such a sense of community and togetherness: everyone feeling inspired, motivated and also entertained. And at times, I had overwhelming feelings of grief at the unjust, destructive systems we live in, compared to the microcosm of compassionate diplomacy that XR embodies.

AWA: How did people react to what you were doing?

I was delighted to see members of the public stopping to take in our street theatre and hear our message. In particular, the drama of the Planet Medics really engaged people. Our Faceless Financiers were very popular with photographers and journalists and we had thousands of photos taken of us. The more effort people put into the art installations and performances, the more it seemed the public, journalists and other activists enjoyed and engaged with the work and the message.

AWA: Was there anything in particular that led you to protesting through creative ways?

My local XR group have a few set pieces of street theatre/performance art, so I got involved quite naturally through that. Each time I am involved in creative activism, it inspires me to do more, as I see how engaging it can be.

AWA: Have you been involved in arts activity before – and are you involved in the arts otherwise?

I had little experience of arts activities before XR. I did do LAMDA drama (just before it was axed) at school and was one of a small group of students chosen to work with a community film maker on a production that got nominated for a First Light award. That helped me deal with being at school and was a great excuse to get away with not wearing school uniform 'because of filming'. I

then got my friends to act in a video I made in our house and back yard. But that was all a long time ago. Currently I make many cards for people's birthdays etc. and that's about it!

AWA: What have you learnt from taking part in this kind of arts activity?

I have really appreciated the impact art activism can make. It can inspire, motivate, entertain and make people laugh. I have seen how art is an integral part of XR and how it can reach different people, in different ways.

AWA: What difference do you think this will make to you in the future?

I will continue to get involved in art activism. The reaction from the public is generally more positive compared with occupations and civil disobedience, so I believe it is as important to use art as engaging in disobedience. I have lots of ideas for rebellions more focused on art, drama and performance.

Bath Arts Workshop: Counterculture in the 1970s

By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/bath-arts-workshop-counterculture-in-the-1970s/>

October 14, 2021

Categories: News



'They thought art could change the world. Thousands joined in and things were never the same again.' From this new publication about participatory arts fifty years ago reviewed here by Adrian Sinclair.

This was a time that had the smell of a rugged kind of freedom.

A jumbled, earthy, blown about time of learning and change,

a time of squats, disobedience and occupation,

a time when you could afford to wander, discover, get lost,

make mistakes unseen and learn from your indiscretions.

A time before everything was recorded in a virtual world, forever.

Bath Arts Workshop — once a ladies' hairdressers —

A place where I learned the ropes of survival, made a lifelong treasured friend,

first heard the word proletariat and first began to understand

my context, my ambition, my commitment to the world.

p189 from the poem 'A young woman's walk in Walcot Street' by Louise Osborn

I never knew Bath Arts Workshop – in fact it only survived for 10 years back in the 70s and I first started working in the sector a decade later. But now I realise I knew people from Bath Arts Workshop, people that inspired me and helped me on my own journey to find my “commitment to the world”.

Legacy is one of the themes of this lovely book. BAW closed in 1981 but the projects it spawned lived on, some even to this day like the Natural Theatre Company. And the individuals involved took that spirit of possibility with them, creating and developing initiatives from campaigns to reuse reclaimed building materials to the London to Brighton Bike ride. All that in the 50 years since the Workshop first took over a ladies' hairdressers.

As Louise Osborn says in her poem, this was before everything was recorded digitally and indeed the book came about from some of those BAW founders not wanting to let the place sink without trace. And in true participatory style the book is a communal effort from start to finish.

It's a great story, written in an open, engaging manner from different points of view, and full of visuals; from festival photos to performance posters, town plans to postcards, even some timeless organisational artefacts:

September 12th 1972 B.A.W. Desk Diary.

- *Return lights from evening show.*
- *Complete Gulbenkian application.*
- *Write to Experimental Arts Panel.*
- *Apply for music licence...*

Timeless apart from the fact that back in 1972, rather than a to-do list on some digital platform, this one was typed out on a proper typewriter!

Anyone reading the book who is working in the sector today will find things that resonate with their own experiences. Apart from the daily to-do lists that might be the shared ambitions:

Breaking down barriers between work, play, social work, theatre, art, social occasions, etc...

We shared a vision of a world in which compassion and generosity came first, along with faith in human creative potential, concern and respect for the environment, and an underlying critique of the class-ridden, consumerist and militaristic culture that prevailed...

Or the feelings when things go really well:

Reality was suspended and we lived in a world that was carnivalesque and riotous in spirit...

Or some of the same old problems:

We lacked the resources and experience to fully engage people in those still early days, but the intention was there...

In May 1978, we had a cash flow crisis and the Arts Council suspended our grants until our accounts had been audited...

No doubt every generation will re-invent their own form of participatory arts and let's celebrate that. But maybe we also need to take a moment to celebrate, learn, and be inspired by our own history. I haven't had much chance yet to share this book with some of the early-career artists and activists I work with at UNION, but those that have seen it have been totally drawn in.

So well done to all those involved in stitching this book together. It's published by Tangent Books so why not go retro and type a letter to them enclosing a postal order for £25...or, if you must, there is even a website: <https://www.bathartsworkshop.org/>

Adrian Sinclair

UNION: The Northern School for Creativity and Activism

Considering Co-Creation

By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/considering-co-creation/>

November 11, 2021

Categories: Research, Resources

Tags: artists, co-creation, community, participation



Author: Heart of Glass and Battersea Arts Centre

Publication Date: July 2021

Summary

Report commissioned by Arts Council England

Details

The report writers offer a set of perspectives and a potential roadmap to encourage further exploration of co-creation practice. From the personal testimonies of artists and community members who have worked on, and continue to work on, co-created projects; to some of the resources and texts drawn upon for guidance, inspiration and challenge; what is presented is for readers to re-shape, rebuild and re-imagine.

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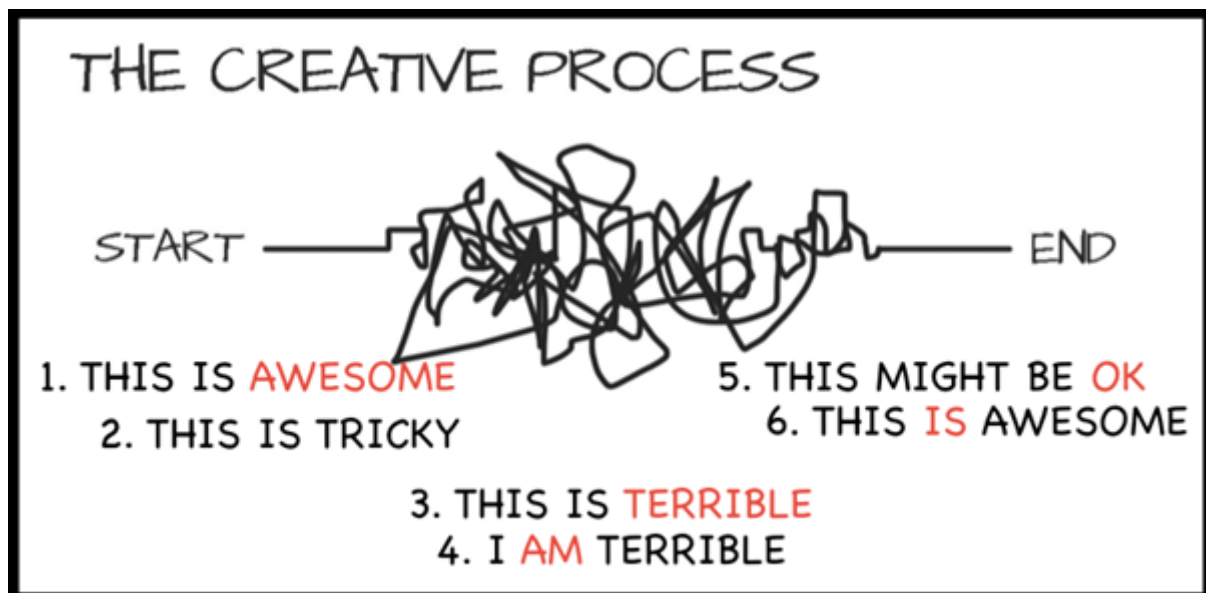
Co-creation environments that manage fear and cultivate resilience

By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/co-creation-environments-that-manage-fear-and-cultivate-resilience/>

November 11, 2021

Categories: News



Kiz Crosbie from member Mortal Fools shares their development journey to a tangible and clearly articulated co-creation practice that combines the creative process (practical activities used to produce artistic content) and the relational process (the environments cultivated and how people work together). With practical tips at the end!

I am Kiz, the Artistic Director and founder of Mortal Fools, a theatre, drama and creative learning company specialising in co-creation with children and young people. As a cultural organisation and a charity, we have social change at our core, with the primary purpose to support people to have better interpersonal relationships, as this is a fundamental part of human wellbeing, fulfilment and productivity.

As a company of artists, we use the co-creation of drama and theatre-based productions as our method to do this. These are collaborative and inter-personal art forms by nature and so the process of co-creation provides a highly effective means to achieve our desired outcomes for people, together with the impact which comes from sharing the resulting performance with audiences.

As a theatre director, I make plays about people's lives and experiences and have to craft them into a form that tells those stories in ways that are relatable to audiences and makes them *feel* something. To do that, a director must develop a strong emotional intelligence, a comprehensive and deep understanding of what makes people tick and behave in the ways they do and a detailed

understanding what that behaviour looks like. Only then can we work with actors to present it authentically and impactfully in performance.

People have always fascinated me, but this took a deeper turn about five years ago. I was consistently seeing things happening in rehearsals (especially in our co-creation settings) where people would bond, take risks, where friendships would develop, where skills would grow and ideas would flow and it awoke in me a deep curiosity about what was happening to people. What was happening in their minds, bodies and souls to make these changes happen? And how could I help to make these things happen more and better?

What followed within Mortal Fools was the crafting of a training programme – initially for businesses – which combined practices from actor training, theatre making and business thought leaders, underpinned by social science theory. We called it CONNECT – a programme of training with the primary purpose of helping people have better inter-personal connections with one another in the workplace.

We've since started to apply the same approach to crafting a tangible and clearly articulated co-creation practice.

What happens in the process of making art isn't magic – it is the result of many layers of learning and appropriately and adeptly applied skills. If we want co-creation to be truly accessible, inclusive and equitable, it is our responsibility to interrogate the processes we're using deeply and work hard to articulate them in ways that are universally understandable to everyone involved.

I wish I could tell you that we've nailed it, but where we are currently is definitely a work in progress. Like all creative processes we started with a clear impetus and excitement about what was to follow, and now we find ourselves mainly in that dark tunnel of creative uncertainty, with glimmers of clarity and inspiration that we note down immediately.

What we've learned on this journey so far is:

- Co-creation is a combination of the creative process (practical activities we utilise to produce artistic content) and the relational process (the environments we cultivate and how we work together).
- The two strands consistently intersect with one another.
- Each strand has a set of success criteria that we should see evident at all times. One example we've defined that features in both strands is *Response-Ability*
- When all these success criteria are present, it results in our highest quality artistic outputs and in the greatest social and personal outcomes for everyone involved – including our audiences.
- What gets in the way most consistently is **fear**.

If fear is what most consistently gets in the way of creativity and successful co-creation, it warranted some special attention. You can't just tell someone not to be afraid and they will. Driving fear responses are a whole host of subconsciously-controlled systems in our bodies and minds, which have to be consciously understood and managed in order to keep that fear in check.

Fear responses in the body produce adrenaline, for instance, which is an energising hormone, designed to fuel our body's fight or flight response (i.e. fight or run away from a threat). Harnessed in the right way, as many performers will testify, adrenaline can be an excellent fuel to push us out of our comfort zones, to try new things and to accomplish in ways we hadn't previously thought possible.

Creativity requires risk and failure – both of which naturally stimulate our fear responses – and you have to wade through a lot of muck to get to the creative nuggets of gold. Most artists have at least some understanding of this, but if fear is our number one barrier to being creative then consciously cultivating a practice of being resilient to the negative impact of this should be one that all artists are prioritising.

For those of us working in and facilitating co-creation settings, we have the additional factor of those we are collaborating with. My aim is that by articulating our co-creation practice, with its clear success factors and by openly noting and practically addressing the barriers to success, we can properly integrate our core purpose (of supporting people to have better inter-personal relationships) into all streams of our work.

To finish, here's a few simple activities to help cultivate a practice of resilience into your work and support others to do likewise:

- One part of *Response-Ability* is to not allow subconscious processes to drive our behaviour. For example:

When you feel that flush of fear – pause. Take a breath. Remove yourself from the situation if you can – even for a few minutes – to take time to consciously connect with what specifically is driving the fear. Name it – which instantly reduces the power it has over you. Maintain responsibility for your own feelings – e.g. resist the common urge to blame to discharge your negative feelings. Share your feelings with others if possible.

To help us with the sharing part (which is often the most vulnerable) we use a version of Brené Brown's Rumble Language, e.g. "The story I'm telling myself is..." (Google it for more details).

- We've created a team *Sh*t List* – three practical things that help each of us reset and recover when we're feeling rubbish – in fear, stressed or overwhelmed.

Try doing the same thing for yourself or your team / group. Maybe write them down or create a

visual reminder of them which is kept close to hand. It can be hard to remember to do these types of resilience activities because fear and stress triggers our survival instinct, which wants to keep us focused on nothing but the fear.

A couple of things on my Sh*it List are:

- Getting out into wide open outdoor spaces with a view, which helps reset my perspective. We have a balcony outside one of our offices, where I'll pop out for 10 minutes with a cuppa.
- Walking and motion – which helps my body process the stress hormones adrenaline and cortisol and bring my thinking brain back online. We use a similar approach in rehearsals when stress levels get a little high or pre-show – shaking out through exercises like Rubber Chicken.

To find out more about Mortal Fools, including our CONNECT training programme, visit www.mortalfools.org.uk.

A positive way forward

By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/a-positive-way-forward/>

December 9, 2021

Categories: News



David Richmond from Arts in Development reflects on the AWA Gathering, which focused on workforce support and development in the times of Covid and climate crisis. Working in participatory arts, *'We are not firefighters, but gardeners'*, he argues.

At the recent AWA Gathering we had a fascinating discussion on sustainability and some excellent resources were shared. I was really encouraged to see AWA engaging so positively with such a difficult subject. When we're faced with something so huge, complex and potentially all-consuming as climate breakdown, it is easy to feel overwhelmed and helpless.

I must admit, I worry sometimes that that our response to climate crisis might actually feed this sense of hopelessness and make us less likely to pursue more positive ways forward. For example, I'm not sure that it is helpful to frame sustainability in terms of things we ought to give up. I recognise a similar underlying negativity when it comes to creativity, diversity, inclusion etc. which are often treated as if they were unpleasant issues rather than positive values that should be celebrated and built into everything we do.

It is important to recognise that the climate crisis, like inequality and oppression, occurs as a direct result of the choices we make. It should also be clear that the values and practices that led to (for example) climate crisis won't get us out of it, neither will they help us in it. It is time to make some different choices – we desperately need a positive way forward.

So, I was particularly encouraged about moves to reinvigorate the 'participatory arts' sector in Scotland. It does feel to me that this might be the moment for a radical repositioning of the sector. For too long we've been funded to provide sticking-plaster solutions when we have something far more important to offer. The role of the arts is not to tinker but to transform. Our role is not to use sustainability, creativity, inclusion, diversity etc. to mitigate the worse effects of the current system but to forge a new one. We are not firefighters, but gardeners.

I think it is time to take ourselves seriously and recognise that what we offer is a distinctly positive paradigm with a clear set of values, concepts and processes. A paradigm that focusses on the quality of our lives and the moments we experience (rather than the quantity of things we possess). (If we want to show that we are serious about this we could stop trying to quantify the benefits of the arts, but instead analyse other resources in terms of the quality they bring to our lives – something that can be done every bit as rigorously as the other way around).

When we see sustainability as a positive value, we realise that it is not just plastics we throw away but that our current tendency to see the world in terms of expendable resources extends to how we treat each other. If we are to find a positive way forward, we need to first recognise that we are all part of the complex and constantly changing systems that shape the world we live in and that everything we do has implications for ourselves, other people and the wider world. To move forward we must first let go of certainty and recognise that we are all 'in development' and find ways to balance our own lives with our relationships with others and the wider world.

The reality of how to realise this is of course complex. Fortunately, there are some simple and natural processes that can guide us on this journey. I have been exploring walking as our natural resource. Walking helps us think and listen – to find the openness that is essential to all creative development. When we walk, we feel connected to the world, to others and to our natural selves. I'm planning a series of Walks in Development across the UK to help find out how we can bring

this natural connection into everything we do and I'm looking for people who would like to explore this with me.

We will walk, listen and think and create, both together and alone. As we walk, we will explore what walking can teach us, how we can support each other and what resources we can build to keep us walking in development.

If anyone would like to join me, or can suggest any people or places 'in development' to visit and connect with, please get in touch.

David@artsindevelopment.org.uk

Making your practice more sustainable

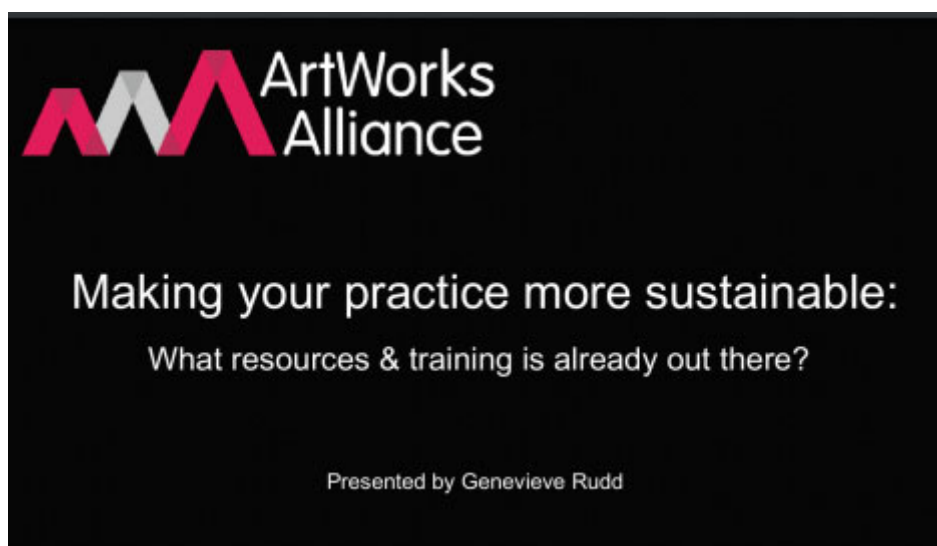
By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/making-your-practice-sustainable/>

January 12, 2022

Categories: Latest, Resources, Toolkits & Guidance

Tags: climate emergency, sustainability



Author: Genevieve Rudd

Publication Date: January 2022

Summary

Resources & training for climate emergency

Details

A presentation on sustainability resources and training given by Genevieve Rudd at the AWA Gathering in November 2021, highlighting practical steps towards addressing the climate emergency as a sector in 2022 and beyond, with additional information from members.

[Download or View Resource](#)

Making sustainable futures

By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/making-sustainable-futures/>

January 13, 2022

Categories: News



Genevieve Rudd reviews the sustainability resources and training presentation she gave at the AWA Gathering in November 2021, highlighting practical steps towards addressing the climate emergency as a sector in 2022 and beyond.

January is the month of New Year's Resolutions, it's a time to set the intentions, habits and actions in motion for the year ahead. This New Year's Eve/Day was the warmest on record in the UK, a result of the warming planet. There isn't a place on Earth unaffected by the climate and ecological emergency and whilst the biggest proportion of responsibility lies with those with most power (such as governments), there are collective actions we can take as a sector to effect positive change.

Protecting and restoring human-made damage to the planet can feel overwhelming and beyond our control. Much of the participatory arts sector, and wider cultural sector, is made up of freelancers experiencing precarious ad hoc working practices – even before the pandemic! – which can often leave little time or energy to think bigger than ourselves. But there are actions we

can take, collectively, which not only limit the negative impact on the Earth, but also reduce the impact on our holistic health as people. (Note: as we are also a part of nature, what is good for the planet is good for us.)

Beyond simply 'climate and nature' themed events or projects, there are organisations leading the way with generously sharing practical steps, guides and training to make positive changes to our work, communities and wider world. At the November 2021 AWA Gathering, I showcased some of these actions in my presentation 'Making your practice more sustainable'. I shared some of the resources already available to culture sector practitioners and organisations, which support things such as monitoring carbon footprint, reducing waste, developing sustainable operations and buildings, and increasing 'climate literacy'.

In the presentation I outlined 12 resources, guides or training courses, and five other sources of inspiration, including a note on considering care and wellbeing when exploring the climate crisis, as feelings of 'eco anxiety' are real and are, quite honestly, very understandable! If you're looking for something to do right now in January and something to work towards this year, here are two starters:

My first recommendation is to declare a climate emergency as your New Year's Resolution!

I'm based in Norfolk, and with fellow culture sector worker Lucy Enskat of Hocus Pocus Theatre and other local practitioners, we're setting up a Culture Declares Emergency (CDE) network for the East of England. Take a look at the CDE website to see how you can declare, what it might mean to your work/life and find your local group – or set one-up! If you work in Music or Business, there is a '...Declares Emergency' network for you too.

My second recommendation is to build a network of eco-inspirational people!

There are many intersectional diverse networks exploring and addressing the relationship between the arts and climate crisis. Making a declaration – as an organisation or individual practitioner – might be the first step to tapping into these networks, but don't be afraid to be the instigator. Share tips or set eco-challenges with your colleagues, and make sure 'sustainability' (use of resources, travel, waste etc.) is included in ongoing project monitoring and evaluation. You don't have to be an 'expert' to make a positive difference to the world, but being connected with other people taking

similar actions can be supportive and affirming.

We received some positive feedback about the resources outlined in the Gathering presentation and the discussions that followed, including this comment:

‘ the mix of concrete information to just drink in and animated debate around it in terms of applying that to the real world and our values.’

But don't just take participants' word for it! You can access a pdf of the slideshow presentation [here](#). I'd also encourage you to share this with colleagues, friends and family. Can you build any of these resources into your business plans? What training will you/your team access? How will you know you've made a difference?

The climate and ecological emergency requires all of us to review and adapt the way we live and work, so I hope that the resources, guides and training are a useful way to start 2022 with positive actions for a more sustainable and regenerative future.

Image: Making positive choices and setting your intentions for 2022 – which direction will you take? An image of the dunes at Winterton on the Norfolk coast, which is rapidly eroding into the sea as a result of climate crisis. Credit: Genevieve Rudd

Hip Hop HEALS

By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/hip-hop-heals/>

March 17, 2022

Categories: News



Hip Hop is perhaps the most powerful and far-reaching modern music phenomenon known to man and womankind. Its multifaceted and complex nature allows its reach to surpass boundaries of race, culture and socio-economic context but how can we, as artists and creators, harness its powers to activate and enhance the wellbeing of the participants we meet during our everyday practice within the UK? Read this month's blog from Kiz Manley.

I'm Kiz. Some might call me the UK's First Hip Hop Therapist. Some call me a Trauma-Informed Hip Hop Practitioner. You could say I'm a Hip Hop fan who wants to stop people being treated unfairly when experiencing mental illness due to their marginalisation by society. For example, African-Caribbean men experience the poorest mental health provision in the UK today. If you are young, black and male, you are seven times more likely to be imprisoned or sectioned whilst experiencing mental health service provision. Meanwhile, your white counterparts will be offered 'softer' interventions.

Finding it impossible to express my own feelings at the loss of my beloved sister, Promila, in a car accident in 2000, I battled with grief repression over a period of seven years. I used to listen to music to help me get through the dark times. The fruit of this was that I discovered the expressive

arts therapies. I wanted to share what I'd learnt about creative recovery and trained to facilitate groups myself through an MSc in Creative Writing for Therapeutic Purposes (CWTP) at Metanoia Institute. CWTP is a relatively new discipline that combines literary theory with counselling and expressive arts practice. Whilst studying, I found out about Hip Hop Therapy in the USA. My mind was blown.

Turns out, it's an engagement tool devised in the States by a social worker named Dr. Edgar H. Tyson. Hip Hop culture is made up of four central tenets: Lyricism (rapping), Turntablism (DJing), Beatboxing and Breaking (Break Dancing). It is not location-specific and, like Kung Fu, its popularity is global. By its very nature, it is easily assimilated into cultures from as far apart as America to Azerbaijan or Palestine to Poland. It allows the expression of multiple truths and many voices speak these truths.

When I started studying poetry therapy on the course, I immediately wondered how things would pan out if I switched the poems for Hip Hop lyrics so when I was asked to devise and deliver a therapeutic writing workshop as part of an assessment, this is exactly what I did. The results were fantastic.

After the session, participants told me about their pre-workshop anxieties. They were worried they would not be able to respond to or feel distanced by the workshop content because as participants, they were not Hip Hop's 'target audience'. But, what they didn't know was that Hip Hop is an all-inclusive and all-encompassing *way of life*, an attitude and not just a genre of music. It's a way of speaking, dressing and *being*.

Hip Hop Therapy can be defined as: **“an innovative synergy of rap music, bibliotherapy, and music therapy”**. (Dr. Edgar J Tyson). My own definition would add 'poetry therapy'. So, what is it about Hip Hop that can be therapeutic? In pondering this, I made a list:

1. isoprinciples (tuning into participants' emotional landscape through art)
2. post-modernism (speaking and/or being aware of many truths and perspectives)
3. doppelgangers (having an alter ego speak a different truths)
4. social constructivism (creating a reality as a group through reflection in the arts)
5. narrative therapy (telling the story, no matter how painful and seeing a beacon of hope somewhere and/or embellishing it with another truth)

6. autobiography (reflecting on experience)
7. mental health (lots of Hip Hop lyrics discuss mental illness)

Hip Hop can be utilised to bring people together in a therapeutic group so that healing may take place. It expresses universal struggle and universal humanity and its poetry offers fertile pickings for therapeutic activity whether in an academic MSc seminar room or out in the proverbial 'ghetto'. **It is also a route inwards to an outsider population of people, especially men and young people, who today, sadly, are choosing to end their own lives rather than speak up.**

If you want to find out how this works in practice, listen to our blog: 'Glowittheflow'. You can have a go at some writing yourself. In fact, we just launched Season 2 of by interviewing 12 UK MCs to find out their writing tricks, so listen here.

I'm currently planning Hip Hop HEALS first online Academy, in partnership with Birmingham Centre for Arts Therapies. We received funding from The Baring Foundation to widen access to the arts and health profession for Minority Ethnic (ME) people. We offer a work experience phase, a package of supervision and a free DBS for trainees, depending on their support needs. If you fit the funder's requirements, we could offer you a place so get in touch with me here: hiphophealsuk@gmail.com.

You can book here.

Creating the environment

By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/creating-the-environment/>

March 29, 2022

Categories: Evaluations & Reports, Resources

Tags: cultural ecology, people, place

Creating the Environment



The cultural eco-systems of
Creative People and Places

Jonathan Gross and Nick Wilson

Author: Jonathan Gross and Nick Wilson

Publication Date: 2018

Summary

What place based cultural programmes can achieve.

Details

This report draws on research conducted with the Creative People and Places (CPP) programme between June and November 2018. It explores the idea of cultural ecology, and the cultural eco-systems within CPP locations. By examining the local environments of which CPP Places are a part, it offers new ways to understand what place based cultural programmes, such as CPP, can seek to achieve in the long run.

Download or View Resource

Faster but slower, slower but faster

By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/faster-but-slower-slower-but-faster/>

April 13, 2022

Categories: Evaluations & Reports, Resources

Tags: co-creation, communities, participation, partnership working



Author: Mark Robinson

Publication Date: 2016

Summary

Creative People and Places learning 2016

Details

A learning summary from 2016, reviewing CPP programme processes, delivery insights and effective ways of supporting change.

[Download or View Resource](#)

Governance and consortium working

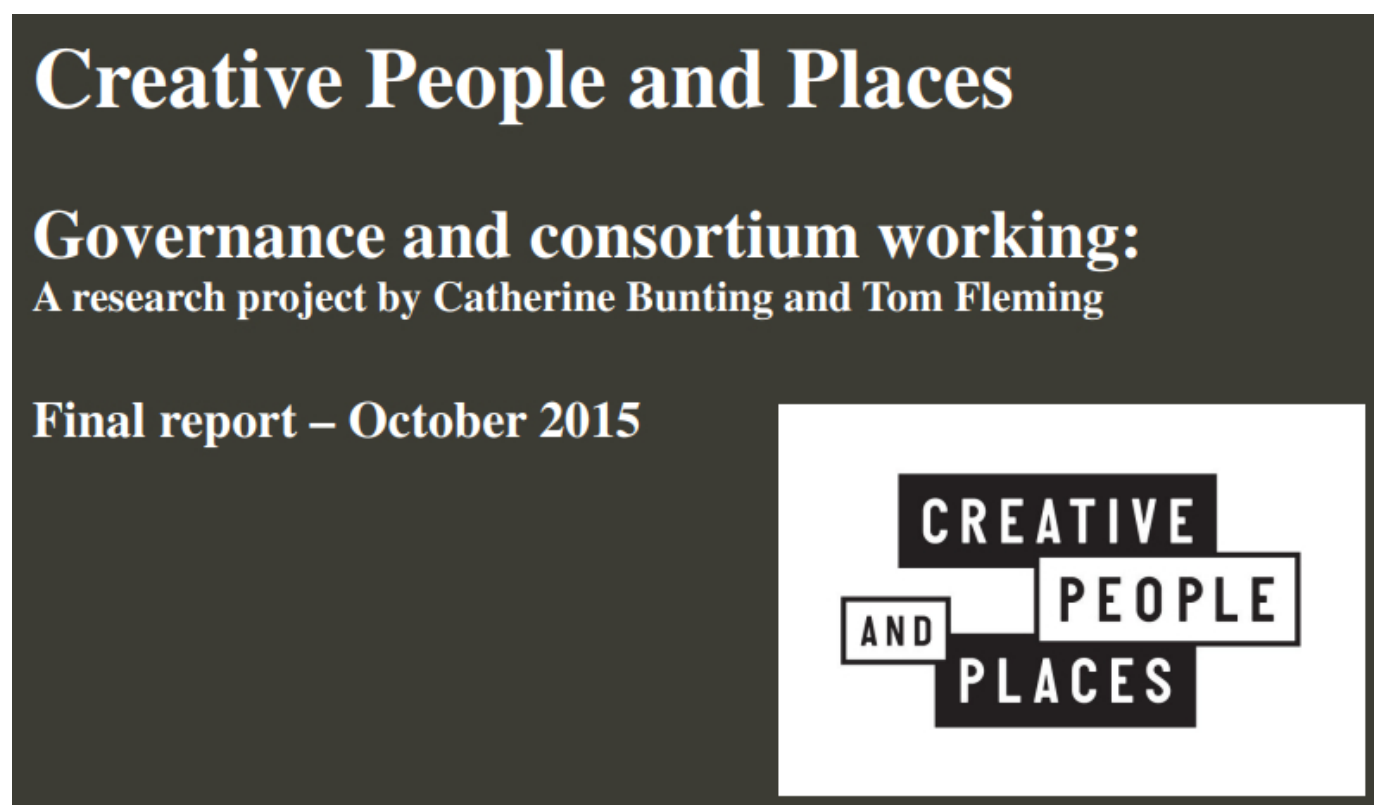
By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/governance-and-consortium-working/>

April 13, 2022

Categories: Evaluations & Reports, Resources

Tags: consortia, governance, partnership working



Author: Catherine Bunting and Tom Fleming

Publication Date: October 2015

Summary

Overview of research into the CPP consortia models.

Details

This paper sets out an overview of research into the consortia models of the Creative People and Places programme as at October 2015. It is written as a snapshot analysis of the development journey for consortia and it sets out some headline learning points and reflections.

[Download or View Resource](#)

Co-creative practice in real life

By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/co-creative-practice-in-real-life/>

April 14, 2022

Categories: News



Suzie West, Talent Development Lead at Barbican Theatre Plymouth, reflects on a year of co-creating in youth training.

New space for possibility

During my 10 years as a secondary dance teacher and freelance practitioner, I became increasingly curious about the creative learning experience and the function of creativity in shaping a person. Since taking on a position at Barbican Theatre in 2017, the organisation has started to explore the co-creative process in participatory settings. The team here are fundamentally committed to co-creation and we want to stretch the process to its most full potential. The team talks extensively about building Plymouth's creative voice and giving it a platform. In the last five years so much has changed for the young people we support and the creatives they collaborate with at Barbican Theatre, Plymouth. As we go into 2022, it feels important to take a step back and not only talk about the successes but also the function and evolution of co-creation for us.

In 2020, Arts Council England positioned their ambitions for creativity firmly in the local community with their ten year *Let's Create* strategy. The term '*democratic creativity*' is important to me as a community arts practitioner and I support Grimsey's argument (2020) that places public agency at the heart of this country's cultural rebuild after the effects of Covid-19.

The pandemic has changed everything in the sense that people have had to adapt to a life threatening crisis, change their behaviours quickly and a new normal is emerging. To achieve this better life, it will be incumbent on government to blow away some of the restrictions of the past and put in place devolved powers that enable local communities to act (Grimsey, 2020, 5).

There is a responsibility for cultural organisations, and not just high street businesses, to look again at agency and how they facilitate this. Our new CEO, who started in 2020, is similarly passionate about non-siloed creative training that teaches collaboration, and open questions. As an organisation we want to find a wider range of tools that allow people to find their own unique voice and platform for their creative expression. This article talks about the learning journey we have been on with co-creation. So, let's start at the beginning.

Whilst completing my MA in Creative Education, I soon found a kindred spirit in Professor Anna Craft. Her studies featured heavily in my three years of action research and the following three years of application at Barbican Theatre. Professor Craft's 'teaching for creativity' theories demand a learning environment that encourages and celebrates questioning and imagination in all children. Furthermore, Craft enlists questioning to foster 'possibility thinking'. Described by Craft (2002) as a shift in thought process from 'What is this?' to 'What can I/we do with this?'.

I had been applying this powerful tool in our community engagement and classes through a fusion dance programme I was leading across Plymouth. Shifting the narrative from 'What do you know?' and 'What do we do here?' to 'What could we do here?' and 'What can we imagine?'. The arrival of lockdowns in 2020 coincided with our new CEO starting and both turned Barbican Theatre's training programme upside down – but in a good way.

During the first lockdown, our contracted practitioners embedded the principles of possibility thinking within our newly founded Digital Rebels programme. We embraced the challenge: we have computers, we have the internet, we have specialists to help you – 'What can we do with this? Where can we go?' The outcome was this: Digital ReBels project 2020 'The Butterfly Effect'

We were able to put the co-creative process into an online space. With so much unknown, there were no time constraints, no outcomes on the horizon, no traditional black box with the traditional rules and roles of responsibility. The online 'other world' gave us a new possibility to work and think in. Craft's theories were reflected in our lockdown projects: *'involved practitioners offering children emotionally enabling opportunities driven by a provocation, involving practitioners valuing highly children's agency'* (Craft, 2002, 26). Craft's co-participation places value on making space for shared outcomes with the experiences of the learner and teacher including: posing questions, risk taking, being imaginative, self determination and intentionality. This was a theory we could embed in our organisation, as it helped us to prioritise the input of learner agency and shared outcomes in order to develop collective ideas.

Key ingredients for co-creation in the real world

It was incredibly important to Barbican Theatre that we supported our community face to face as soon as we could. Returning to classes tripled our organisation costs, as our CEO wrote in a white paper for MP Luke Pollard:

We've gone from running 5 classes a week to 18, all of which can move between in person, social distanced, blended and online so that we can continue to support creative growth. Each class combines 2 practitioners from different creative backgrounds, who are trained in collaborative co-creative techniques... Creating cross art form work enables more unique voices, and future employment opportunities because ReBels are given permission to flex their muscles and discover what their voices could be, and what they want them to be... They feel heard, represented and consulted and as a consequence are feeling increasingly confident to move between different types of creative explorations.



ReBels Rhythm & Articulation members entertain Christmas shoppers on Plymouth Piazza 10 December 2020. Image credit: Gemma Ward

We used the re-start of our classes to re-launch them entirely under the ReBels banner. A new name to support the shift in our face-to-face classes- instilling co-creation as a fundamental core. Alongside my colleagues I worked to interrogate whether co-creative practice functioned in reality, in regular classes and not just online. With our care and support, could the 15 classes a week embed co-creative practice? The advantages of starting something new in the pandemic was that people were open to change and difference. The rules in the space shifted and their relationship with the creative facilitators shifted too, in the same way they had at school – more agency, more repressibility, choice and adaptability. These new skills were celebrated in the ReBels programme

and some amazing learning took place for everyone, making interdisciplinary work, about self-selected topics with an empowered voice.

Plymouth In Motion short film featuring ReBels Dancers collaborating with professional dancers Kadus Smith and Daisy Harrison and members of Plymouth Parkour & Prime Skatepark (film by Seb Pinkham)

The unexpected combinations of artforms in each class piqued curiosity. Each class had a starting question that enabled our ReBels to be part of this possibility thinking framework: 'What happens when you combine stage combat with Shakespeare?' or 'What happens when you can learn Afro Beat and Contemporary dance in the same class?' This instilled four key features to making co-creation function in the reality of Covid-safe classes: Playfulness, Possibilities, Pluralities and Participation.

The '4Ps: Playfulness, Possibilities, Pluralities and Participation' are coined by Craft in her future-thinking 2001 study on creativity in education. In the book, Craft describes creativity in education as something that must be participated in with open ended, risk enhanced innovation (possibility), multiple viewpoints or roles (plurality) and a loose framework that encourages question posing, immersion and self-determination (playfulness). The continuous thread between the individual, communal and collaborative demonstrates that individual agency and dialogue with others occur simultaneously. This, after all, is what community creative practitioners and teachers across the world have always known and always wanted for their participants: a chance for self-growth and a chance to feel valued in a group. The golden ticket to successful creative projects.



ReBels What's Your Style? graffiti photo project in Stonehouse March 2021. Image credit: Joshua Marsh

Our new and shiny ReBels programme wasn't instantly the golden ticket and there isn't a 'one size

fits all' equation. What we found post pandemic was that as well as having screen fatigue, some of the learners have 'agency' fatigue too. In some cases, the young people have lost two years of development in a social situation. They aren't always emotionally and socially ready for co-creation in its most open-ended form. Our young people don't always want to make all of the decisions, all of the time. This isn't lethargy. This is fatigue. This isn't 'front'. This is a lack of confidence. Some of them just want to be in a social space, learning from each other and at times, just being told what to do. No problem. We talked a lot to our practitioners about the '*sliding scale of co-creation*' and asked them to consider their classes' capacity for co-creative agency vs collective responsibility. The 4Ps can exist across a term of experiences, balanced with instruction and tasters by specialists (some of whom are still the ReBels, instructing us how to use Ableton, to use a different language or costume a character). The framework can be set, sometimes even the outcome is set, but there is still room for the 4Ps and room for the ReBels' creative voices.

'Progressive organisations, like Barbican Theatre, lead the way with their innovative approach and dedication to diversifying the creative sector.' Matt Griffiths, Youth Music CEO

We have been able to use the more open end of the scale/co-creation model with those ready to have agency and this tends to be those who have actively sought us out during lockdown. This has been particularly popular with solo musicians, recent graduates or third year students ready for their own creative journey. We've got buskers, record labels designers, DJs, MCs, community dance artists, podcasters, spoken word artists, comedians, projection mappers, dance film makers, drag artists and parkour choreographers. We have young people who don't want a traditional class any longer, or a traditional didactic project. They clearly recognise when Barbican Theatre, a collaborating partner or guest company wish to involve them in their process but do not value their voice. They are becoming increasingly confident in electing creative experiences that suit them and are now informing us about what classes and experiences they want next.



ReBels Music participant Jacob Elder DJing with professional MC, Maddy V, at Prime Skatepark Takeover June 2021.

Image credit: Dom Moore

Risky and safe spaces

Our ReBels also talk about the fear, nervousness, anxiety and challenge they feel internally. Bravery is less common than it used to be in our creative space. We wondered if that is because it's being used so much elsewhere? There is so much unknown out there. Is it also about the individual's concept of risk and where they feel safe? Is our risky playful space now their only safe space? Can it be both?

Risk is an important part of the co-creative journey as it glues a group together and stretches their perceptions of their own ability – in *“making something”* they are *“making a new version of themselves”*. It is important for Barbican Theatre to gently stretch and nurture curiosity and a healthy appetite for challenge. There can be a healthy balance of the co-created space being safe and risky. Wenger-Traynor (2014) explains that if activities provide a degree of agency, then the participant can decide if they wish to align themselves with the values set out. If the participant's values are reflected in the activity, and their role in the group, the individual attaches themselves to the activity or outcome positively.

So, in the autumn term the teams initiated discussions much sooner, giving each person a chance to talk about what is important to them and to experience various roles. Transparency is provided by giving time and space for the facilitators and participants to understand what everyone's values are, so that an equilibrium between risk and value can be made early on and regularly stretched, then reflected on. Wenger (2014) recommends pliable boundaries so that the *“members can push the edge of the domain with confidence when they are not at risk”* (Wenger, 2014, 44). For some of

our groups, this risk is managed carefully with small stepping stones, rather than big leaps: options to vote on, small collective decisions and specialist interaction they can expand or embody. Slowly, the facilitators can encourage Possibility Thinking to shift their perceptions of the art form and their ability. To bring them to the edges.



ReBels Music members in a session with ReBels Music Practitioner Jon Fazal March 2022. Image credit: Zoe Bloss

In the spring term the ReBels have larger ambitions for their weekly sessions. The practitioners in the room are encouraged to meddle a little more so that the edges can be stretched beyond the ReBels' skill set. As well as facilitating and supporting the group, the practitioners are teaching new skills, stretching the ReBels' technique and imaginations. The practitioners are finding more confidence in swinging the sliding scale back over to tighter frameworks and co-created content or co-directed content when needed to help classes reach their ambitions and achieve a 'big production' they feel part of and proud of. Although it seems contradictory, there is value in practitioners using their specialist experience and enabling the collective ambition to be obtained. A high quality process and product are both important.

A year in...

In 2022 our amazing practitioners are building the 4Ps into some personalised ways to suit the journey of their young people. It is a longer process, with time allocated every session to talking, building dialogue and framing or reframing their ideas. Time is also dedicated this term to building the value of others in relation to the individual which has really helped them understand their greater value in the group.

'There are more and more opportunities which I find thrilling and very positive.' Julius Taresch (ReBels member) Read a full testimonial from Julius here

'I've had amazing opportunities & met some really cool people who have helped support me.' Aya

El Morshdy (ReBels member)

ReBels 'Dancing On Cars' short film project March 2021 — co-choreographed by ReBels and their practitioners Lauren Pomfret and Daisy Harrison (film produced by Seb Pinkham)

In our first full year of co-creative training and interdisciplinary classes, we are only just getting to grips with the reality of co-creation, day in day out. The experience of the individual and the group is complex and takes time and careful observation. It's 4Ps have put us all through the ringer: we have to be playful/adaptable, plural/see all sides, possibility modelling/ challenging and participatory/braver with our democratic process. Co-creative processes enable participants to negotiate their identity but this also means that there is the potential for a variety of negotiations. The possibility of so many values and expectations can mean that activity will not satisfy every person's constitution of identity. It's a messy way of making sure everyone's voice is heard, but it's also the most impactful.

I am passionate about creative learning and the potential it has. I also love the messy, entangled creative process and how this has shaped me as a person. It's helped me to be ok with the unknown, resilient and adaptable. It's helped me to adapt from being a secondary dance teacher to the role I am in now. It's helped me to manage life's stresses and emotional toils that we all go through as humans. Co-creation defines the Barbican Theatre rather well too. It isn't really shiny, golden perfection, it's more like a well loved tapestry – perfectly complex from the front: a big messy entangled bunch of threads when you look at the back. It's a bit risky, it's messy.

This article has also been written by the team – edited, re-ordered, quotes thrown in, perspectives drawn on. It has helped us to reflect on us as an organisation and the shifts we have made because of possibility thinking and co-creative practice. It has reiterated to us the importance of risk, resilience and having confidence with the unknown. Such experiences are vital for our radical young ReBels in this world and for organisations alike. So Barbican Theatre are learning how to be transparent about the value of the ReBels' voice and the value of risk in our space.

Info about ReBels Talent Development weekly training sessions

Craft, A. et al (eds) (2011) *Creativity in Education* London: A&C Black

Craft, A. (2002) *Creativity and Early Years Education: A lifewide foundation* Continuum Studies in Lifelong Learning London: Continuum

Grimsey Review: Covid-19 Supplement For Town Centres

Wenger-Traynor et al (eds) (2014) *Learning in Landscapes of Practice: Boundaries, identity, and*

knowledgeability in practice-based learning London: Routledge

For Artful Care and careful art

By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/for-artful-care-and-careful-art/>

February 9, 2023

Categories: News



What if the work of a nurse, physio, or homecare worker was designated an art, so that the qualities of the experiences they create became understood as aesthetic qualities? What if the interactions created by artists, directors, dancers, or workshop facilitators were understood as works of care? Care Aesthetics is the first full-length book to explore these questions and examine the work of carer artists and artist carers to make the case for the importance of valuing and supporting aesthetically caring relations across multiple aspects of our lives.

James Thompson is Professor of Applied Theatre at the University of Manchester. He was the co-founder of the Theatre in Prisons and Probation Centre, the arts organisation, In Place of War, and has run arts projects in conflict zones internationally. He has written widely on applied theatre and the socially engaged arts.

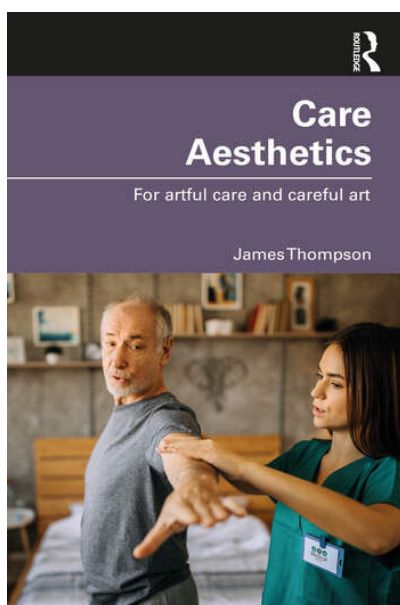
Care Aesthetics is described as:

“...a vital, paradigm-shifting book for anyone engaged with socially engaged arts or social and health care practices on an academic or professional level.”

Available to buy here...

As James himself explains in a recent article “Care Aesthetics in Time of Covid-19” (full article available [here](#))

“Of course, care aesthetics is making another claim. One that suggests that increasing the artistry that takes place between people in their communities makes healthier, potentially more equitable and joyful lives. Similarly deepening our capacities to care for each other – not as an idea but as an actual practice – can provide more sustainable, healthy neighbourhoods and more mutually enriching lives. Care aesthetics is descriptive in analysing and documenting the aesthetic experience of care in community, health and arts projects. But it is also normative – it is a proposal for change. It is suggesting that improving the aesthetic quality of care practices (whether a theatre project or a health practice) will enhance the likelihood of them offering life enhancing and transformative experiences. When the times we live in value the technical and managerial over the embodied and affective, it is a demand for a slower, more human-centred relational focus for acts of care. Similarly, it is making a demand that in a world of extremes of lack of care, and the ugliness of poverty, exclusion and discrimination, we need to improve the way we live together to ensure the damaging and unequal relations that dominate our worlds have a chance to be transformed. Care aesthetics is about the shape and feel of how we look after each other and how we look out for each other – it is about the art and craft of solidarity.”



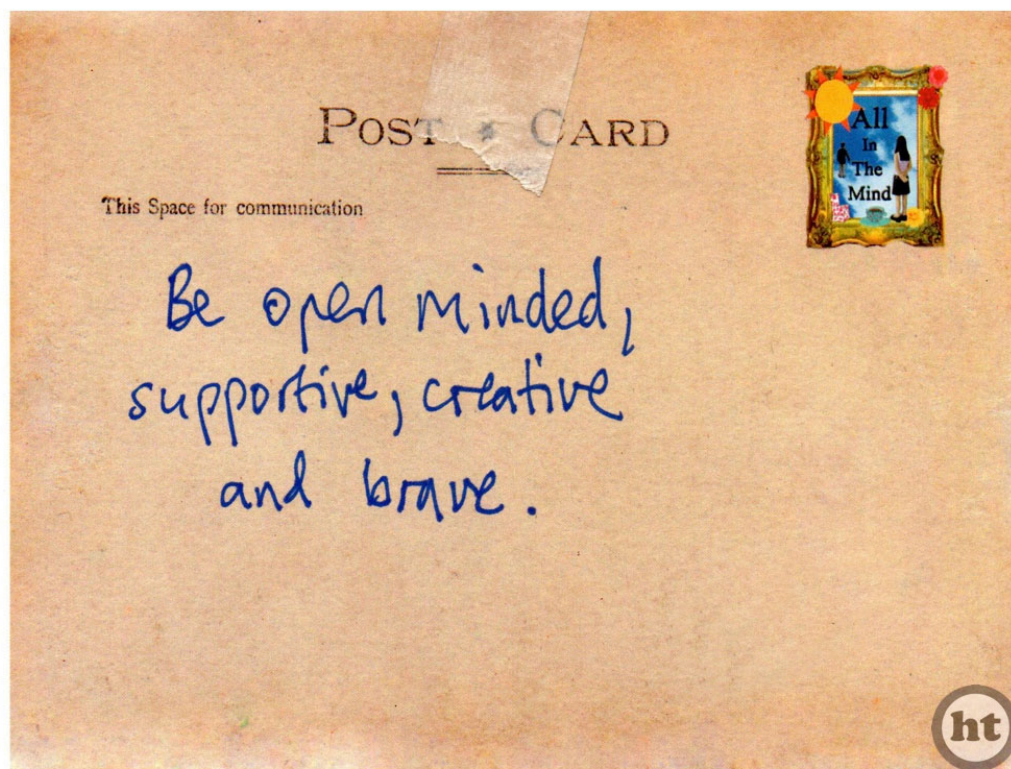
Responding Creatively to Crisis

By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/responding-creatively-to-crisis/>

February 11, 2023

Categories: News



Artworks Alliance's gathering on 19th October 2022 focussed on the cost of living crisis. As the cost of living crisis hits hard and people are struggling with the soaring cost of living, we wanted to explore how participatory artists, organisations and participants are faring and how Artworks Alliance, as a member-led network could respond creatively to the extraordinary times in which we're living and working.

The Zoom session ran from 9-30 am to 12 pm. The first half of the session focussed on the impact of the cost of living crisis in three key areas; on participants, on practitioners and on the fight for resources. Each area was discussed by a small group in a break-out room and then fed back to the larger group for further discussion.

The Impact of the Cost of Living Crisis

The impact on participants was of great concern to all those present. The group talked about the range of challenges poorer communities and individuals are experiencing and the danger that art-based activities can seem irrelevant to some – at a time when we all believe participatory arts has such an important role to play.

“When people can’t pay for heating or food, the arts become a luxury”

The fight for resources was discussed in depth. So many practitioners and organisations are playing “catch-up” as a result of the pandemic. People are feeling pressured and it has become very challenging to find funders that are prepared to be flexible and responsive.

“The cost of living is making applying for funding more competitive and taking up time that could be spent otherwise”

The impact on practitioners was explored by a third small group. We discussed how the lingering effects of Covid mean that many practitioners we are still in a state of flux and uncertainty. Practitioners and organisations have pushed themselves almost to the limit during the Pandemic. We all have a lot of emotions that we haven’t fully processed and are still ever-present.

“We are in a place of precariousness – feeling constantly that we need to prove our value and therefore needing to work harder, better, longer and smarter”

Participants in this discussion are often working with people who are deeply affected by the crisis. How can we hold the experiences and emotions of participants whilst at the same time keeping ourselves well? We have a strong sense of responsibility for others and don’t want to let people down, but we also need to look after our own health and well-being and to do this we need to establish professional boundaries.

“How do we support and encourage others without developing dependency? Expectations have changed during Covid and we are being asked to and are expecting ourselves to do things we would never have taken on previously”.

How can Artworks Alliance respond to what is needed now?

The second half of the morning we switched focus to explore what members want from Artworks Alliance at this time. Once again we split off into three break-out rooms to discuss the aspects that interested us most, before opening up a whole-group discussion.

Themes for future gatherings and Forums were explored by the first break-out group, including

creative wellbeing, storytelling in evaluation, sustainability in our work, trauma-informed practice, and keeping practitioners and participants safe.

Funding Artworks Alliance was the focus of the second break-out room. We talked a lot about collaboration and the ways in which individuals and organisations could work together to develop joint training and networking opportunities. The network is highly valued by members but we are not always very effective in capturing and communicating this value to prospective funders. Once again it was felt that we could work together to gather both qualitative and quantitative data and we could approach the dissemination of our messages in more creative ways. This could be a way of drawing on the skills of freelancers in the network to create art works as forms of advocacy, get better at raising the profile of Artworks Alliance and increase our brand visibility.

What do we want from Artworks Alliance? was discussed by the third break-out group. Key themes that emerged were:

- **Creating a community of likeminded people** – Members said they valued the opportunity to connect with other people in the sector to discuss ideas, challenges, support each other, create a network and share news or stories about their work.
- **Advocacy for the sector** – People agreed the network has a role in looking at ways to support the participatory arts sector. It can provide peer to peer support in finding useful resources and organisations for potential partnerships or opportunities.
- **Promoting a federated approach to Continuing Professional Development** – The network could provide targeted support for participatory artists at different career stages including networking and shadow working with participatory artists in different regions.

Thank you to everyone who came together in October attended the gathering and inputted into these lively and important discussions. The conversations we are having during these extraordinary times are crucial for the sector and as we look forward to 2023, Artworks Alliance as a member-led network will continue to offer opportunities for participatory arts practitioners to meet together with peers in our sector across the UK, to grow our networks and share our learning.

Gathering Summary March 2023

By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/gathering-summary-march-2023/>

March 30, 2023

Categories: News

Tags: AWA, Gathering, wellbeing



We held our regular ArtWorks Alliance Gathering last week, and it was a great opportunity to catch-up and reflect on where members of the AWA network are with their practice. The purpose of the ArtWorks Alliance is to provide opportunities for people interested in participative arts to engage with one another about their work, and to find common purpose as we develop our creative approaches that mean something to the people we represent in our many diverse communities. The gatherings are our regular opportunity to meet up, and bring together artists, advocates and practitioners of participative arts from across the UK. These are occasions for purposeful conversations, where we can share our thinking and experiences of the vital role of participative arts.

Last week, Abi Horsfield from Collective Encounters facilitated our conversation on how to manage our wellbeing as participative arts practitioners. The ArtWorks Alliance network brings together people who work in established arts organisations, freelancers and independents creative practitioners, so the experience of managing wellbeing can be quite diverse. It's always good to hear how different network members approach the challenges of maintaining a creative practice approach, while serving the needs of the people they work with and for. Our conversation focused on distinct approaches to wellbeing, some related to the organisations that members work for, the

fundings they are accountable to, and let's not forget, the responsibility we have to ourselves as individuals.

After being set our topic by Abi, we used breakout groups to ensure that everyone had a chance to contribute. These conversations were then summarised when we came back together to hear what we'd each been discussing in our groups. One observation was of the importance of reflection, coupled with our ability as practitioners, to maintain a level of awareness about the flow of our work. How do we stay tuned to our self-needs, as well as those of our clients and colleagues? How do we know we are doing what feels right for us as individuals? How do we monitor the boundaries between positive and enriching engagement, and negative and stressful interaction?

For a fulfilling working life, it was agreed that wellbeing requires a continuing ability to recalibrate and adjust, based on our ability to reflect and re-evaluate our experiences as they fit with everything else that is around us. Abi explained that at Collective Encounters she is encouraged to go for a swim when planning a workshop because that's where her good thinking takes place. Too often, we agreed, presenteeism takes priority, and that doing something else, something more creative, is the best source of inspiration because it can be the spark that enables us to think differently.

We explored how our time working is like a journey, which, because our work isn't static, and involves interacting with people in demanding situations, must foster a creative mindset that is open to transformation. It is necessary, we agreed, to foster and develop our ability to sustain interest in our work and not burn-out. We agreed that this is easy to say, putting a mindfulness attitude into practice needs a lot of work, especially if we are to thrive rather than just survive. The ArtWorks Alliance network, it was acknowledged, helps provide support for people often working alone. Connection with people across any network potentially benefits people who may be socially isolated. An effective network has to serve as many people as possible, not only those living in urban areas, who are in proximity to other organisations. It's possible, however, as we were reminded, to be alone in a busy organisation where task-focussed roles mean that people don't often get the time to collaborate and interact, unless it is about those tasks.

Organisations often want us to be administrators, facilitators and crisis-managers, all at once. So, it's essential that we value the vital creative contribution that we each offer. We can do this by learning to reciprocate with other artists and creative practitioners, which in turn means we are actually supporting ourselves. The power of being a member of a network is that we see ourselves reflected in other people's similar experiences. So, we benefit from offering mutual support to others. The poetic analogy that was shared asked us was to think that we are boats, but we are "not just floating at sea by ourselves." "We're all on individual journeys," it was noted, but we can be "assured that there are other boats surrounding us." To maintain a positive orientation and sense of wellbeing, what we need, it was suggested, "is a network and a support system." "There

might be plenty of lights at the shore that can guide us, but we don't have to follow them all because that would be impossible."

Wellbeing can often feel, however, that it's just about remaining afloat. We have to make sure we've got enough resources on our boat to keep us going. Sometimes we just can't set sail, and we have to pull into the dock and have a break. So, rather than trying to squeeze everything, we agreed that it's essential to have that safe place for when the storm hits and the going gets rough.

What was most important to all contributors in our discussion, was the ability to create and set boundaries. Too often, we discussed, time runs short, and we've got deadlines to meet. As Abi shared with the group, "wellbeing is to thrive, not just survive. It's the bread and the roses. To have space to think, reflect and grow and share." Boundaries, then, are essential. We should never, for example, feel we are obliged to check our emails when away from work. We should never feel that we can't switch off and enjoy our lives. Being a participative arts practitioner is not an emergency service, as one contributor said: "we are art workers, not therapists, not an emergency service. We can't be twenty-four-seven to everybody."

The flip-side of boundaries, as we discussed, is the ability to empathise with the people we are working with. Our clients and colleagues are also people who feel the same pressure in similar ways. No one is perfect, and we've all experienced moments when all we want is an expression of empathy that helps us to adapt to the challenges we are facing. Many people are managing their business and professional lives, their creative and personal lives across several domains, such as work and home. What we can't do, it was noted, is just "give, give give, and get nothing in return."

As was pointed out:

"Thinking about the boat metaphor, you know often the sea can get really quite rough, you know, at that periods of time when you get sort of an onslaught of everyone struggling. And because everyone's struggling, it makes your boat get really rocky and workshops become about people wanting and needing space and time to reflect on what's happening in their lives. And yet, you're being bashed quite a lot by what's happening, but it's about having that space to just go 'whoa, I need to unpack this. I need to process. I've been empathising all day.'"

Concluding our discussion, it was clear how each of the contributors benefit from being part of a

supportive network, both real-world and virtual. It's about coming together and opening that can of worms we carry around with us, which is our feeling of wellbeing. Being creative and participative arts practitioners, we often spend more time dealing with people who don't have the capacity or confidence to express themselves in a creative form and use creative language. Many people have never had access to creative opportunities in the past, which means that sometimes people emotionally unload in our workshops, expecting to find a space and place where they are valued and treated sympathetically. As practitioners, however, we are responsible for ensuring that a safe space is available to all, including the people we work with and for.

So, until we grasp that wellbeing won't happen by magic, but has to be worked on and developed over time, we've got a lot of work to do as a network. It's safe to say that we finished our conversation with a renewed resolve to use the networking tools that we have to hand will enable us to renew our social purpose, and ensure that the connections we make by being part of an open and supportive network dedicated to helping one another, will add value to our work as participative arts practitioners.

Best wishes,

Rob Watson

I Asked ChatGPT Why Participatory Arts Are Important for Social Development

By Rob Watson

<https://artworksalliance.uk/i-asked-chatgpt-why-participatory-arts-are-important-for-social-development/>

May 1, 2023

Categories: Comment, News

Tags: AI, arts, ChatGPT, participation, participatory arts



I've asked ChatGPT why participatory arts are important for social development in the UK. The response was a fairly good summary:

Participatory arts refer to art forms that actively involve people in the creative process, rather than just passive observation. These can include activities such as community theatre, music workshops, and visual arts projects.

Participatory arts are important for social development in the United Kingdom for several reasons:

- 1. Building social connections: Participatory arts provide a space for people to come together and connect with each other. This can help to reduce social isolation and build stronger communities.*
- 2. Fostering creativity: Participatory arts encourage people to express themselves creatively, which can help to boost their self-confidence and self-esteem.*
- 3. Developing skills: Participatory arts can also provide opportunities for people to develop new skills and talents, which can be beneficial for personal and professional development.*
- 4. Promoting diversity: Participatory arts can bring people from different backgrounds together, helping to promote diversity and understanding between different communities.*

5. Empowering communities: Participatory arts projects can give a voice to marginalized communities, empowering them to express their perspectives and experiences in a creative and meaningful way.

Overall, participatory arts can be a powerful tool for social development in the United Kingdom, promoting social cohesion, creativity, and empowerment for individuals and communities alike.

Is anyone else using AI tools to make sense of their work, or as part of their practice?

Artworks Alliance: Member Benefits

By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/artworks-alliance-member-benefits/>

May 18, 2023

Categories: Comment, News

Tags: ArtWorks Alliance, Comment, Members Benefits, Survey



Earlier in 2023, a consortium of UK-based arts membership organisations, led by Engage, delivered a Member Benefits survey. The survey built on Engage's own consultations with their members over 12 months, which will shape how they deliver their existing membership structure.

Artworks Alliance joined this consortium and supported the development of the survey before sharing it with our membership. Other consortium members were; AccessArt, Axis, and the Group for Education in Museums. Engage collated the responses on behalf of the group and shared an overview of all findings with Artworks Alliance, alongside detailed data of responses from our members.

Survey Findings

When asked to select the current membership benefits they engaged with, Artworks Alliance members were most engaged by Opportunities to share practice (79%), Talks, Seminars, and professional events (58%), Networking (58%), promoting their organisation to other members (42%) and receiving the Latest news and policy updates in e-bulletins (37%).

When asked to rate which benefits were most valuable, Artworks Alliance members indicated the

same five benefits, rating Networking as the most valued (58%), with Talks, Seminars and professional events, and Opportunities to share practice both valued highly (47%), and promoting their organisation's work and receiving the Latest news and policy updates in e-bulletins being moderately valued (37%).

'So important for us to connect and network in these challenging times – together we are stronger' – Survey respondent, 2023

It is also worth noting that benefits that were considered to be most valuable by between 30-20% of the respondents included Access to an online library of specialist research, case studies and toolkits, Advocacy support, Opportunities to take part in projects and campaigns, and Support/ advice through regional networks.

Respondents were asked to reflect on the main difference their membership makes on their professional development. Over 80% of Artworks Alliance survey respondents indicated that membership increased their knowledge in a relevant area. Respondents also felt that their membership supports new networks or partnerships (59%), provides a positive experience (47%) and increases their confidence (24%). Other responses were spread across the outcomes; Increases skills in a relevant area, supports work with new audiences, and Supports career progression.

'I have truly valued and appreciated my time as a member with Artworks Alliance. I have gained a wealth of support, knowledge and resources to support my career as part of this network. It is incredibly valuable to be able to talk, share and network with other social practitioners across the art and cultural sectors.' – Survey respondent, 2023

The survey asked members to consider the cost of their membership, and rate whether the current pricing represented good value for money. Of Artworks Alliance members responding, 68% felt that their membership was good value for money, and the remainder were neutral on this question.

Respondents were invited to suggest opportunities or improvements to the member benefits. These comments indicated that the quality and format of the current member benefits for Artworks Alliance is well-matched to the needs of members, however, a higher number of events, opportunities to participate and network throughout the year would support the membership to grow and work together. Additionally, some respondents indicated that they would like to see Artworks Alliance taking on more advocacy to champion participatory arts on behalf of members.

'Through Covid and beyond, it has been fantastic to meet like-minded artists and share inspiring practice and interesting discussion.' – Survey respondent, 2023

Conclusions and Next Steps

As a small and focused membership organisation, the Member Benefits survey provided an opportunity for Artworks Alliance to gather valuable data on how we are meeting the needs of our members, and to also consider how our activity both aligns with and differs from that which is offered by other membership organisations. Despite our smaller size, we received the highest number of survey responses from members, which positively reflects the engagement of our membership.

The survey findings will enable Artworks Alliance to clarify and refine our membership offer, and will support future funding applications and partnership working. Through further consultation with our members, we will explore how we can work together to develop opportunities for further networking and practice sharing activities and events, which will support practitioners to build our collective knowledge of participatory arts and shape practice.

**Hannah Gaunt, Artworks Alliance Oversight Group Member and Creative Producer, Engage.
May 2023**

Podcast Test

By Rob Watson

<https://artworksalliance.uk/podcast-test/>

May 21, 2023

Categories: Podcast

Tags: Podcast, Test



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This is a test podcast with music: "Above the Rain (Excerpt)" by Alex Bainter which is licensed under CC BY 4.0

Artistic Funding: A Two-Tier System or an Integrated Approach

By Rob Watson

<https://artworksalliance.uk/artistic-funding-a-two-tier-system-or-an-integrated-approach/>

May 23, 2023

Categories: Comment

Tags: advocacy, Comment, Discussion, funding



The art world is bristling with opinions following Nicholas Hytner's provocative suggestion for the establishment of an expert body to oversee arts funding in the UK, similar to Sport England. His call to action in The Guardian has ignited discussions among artists and arts administrators alike, proposing a new approach to arts funding, focusing on participation and placing the arts back into schools. Yet, this suggestion is not without its critics.

Hytner argues that the arts in Britain are in a precarious situation due to reduced government support and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Nicholas Hytner, writing in The Guardian, highlights that while government funding was once plentiful and fostered a flourishing arts scene, today's arts organisations and freelance artists are struggling to stay afloat. A lack of financial security, along with restrictions on artists' right to work freely in the EU, has led many to abandon their professions. Despite the government's £1.6bn Culture Recovery Fund, which helped prevent a total collapse during the pandemic, the arts sector has been left without sufficient support to recover fully.

Hytner also criticises the wide remit of the Arts Council, which is expected to nurture individual

creativity, ensure access to high-quality cultural experiences, and support professional artists, all with insufficient funding. He points out that the total grant provided to the Arts Council England is £458.5m, less than 0.05% of all government spending. Doubling this amount, he argues, would not significantly impact national finances, but could transform the arts sector, boosting artist productivity and confidence, audience size and enthusiasm, and community wellbeing, while also enhancing town and city centres and the UK's international reputation.

Drawing on the structure of sports funding in the UK, Hytner proposes a similar dual model for the arts. He suggests the creation of a new funding body to focus on participation in the arts, supporting new community-based initiatives, established education and outreach programmes, and re-establishing the arts in schools. This would allow the Arts Council to refocus its efforts on supporting professional artists and their work, potentially leading to a rejuvenation of the UK's arts scene.

Leading figures in the arts community, such as Jamie Hale, Richard Eyre, and Chris Hodgkins, have countered Hytner's proposition, pointing out perceived flaws and possible negative impacts. They engaged in a thoughtful dialogue on the Guardian's letters page, raising concerns about the potential consequences of Hytner's proposal. The critique of Nicholas Hytner's plan to save the performing arts in the UK is articulated in three responses to his proposal published in the Guardian.

Jamie Hale, founder of a disability arts organisation, challenges Hytner's concept of dividing arts into "community" and "professional" categories. Hale suggests that some of the most innovative art comes from community and non-professional spaces, and that stratifying the arts and culture sector can risk stagnation. Hale also expresses concern that isolating the art created by "professional artists" could regress the sector's diversity, limiting it mainly to individuals who have had the privilege to navigate this uncertain sector. Hale proposes that the arts need to be saved through investment in arts education and unifying, rather than separating, community and professional work [86†source] .

Richard Eyre, while generally supportive of Hytner's plan, adds that any such plan should also include investment in educational initiatives to cultivate a future audience for the arts. Eyre reflects on his past conversation with Jeremy Hunt, the then shadow Secretary of State at the Department for Culture, Media and Sport, discussing the necessity of funding arts education to ensure a future for the arts.

Chris Hodgkins critiques Hytner's proposal to replace Arts Council England (ACE) with a two-tier system, stating it is just as flawed as the current system. Hodgkins argues that the challenges facing the arts in the UK are deeper and broader than just dance, opera, and classical music. Hodgkins criticises ACE for neglecting its responsibility towards the arts and for having a flawed funding system and operational plan. Hodgkins calls for an audit of ACE by the National Audit

Office, suggesting that the current use of lottery funds is scandalous and should be directed towards funding touring, artistic projects, and supporting the work of artists instead.

Perhaps one of the most intriguing rebuttals came from Francois Matarasso, who presented a thoughtful examination of the issue on his blog, *A Restless Art*. He argues that many people in the arts hold an “unshakeable belief” that community work cannot meet the high artistic standards set by professional artists. According to Matarasso, this view sees the world divided between ‘Us and Them,’ which creates an uncomfortable divide in the artistic community.

Francois Matarasso makes several key points in his article “A Selfless Art.” Firstly, he observes that participatory art and co-creation practices often perpetuate a division between “us” and “them.” This division exists between those who hold power, knowledge, and control over artistic decisions and those who are affected by those decisions. Matarasso argues that artists engaged in co-creation operate in the borderlands between these two groups, understanding both perspectives.

Matarasso criticizes Nicholas Hytner’s plan to save the arts in Britain, which he believes further reinforces the division between the arts world’s elite and the wider community. Hytner suggests creating a new body to focus on community-based initiatives while allowing the Arts Council to concentrate on financing the work of professional artists. Matarasso sees this as a perpetuation of an old model that fails to recognize the interconnectedness and diversity of artistic expression.

Matarasso also highlights historical examples of similar thinking, such as the class-based approach to arts funding during the Second World War and the Arts Council’s resistance to community art in the past. Matarasso argues that this divisive mindset, which perceives community work as inferior to professional art, is flawed politically, morally, and artistically. He emphasizes that art is not a binary distinction between professional and non-professional, but rather a vast network of diverse creative expressions that enrich humanity as a whole.

Matarasso concludes that drawing borders and creating divisions within this interconnected network of artistic expression only leads to conflict. He advocates for a more inclusive and integrated approach to art, where the diversity of creative expressions is valued and explored without hierarchical distinctions.

My input into this lively debate was the suggestion of an integrated, universal system to challenge both national and community arts. Drawing from experience, I expressed concern that a two-tier system could marginalize community arts and damage the link between excellence and accessibility.

As we delve further into this debate, the proposal to bring some Artworks Alliance members together to discuss this issue seems apt. This will give us a chance to establish our stance,

contemplate how we might influence the policies of an incoming Labour Government, and share our ideas via a podcast for wider consumption.

Of course, we must not forget that the experiences of Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland, with their differing approaches, can provide valuable insights. The dominance of Whitehall, which has replaced the devolved arts budgets that many local authorities used to offer, is not the only approach to arts administration.

To further our discourse on this issue, we have started setting up a podcast feed on the AWA website. This will allow us to record discussions via Google Meeting or Zoom and make them available through the usual channels.

What are your thoughts on these proposals? What do you think would be the best approach to arts funding in the UK? Can we find a way to avoid creating a division between the community and professional arts, while also encouraging participation and re-establishing the arts in schools?

These are just some of the questions this discourse has brought to light, and as we continue to delve into this issue, we look forward to hearing more diverse viewpoints from across the artistic community. Your perspectives will help shape our understanding of this issue and our approach moving forward.

ArtWorks Alliance Gathering July 2023 Summary

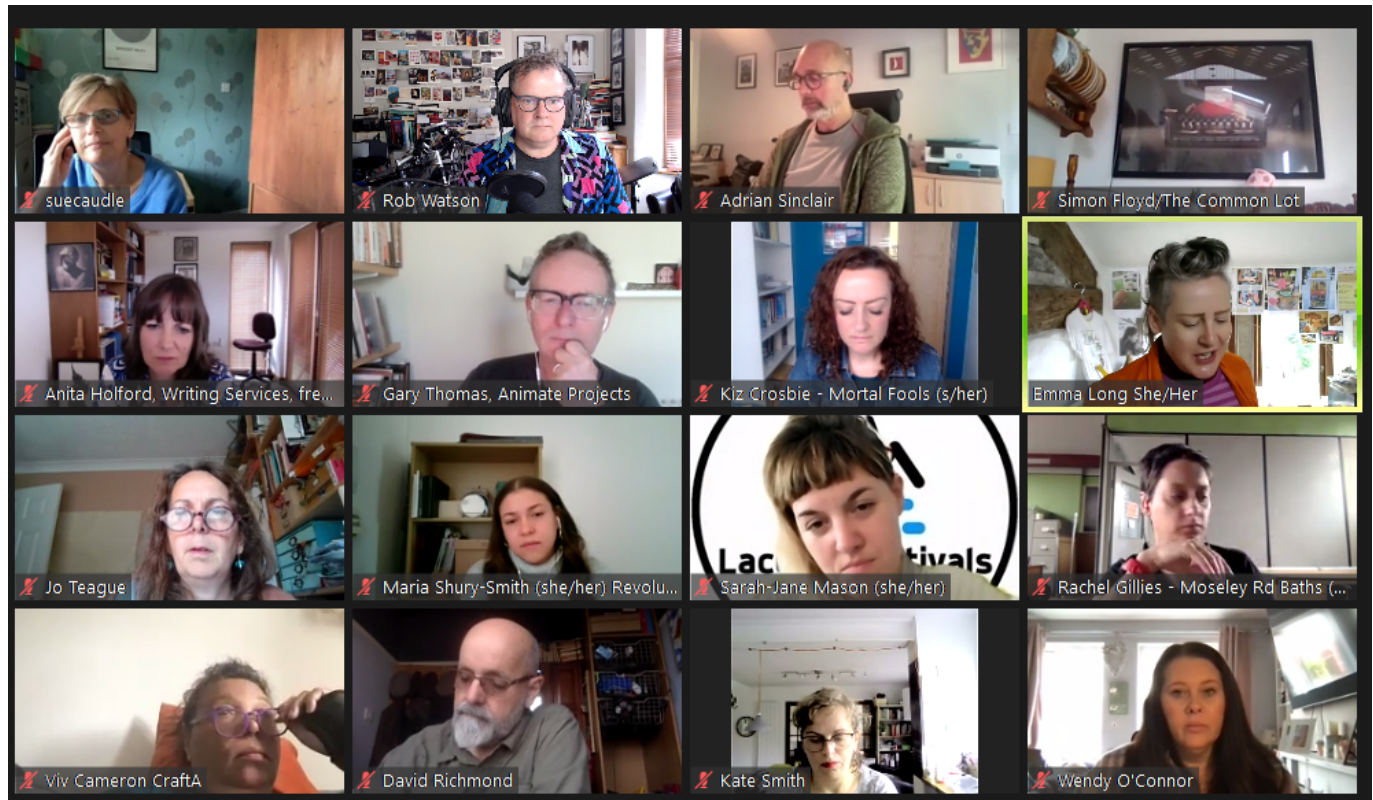
By Rob Watson

<https://artworksalliance.uk/artworks-alliance-gathering-july-2023-summary/>

July 19, 2023

Categories: Gathering

Tags: advocacy, Discussion, Gathering, Summary



On the 6th July, we met online for our regular ArtWorks Alliance online member's gathering. Facilitated by Sue Caudle, we discussed a number of issues, and this post is a summary of the key points that were made after conversations in break-out groups.

One group highlighted the danger of promoting siloism, and noted the potential for losing human connectivity by emphasising only the distinguishing factors in our work. They stressed the need to avoid compartmentalising our work into isolated categories, which could lead to a loss of human connection. It was felt that we should continue to emphasise the importance of valuing all levels of participation by recognising and appreciating the contributions of everyone involved, regardless of their role or level of involvement. The group also discussed the need to articulate our work in a way that is intelligible to everyone, and communicate our work in a clear, understandable manner that can be easily grasped by all. However, they also noted the importance of not being seen as just a door unlocking mechanism for other sectors. Some concern was expressed that this perception could limit creativity and lead to transactional output, where the focus is more on delivering specific results rather than fostering creativity and innovation.

Members of the second groups summarised their discussion, starting off with talking about

personal agency as a key factor in developing participatory arts. They had discussed how both personal and community agency is developed through participatory arts practice, but they questioned whether this work should all be focused on the individual, or if it might be better to open the process up to groups acting in community to achieve things. They discussed the need to define quality within the sector and have conversation within the sector that demonstrate and articulate what quality is as a living process. They mentioned a quote: “We don’t just want, we want a stretch-zone, not a friendly club within it.” They also highlighted the need to recognise the narrative and the history of the work that they are part of, while articulating a sense that “my art will be art is participation.”

The discussion in this group also recognised that there is a need to train people in the participatory principles of participatory arts, that can help people who are new to the movement to recognise that it is not something that necessarily comes naturally. In doing this, the group reported that they hoped to identify a more specific and recognisable culture of community arts, which could be articulated to the Arts Council and other funding organisations. The group suggested that there is some misapprehension about whether the Arts Council England’s strategy is achieving what it seeks to achieve, and whether many participative arts practitioners actually even understand it.

Lastly, the group highlighted that the work of participatory artists, and the existence of participatory artists, is a challenge to things as the stand, and the power structures both within their sectors and the societies we work with. The group made the point that we need to find the right people to talk to in the right ways, and look at things that they can be part of, not just within the art sector, but outside as well. The sentiment was summed up by saying that they believe that participatory arts really matters, and that we shouldn’t be reluctant in indicating the importance and significance of their work and discussions.

The next group to report back said they spent most of their time discussing the language used by participatory arts, and thinking about the hierarchies that shape their approaches. This group felt that many of the things they discussed echoed what other groups had been discussing, especially around the language used and hierarchies. They discussed the need to articulate what they do in a way that is intelligible to everyone and doesn’t feel super-arts specific. They felt it would be better to use language that would enable us to position ourselves as practitioners who can be embedded across other forms of the sector.

They also discussed the need to distil our messages so that we can be better understood, and to counter negative and narrow perceptions about what we do, and in the process to question the terms we use. They also discussed how arts and creativity might be threatening and how they need to hear more from the end beneficiaries, in terms of the purpose of participatory arts as a process for enhancing social justice, and that participatory arts can be considered as a set of tools that can allow people to participate in society.

They distilled their discussion into three points on what they do and who they are. They stated that what they do may look soft, but the intention is not soft. They are shifting, not reflecting, social power dynamics, and what they do is about social justice. This group also discussed the need to have conversations with participants and share these discussions with the people who shape policy and practice to advocate for better support. They also discussed the need to challenge the sector hierarchy and to speak honestly with funders about how the value isn't just in an activity, but how the activities they do are catalysts for something else that is of more value.

The fourth group reported that they had a conversation around the idea of *proof* and the partnership of academics and the participatory art sector. They discussed the importance of being more true, genuine, and authentic in achieving the difference they make to ensure that people prosper. They talked about the role of people they work with in telling their story, which they felt is a key aspect of participatory arts. They also considered what they can do as a network to get creative ideas and messages out.

They discussed the importance of listening and exploring, and how they can start looking at creative ideas as a network to get messages out, and they touched on the idea of high-profile awards events in their sector that do not seem to ever have any of the work that we do in their profiles. They felt that there is something about the profile of participatory arts, in terms of quality needing to be something that's demonstrated more clearly, and that it's essential to remember that participatory arts can be an inclusive space for narratives to be developed and shared that are truly impactful.

Picking out some main issues from our general discussion:

- It was noted the tendency to focus on the impacts of our work that funders want to hear about, such as the difference we're making, the number of people we're reaching, and the number of sessions we're conducting. A desire was noted for shifting this focus away from the funders' agenda towards knowledge that is useful to them as organisations and to others involved in similar work.
- The need for honest sharing of knowledge with other organisations was discussed, particularly in relation to the importance of having honest dialogues with academics. Concern was expressed about experiences where researchers have taken what we need and not fed back into the organisations or individual practices.
- The need for a mutually beneficial collaboration between participatory artists and academics was also noted, recognising that both bring their specialism and knowledge to the table.
- The need for more creativity in terms of funding was noted, recognising that there are many ways to fund and facilitate organisations to thrive, which are not currently in the system.
- The conversation highlighted the need to challenge the Arts Council strategy and whether it

is being achieved or even understood.

- The point was made that we need to continue to challenge power structures within their sectors and the societies, while recognising that our very existence as participatory artists is a challenge to these structures.
- It was suggested that we need to find the right people to talk to in the right ways and look at things that the ArtWorks Alliance can be part of, not just within the art sector, but outside as well.
- It was noted that it is essential that the participatory artists must maintain a positive relationship of trust with funders, where the focus is not just on producing an exhibition or performance at the end, but on working together on something and allowing beautiful things to emerge and intense learning to happen.

Several points were also noted about developing an advocacy plan for the participatory arts sector that could be offered and developed on behalf of ArtWorks Alliance members:

- It was noted that ArtWorks Alliance has an advocacy group, which includes members from Scotland and Wales. The differences in focus among these regions was noted, with England focusing on wellbeing, Scotland on placemaking and community-based work, and Wales on the wellbeing of future generations.
- It was felt by contributors that there is a need to articulate alliance members' work in a way that resonates with different regions and themes. It was mentioned that there may be an opportunity to engage with the Arts Council and that we should think about what issues matter to them and fit with their priorities.
- It was suggested that anyone who might be interested in renewing the advocacy group, to define the messages that emerged from the alliance, could meet to decide what would be a priority and what might be a clear set of asks and demands.

Sue Caudle, the facilitator of the discussion, concluded the gathering with the following take-away points:

- Sue emphasised the importance of having the confidence to own the work that members of the ArtWorks Alliance do, rather than trying to fit into the funders' original funding applications. Sue noted that even if we only worked with two people, the depth of those experiences is significant and should be recognised.
- Sue encouraged participants to review the tips and ideas shared in the chat during the gathering, as they contained valuable insights, and she asked participants to reflect on something that would be taken away from the session, which could be an idea that emerged, a conversation that had taken place, or even a frustration.
- Sue asked for feedback to help shape future gatherings, and she thanked everyone for the depth of sharing and conversation that took place during the gathering. She noted that it

demonstrated the strength of the sector, the people involved in it, and the work that's happening.

ArtWorks Alliance Podcast 001 – Participatory Arts as Positive Disruption

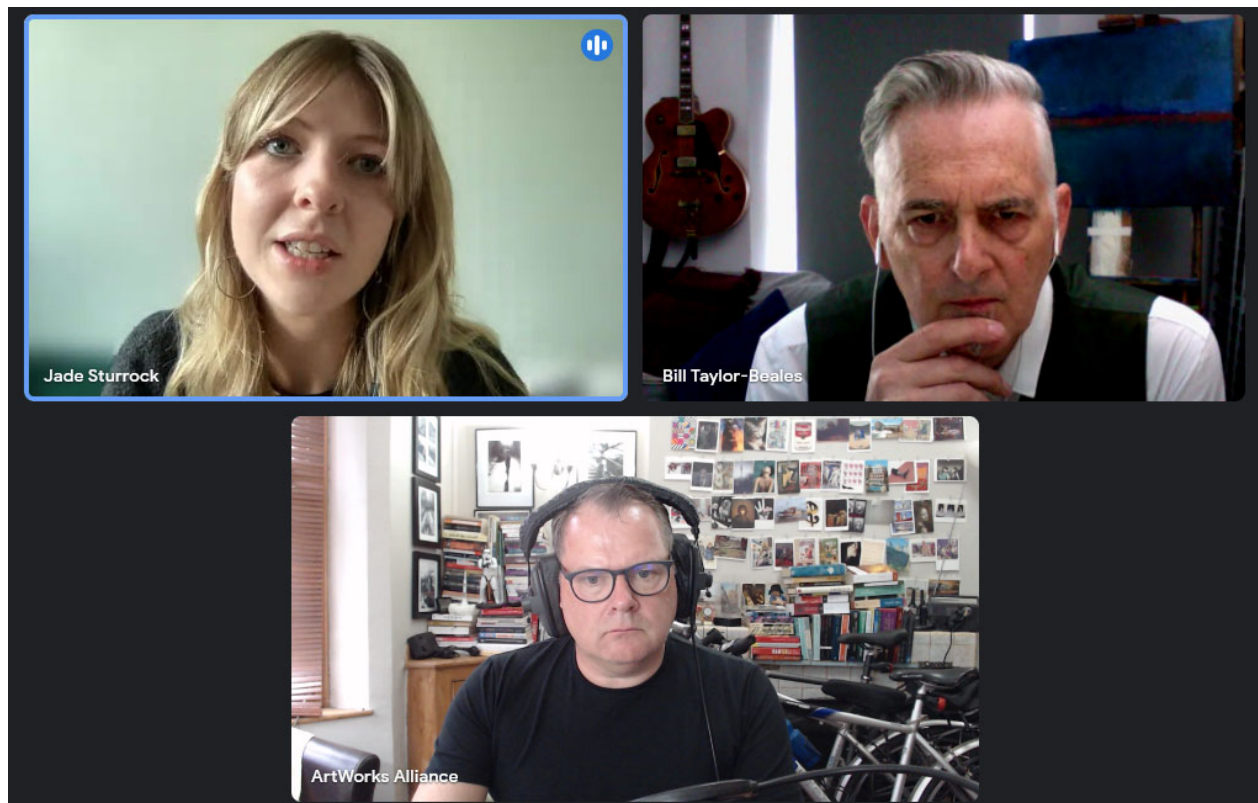
By Rob Watson

<https://artworksalliance.uk/artworks-alliance-podcast-001-participatory-arts-as-positive-disruption/>

September 12, 2023

Categories: Podcast

Tags: participatory arts, Podcast, Positive Disruption



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In the first ArtWorks Alliance podcast, Jade Sturrock from Glasgow Can, Bill Taylor-Beales from Hushland Creative and Rob Watson from Decentered Media, chatted about the potential of participatory arts to transform learning and education by pursuing the potential for 'positive disruption' that participatory arts represents.

Ken Robinson videos:

[Does Education Kill Creativity?](#)

[Changing Education Paradigms](#)

From Safe Spaces to Brave Spaces article: <https://everydayfeminism.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/from-safe-spaces-to-brave-spaces.pdf>

Philipa Perry: [The Book You Wish Your Parents Had Read \(and Your Children Will Be Glad That You Did\)](#)

Donaldson Welsh Curriculum Review

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Sarah-Jane Mason – Participative Arts and Inclusion for People with Disabilities

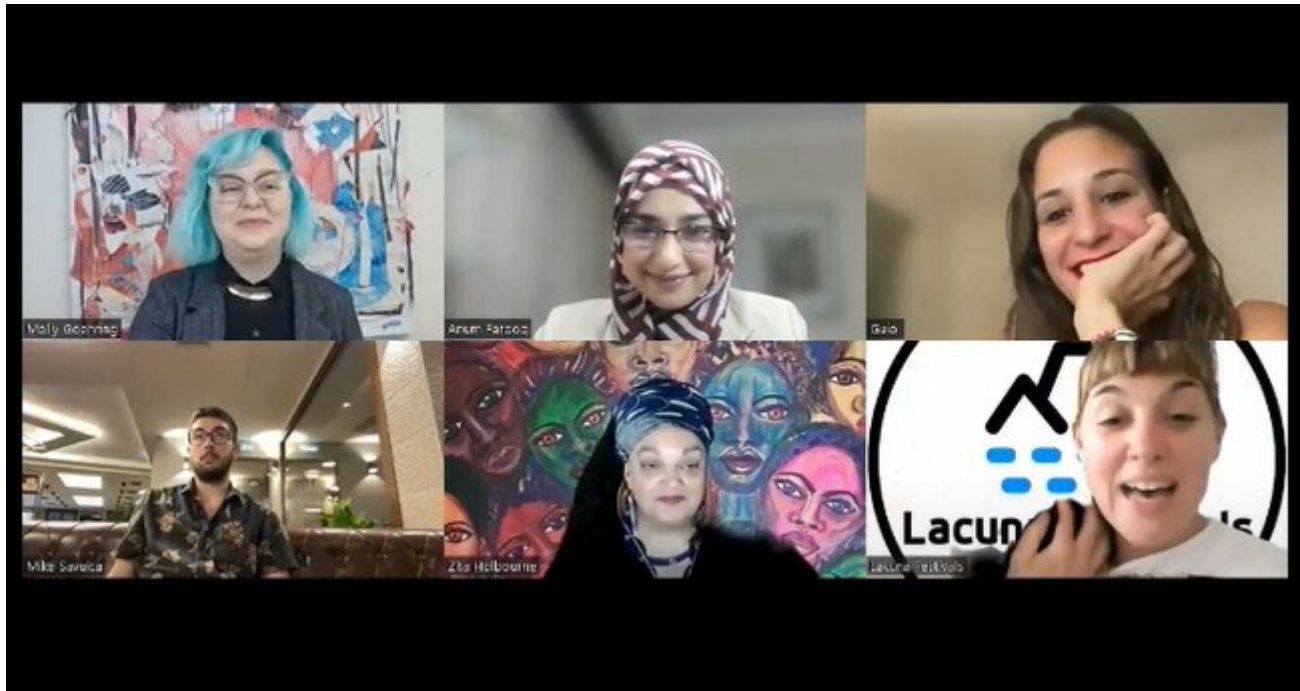
By Rob Watson

<https://artworksalliance.uk/sarah-jane-mason-participative-arts-and-inclusion-for-people-with-disabilities/>

September 18, 2023

Categories: Comment

Tags: Accessibility, arts, disability, participation, Sarah-Jane Mason



Sara Jane Mason is a participative arts specialist, using mixed media arts practice for creating, learning and expression that is rooted in painting, drawing, and sculpture. Sarah-Jane is passionate about the importance of creativity for everyone, and places an emphasis on both her roles as a Creative Educator and a practising Artist. Currently, Sarah-Jane splits her time between the UK and Lanzarote. In the UK she works as an Artist Educator for spaces such as Leeds Art Gallery, The Tetley and Yorkshire Sculpture Park and also for Arts charities such as Skippko.

Here, Sarah-Jane shares her insights about participative art and issues related to accessibility for people with disabilities, which she believes must be given more equitable attention and support, not only for audiences, but also for artists with disabilities as well.

My name is Sarah Jane Mason. I am based in two countries. I have a bit of an unusual life. In the UK I'm based in a small ex-mining town called Bolsover, which is in Derbyshire, and my work is mainly in Yorkshire because that was where I lived when I set up my, my practice. And then I also live in Lanzarote, where I run an artist led festival called Lacuna Festivals, which is an annual festival, mixed disciplinary. It lasts a whole month in the summer. And I'm a creative practitioner and facilitator, and I have a fine art degree and a master's level qualifications in arts education.

Currently, I'm actually not working on anything because I had COVID-19 in March 2020, and I was really severely ill with it. So I've had eighteen months of not working, so I can focus on recovery. I'm hoping to be back at work towards the end of this month, or the beginning of next month. It's a very tentative and slow recovery, where I'll only be doing a few hours each month. But coming up, I've got some interesting things to look forward to. I'm working on a research project with Maggie from the University of Leeds, and I'm also working on a series of pop-ups, which in a way, are a form of research too. It with an arts charity in Leeds called Skippko, and they're very much based in the community that they're working with.

Before we go live with the project, we go into those communities and do some hands-on practical research. We run arts activities, with the idea of using those activities to talk about, and to explore some of the issues that are important to those members of that community. We aim to co-design a project that feels like it's going to be really relevant and appropriate for those people, rather than just flying in with something.

I don't have a specific definition of what participative arts is currently, though I feel like I can be swayed in many directions. I have these conversations with colleagues quite a lot about what we want it to mean, and what we don't want it to mean. Who it includes, who it excludes, and are the principles that we use okay? At the minute, I don't have firm boundaries on it, probably because I've been out of practice for such a long time. But when I'm practice connected, I will have a better idea. I feel like I'm deciding from the outside at the minute. Hopefully, in a few months, I'll be able to answer that with a bit more of a definitive statement.

In May 2023, I attended the Stockholm Supermarket Art Fair, which is a non-commercial art fair. It was set up originally in direct opposition to a commercial fair, which took place at the same time but in a different building. It was trying to show that art is a bit more than just a commodity, or something that you can purchase. That there is so much more vibrancy and dynamism to art than commodities to be bought and sold.

It's been running for many years now, and part of their programme involves meetings and discussions on different topics, which are for artist-led practitioners. The art fair is focussed on artist-led spaces, and the meetings are small, between five and ten people. You can have quite intimate discussion about a topic of importance. They had three umbrella themes this year. One was sustainability, one was Pedagogy or Art Education, and the other one was Care. And I was moderating a talk under the Care umbrella, which was about accessibility and the artist-led scene.

We spent a large portion of this hour-long meeting talking about accessibility as a term. A lot of the participants had come thinking that it meant something else. They didn't expect it to be focussed on the experience of people with disabilities. They thought it was about making the artist-led scene accessible for the audience or for other professionals, who perhaps are still working within the kind of institution or establishment in some way.

There was quite a big conversation about what accessibility actually means, and who's using that word, and to what extent it has been appropriated? It was a similar kind of conversation that we have about participatory arts, about whether that term has been taken and is being cashed-in by other people? This appropriation often means that the original community that it was originally intended to serve, is no longer served in this conversation. At least a quarter of this meeting was taken up explaining why we were there, despite the title of the talk and the description of the talk being about the experience of disabled people.

I think that the artist-led scene is excellent at working with disabled participants, but I am not convinced that the arts sector is particularly great at supporting disabled professionals in roles where they can lead and facilitate. So we still had many people, probably half of the attendants, there for different reasons, which can be frustrating. However, it made me aware of this problem, and it's not just arguing about semantics. It's more than that. It's a belief about what accessibility actually means in practice for the people who need it.

People often come with a particular notion of accessibility. There is also typically a sense of unease around the topic, which we found out when we started to unpick it a little. This is probably because of the sense of overwhelm that goes with these issues. When nondisabled participants feel like they didn't know anything about the topic of conversation and accessibility in practice, it is overwhelming.

Moreover, instead of approaching this discomfort from a position of curiosity and exploration, with openness, there is frequently a defensive block put in place. With people asking, 'like how we are meant to know all this stuff?' Or they say, 'you need to tell us this stuff,' or 'you need to teach us.' So there is a weird expectation that the disabled participants, who were there to discuss the fact that things aren't very accessible, are starting from the point where there isn't equality and equity already.

Often there is an expectation that the disabled participants should take on the free labour of teaching everybody else what accessibility is, and what it means, and how we can change the world. It is a bit like some non-disabled participants were saying we'll help, and we'll make things more accessible, but someone has to tell them what to do. In my head, this has parallels with traditional household dynamics where the man says, oh, I'll do whatever. You just need to tell me what to do, and totally disregards the mental load that the female is carrying, as well as the actual physical duties.

When I spoke to one of my black friends, she was talking about how this had some parallels to how she feels about racism, and how five years ago, ten years ago, people would approach conversations about racism with her, where they would say, just tell me what your problem is, and I'll fix it. She is very passionate about people going and learning for themselves. Educate yourself and find out why this world is, is not just, and is not equal, and what we can do to improve it

because we're all missing out because it's not.

I've moderated three meetings now at three distinct festivals or fairs. At Juxtapose Art Fair, held at the beginning of September in Denmark, (another non-commercial art fair – a biennial), the meetings were set up so that we looked at the same themes as at Supermarket Art Fair so that there could be continued conversations between professionals. There are some repeat professionals coming. And, and what was quite interesting, was that we had somebody attend who works for an organisation in London. Previously, they had worked in a co-creative way, to create a code of conduct around how spaces should be accessible. This was a standard policy approach, but was meant to be not just a piece of paper that gets stuck in a folder, but something that people can actually refer to and actually use. A lot of paperwork that we have is not actually that useful. It's more box ticking.

This was meant to be like an active, an active guide. And she was talking about some of her experiences putting this together, and she spoke about one particular experience where she went to a gallery space, and she was saying to the people who ran the gallery space that it was not very accessible. The gallery was on three levels, and there was no lift or ramp. The immediate default hit-back of the gallery was, 'but we don't have money to put a lift in.' 'That costs hundreds of thousands.' 'We can't do that.' So, and that was the end of the conversation.

As far as that organisation was concerned, it was either or. It was that's what we need to do, and that's what we can't do, so we're not going to do anything. I don't expect them to assign all of their resources to making their space accessible, but I do expect them to look at their books and go, 'okay, well, we can't afford a hundred thousand, but in our budget, we should be allocating an amount for this, and we should be doing something towards it'. A small step.

So instead of having all of our exhibitions on a second floor when there is no lift, maybe galleries should look at putting one programme on the ground floor, and putting in a cheaply sourced ramp, so that that is accessible. But this was a repeated kind of theme with the organisations that many disabled people find is the default. When challenged, the immediate hit-back is we don't have any funding for it, so we can't do it. That's why we're not doing it. Full stop.

There's this tension when it comes to co-creating with groups because you would rather not expect disabled people to do lots of free labour, just because you don't understand something. There's definitely something in having open dialogue with people who are experiencing these issues. Yes. But there's undoubtedly also something about rewarding people for their time and insight in some way.

Rather than going, well, you're living this, so we're just going to take all of that to free because otherwise things aren't going to get better. It just feels really exploitative at that level. I think there is a place for open dialogue, but I think that the structure of that dialogue needs to be talked about.

It needs to be really considered so that it's ethical. I feel that that's essential.

In July I was part of a conversation that had participants from all over the world. In fact, it's quite an important point to say that all these conversations were international and mainly European. The Lacuna Festival. It was interesting to have that sort of international platform, to have this discussion, and that extra kind of factor in play at looking into festivals, which is different to Stockholm Supermarket, and Juxtapose. The Lacuna Festivals is an unfunded festival, and is artist led by myself and my partner Simon Turner. While we have no funding, we also have no outside commitments to other organisations. This means that the way we structure the festivals is quite different to how other festivals and fairs are run.

When we say artist led, we don't just mean that it's me and Simon directing things, we facilitate things. It's led by the arts community themselves. So this conversation around Arts and Disability was actually suggested by one of our artist participants, and our whole events program was actually structured that way. We don't say these specific events are going to happen this year. Artists say these are the events they can offer, or these are the events they would like to see, and then we facilitate those to happen.

Having this sort of ethos to the festival helps to frame the conversation differently. I think that people felt safe. They felt like if they were giving something of themselves. It was within a safe space. I'm not saying that people didn't feel like that at the other art fairs. I don't know how they felt. But at Lacuna Festivals, it's a significant part of the ethos, and it's a really transparent part of the ethos, that we are working by and for the community.

It's all about the arts community. Our audience as Lacuna Festivals is the artists. It's not trying to get audience members in to see our work. That's not the point of it. The point of it is that we can connect, and we can share on a level that's outside that commercial, hierarchical, money-based system. There's something else. There's an intrinsic value to our practice and to our lives. And if we come together, and we're generous with each other, then we can get quite a lot out of that.

I think that because the whole festival is framed like that, it made this conversation in particular very, very open. People were very generous with sharing their experiences and their thoughts. People were very vulnerable. And so the conversation was quiet, quite meaningful.

I really want this to be a call to action. All of these conversations I'm having have been a call to action. Some of the actions that have happened so far, are that as a group, from looking at festivals, we're applying for some funding to support a disabled artist network. From Juxtapose and Supermarket, we've already got a network forming, which can be emailed at disabledartistsatwork@gmail.com. We are sharing and pooling resources because we believe it is really difficult to find information about accessibility for artists themselves, even though there's quite a lot of information and quite a lot of research.

We are trying to pull some information together that we can present to the Artist Run Resource Centre, and see if we can get it on their website. Every so often you do a call to action, and then everybody goes away and forgets about it. I just wanted to share this with an expectation that something will happen, and that together we can do more. I feel like the participatory arts sector has to be a welcoming and inclusive sector for disabled artists. Particularly going forward.

We have to anticipate mass disabling events. I've talked about earthquakes and volcanoes, and tsunamis, and contagions, and all sorts of things. The only one that people really connected with has been COVID-19 because it was more obvious that a pandemic has to do more for disabled people. Actually, however, everything happening in the past twelve months continues to illustrate this point. We are seeing more and more of these massive destructive events, and they're becoming more and more common as climate change gets out of control. So we need to be aware that it's something that is not going away.

We are going to have more and more disabled people in our societies. We have an ageing population. Disability, of course, isn't static. It changes. Issues around mobility, around speech, and around our dexterity, they are all going to be more important. There are all sorts of issues that change with age, and with various health issues or traumatic events. It's essential that our sector considered this as a critical issue going forward.

We have to consider who's missing from the conversation, and how we can include them. To members of the ArtWorks Alliance Network, the questions are: how can we better support disabled artists in participatory arts? How do we get disabled artists into the position of speaking and facilitating our conversations? What steps are we already taking that can be showcased as best practice? There's probably already plenty of good things happening, but we need to collect some case studies, and develop some guidance. Gather some codes of conduct, or anything that's already in place in the different organisations in the network, and share that.

It's about doing things together. It's about shared responsibility, as well as rights. So we all have a responsibility to be informed about the societies that we are living in. We have a responsibility to educate ourselves and to keep informed and to be engaged. Then we can develop the capacity together and move forward and to aspire to things that are a bit more equitable for those with accessibility issues or challenges.

ArtWorks Alliance Podcast 002 – Participative Arts and Inclusion for People with Disabilities

By Rob Watson

<https://artworksalliance.uk/artworks-alliance-podcast-002-participative-arts-and-inclusion-for-people-with-disabilities/>

September 26, 2023

Categories: Podcast

Tags: Accessibility, ArtWorks Alliance, disability, Inclusion, participation, Podcast



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Today's conversation at the ArtWorks Alliance member's online drop-in focussed on Participative Arts and Inclusion for People with Disabilities. Taking part in the conversation were Rebecca Manson-Jones, Amanda Castro, Rob Watson, Bill Taylor-Beales, Emma Long, Sarah-Jane Mason and Rob Watson. We discussed the need to recognise support, facilitate, empower and inspire people with disabilities and people with different social abilities as artists and as participants in art. We asked how the experience of people with disabilities can be better represented and understood in participative arts practice, and what concerns need to be recognised and dealt with to value the contribution of everyone in society, regardless of the challenges that they may face.

The prompt for our conversation was a recent article for ArtWorks Alliance by Sarah-Jane Mason, who shared her concerns that the language of accessibility and inclusion, does not always suit the needs of people with disabilities who want to access and fully participate in the arts: <https://>

artworksalliance.uk/sarah-jane-mason-participative-arts-and-inclusion-for-people-with-disabilities/

To join the network that is forming as a result of these conversations, please email
disabledartistsatwork@gmail.com

We used the Social Model for Disability Language: <https://www.disabilityrightsuk.org/social-model-disability-language>

[Download the Transcript Here](#)

www.sarahjanemason.com

Instagram [@sarahjanemasonartist](#)

Gathering Summary – Co-Creation and Participatory Arts

By Rob Watson

<https://artworksalliance.uk/gathering-summary-co-creation-and-participatory-arts/>

November 27, 2023

Categories: Gathering, News

Tags: co-creation, Co-Production, Discussion, Gathering



Conversation about co-creative practices in participatory arts, encompasses diverse perspectives on equality and inclusivity. At the ArtWorks Alliance members gathering, held on November 15, 2023, we discussed the vital role of co-creation and co-production in participatory arts, and asked what the benefit is of advocating for this time-consuming, resource intensive, and slippery approach to participatory arts practice?

The gathering was facilitated by Adrian Sinclair from Union Arts and was an opportunity for an exchange of ideas and experiences between ArtWorks Alliance members. Taking place on Zoom, we wanted to ensure we had participants from many locations around the UK. The choice of an online platform like Zoom is helpful because it facilitates broad participation and allows members to engage in some free-flowing critical discussions from their separate settings.

Here are the Mentimeter slides from the session: [AWA-November-2023-Gathering-Slides](#)

ngg_shortcode_1_placeholderThe focus of the gathering was on exploring and understanding the nuances of co-creative practices in participatory arts, with an emphasis on different aspects of

equality, which give way to differences in value, opportunity, and outcome. The discussion was guided by Adrian through a structured agenda, with breakout sessions and interactive activities. We wanted to give participants the opportunity to delve deeply into each topic and share their insights and experiences.

This virtual gathering served as an open platform for members of the ArtWorks Alliance to collaborate, reflect, and enhance their understanding and practice of co-creative and participatory arts. The event not only provided a forum for discussing theoretical aspects of participatory arts, but also addressed practical challenges and strategies, fostering a holistic approach to arts practice that is inclusive, equitable, and impactful.

Key Themes in Co-Creation

Co-creation, a fundamental aspect of participatory arts, involves complex dynamics of equality, inclusivity, and community engagement, making it essential to explore these themes in-depth. Participants in the gathering, coming from diverse backgrounds and experiences in the arts, were able to offer multilevel insights into these topics. Their contributions, shaped by a range of perspectives, from on-the-ground practitioners to policy influencers, enriched the dialogue, enabling a comprehensive exploration of co-creation.

This diversity of viewpoints was crucial in addressing the nuanced challenges and opportunities within co-creative practices, leading to a more profound and holistic understanding that can inform future activities in participatory arts. The gathering served not just as a discussion forum, but also as a collaborative space for collective learning and knowledge building, reflecting the very essence of co-creation it aimed to explore.

Key themes discussed include:

1. **The Importance of Time and Building Trust:** Participants emphasised the need for working slowly and over extended periods to develop trusted relationships essential for successful co-creation.
2. **Relinquishing Control and Open-Ended Outcomes:** There's a focus on the importance of not having a fixed outcome in mind, allowing for more genuine collaborative processes.
3. **Professional Skills in Facilitating Co-Creation:** The discussion acknowledged that facilitating co-creation requires specific skills and is a distinct practice, not just another form of community engagement or arts practice, but a fusion of the two.
4. **Challenges with Funding and Predetermined Projects:** A significant challenge highlighted is the need to predefine projects for funding purposes, which can conflict with the open-ended nature of true co-creation.
5. **Power Dynamics and Equality:** Concerns were raised about the power dynamics between professionals and participants, especially in contexts of paid and unpaid roles, and how to achieve equality in such settings.

6. **Creating Safe Spaces for Creativity:** The importance of creating safe and inclusive environments where all participants feel empowered to contribute was emphasised.
7. **Barriers to Participation:** Discussions include how to enable more collaboration, particularly in the development phase of a project, and the need to recognise and overcome barriers to participation, especially in vulnerable communities.
8. **Impact of Funding and Evaluation Metrics:** The role of funders in the co-creation process, and the need for them to understand and adapt to the unique requirements of co-creative projects, including in project evaluation, was discussed.

Overall, the gathering was a reflective and critical discussion on the nuances, challenges, and potential of co-creation in arts and community projects, with a focus on how to make these processes more inclusive, equitable, and impactful.

Co-creation in Arts and Community Projects

By focussing on the integration and merging of community development mindsets with arts practice, many contributors recognised that as an integrated practice, linking both fields, there is significant potential for social impact. This emphasis stems from an understanding that combining the creative processes of the arts with community development initiatives can lead to more inclusive, empathetic, and transformative outcomes. The discussions were driven by a need to explore how artistic creativity can be harnessed, not just for aesthetic purposes, but as a tool for fostering community engagement, addressing social issues, and promoting participatory democracy.

By merging the experience of co-creators and active participants, with their varied experiences in both arts and community life, it's possible to provide grounded insights into how these two fields can synergistically operate. The aim was to move beyond traditional boundaries of art for art's sake and community development as a separate endeavour, instead moving towards a more integrated approach where each enriches and informs the other, leading to more meaningful and sustainable impacts in communities.

The key topics and themes include:

- **Creative Approaches to Co-Creation:** Many of the discussions explored creative ways to conceptualise co-creation, such as through models, recipes, and poems, emphasising the diversity and multidimensional nature of the concept.
- **Challenges in Resource Allocation and Funding:** There was a discussion on how resource constraints, particularly short-term funding, affect co-creative projects. Ideas like reallocating larger funds into multiple smaller grants to encourage community involvement were explored.
- **Importance of Time and Deep Relationships:** The significance of time in building meaningful relationships and creating impactful work was reiterated.

- **Power Dynamics and Inclusivity:** The conversations touched on the importance of addressing power dynamics in co-creation, ensuring inclusivity and equality among participants.
- **Flexible Models and Toolkits for Co-Creation:** The need for flexible and adaptable models or toolkits that can cater to diverse contexts and requirements in co-creation projects was highlighted.
- **Overcoming Barriers to Participation:** There was an ongoing conversation about recognising and overcoming barriers to participation, particularly in community-based projects.
- **The Role of Failure in the Creative Process:** Acknowledging and learning from failures was seen as an integral part of the co-creative process, with metaphors like a 'co-creation stew' being used to illustrate this point.
- **Reflecting on Personal Roles in Co-Creation:** Participants were encouraged to reflect on their roles and contributions within co-creative practices, emphasising the importance of personal growth and development in this context.

Any deep dive into the nuances of co-creation in arts and community projects, has to be able to explore many different and emergent creative metaphors and practical challenges, while emphasising the need for adaptable and inclusive approaches.

Defining Co-Creation

Co-creation in participatory arts practice is a collaborative and dynamic process that involves the active engagement of artists and community members working together to generate creative outcomes. This definition underscores the importance of having clear and shared understandings of what co-creation entails. It necessitates contributions from all participants, valuing diverse perspectives and skills, and fostering a shared sense of ownership and agency. Addressing challenges is integral to co-creation, requiring flexibility, adaptability, and problem-solving skills, while also foregrounding examples of successful co-creation helps in providing tangible models for others to learn from and emulate.

Providing space for critical reflections is crucial, as it allows participants to consider the efficacy and impact of their collaborative efforts, leading to continuous improvement and more profound engagement. By modelling the co-creation process, we can work with guides that support participants in understanding the dynamics and complexities of collaborative art-making. For example, by developing 'recipes' for co-creation — metaphorical guidelines or frameworks — it's possible to aid practitioners in conceptualising and implementing effective co-creative strategies.

Being part of a Co-Creating Change Network, then, is desirable, as it fosters a community of practice, encouraging knowledge sharing and collective growth. Agreeing on fundamental principles, such as inclusivity, respect, and equality, ensures that the co-creative process aligns

with broader ethical and social values. Lastly, incorporating personal experiences and reflections enriches the co-creative practice, bringing authenticity and depth to the collaborative process and ensuring that it remains a relevant and responsive approach in participatory arts.

If we aim to enrich the social understanding of people within our communities, the benefit of participatory forms of co-production in the arts, can be guided by asking a apposite set of questions for people involved in participatory arts practices, particularly in the context of co-creation, as follows:

Defining Co-Creation:

- What does co-creation mean to both artists and contributors in the context of participatory arts?
- How do we differentiate co-creation from other collaborative processes, like co-design or co-production?

Building Relationships:

- What strategies can we use to build trust and meaningful relationships in co-creative projects?
- How can we balance power dynamics to ensure equality and inclusivity among all participants?

Challenges and Solutions:

- What are the most significant challenges we face in co-creative arts projects, and how do we address them?
- How do resource limitations (like time and funding) impact our co-creative practices, and how do we navigate these constraints?

Impact and Measurement:

- How do we measure the impact of co-creative projects on participants and the wider community?
- What indicators should we use to evaluate the success of a co-creative process?

Role of Funders and Policymakers:

- What role should funders and policymakers play in supporting co-creative arts practices?
- How can funding models be adapted to better support the unique aspects of co-creative work?

Reflection and Learning:

- How can we incorporate reflection and learning from both successful and less successful co-creative experiences?
- What practices do we have in place for ongoing learning and development in co-creation?

Community Engagement:

- How can we ensure genuine and meaningful community engagement in co-creative projects?
- What methods can we use to identify and overcome barriers to participation, especially in vulnerable or marginalised communities?

Sustainability and Legacy:

- How can we ensure the sustainability and legacy of co-creative projects within communities?
- What strategies should we employ to maintain engagement and momentum post-project?

Ethical Considerations:

- What ethical considerations are important in co-creative arts practices?
- How should we manage and respect diverse perspectives and experiences in co-creative projects?

Future of Co-Creation:

- What do we envision as the future of co-creative practices in participatory arts?
- How can the principles of co-creation be more widely integrated into arts and community projects?

Emergent Questions

These questions emerged from the conversation and can be used to provoke deep thinking and discussion among practitioners, funders, and participants in the field of participatory arts. They aim to foster a richer understanding of co-creative practices and their potential social impact. Based on the discussions from gathering, a working definition of co-creative practice in the context of participatory arts can be summarised as follows:

Co-creative practice in participatory arts is a collaborative and inclusive process where artists and community members work together as equal partners in the creative process. It is characterised by shared decision-

making, mutual learning, and a deep respect for the diverse skills and perspectives each participant brings. In co-creation, the emphasis is on the journey of making, rather than just the end product. This approach nurtures trust and builds meaningful relationships, and often results in more innovative and relevant artistic outcomes.

To summarise, co-creative practice in participatory arts is a comprehensive approach that prioritises equality and inclusivity, ensuring that all participants, regardless of background or skill level, are valued equally and have an equal voice in the creative process. This practice is grounded in shared decision-making, where mutual learning and respect are central tenets, acknowledging the unique contributions and perspectives of each participant. Co-creation is inherently process-oriented, focusing on the journey of creation rather than just the final product, thereby fostering a deeper engagement and understanding among collaborators. Flexibility and adaptability are key characteristics of this practice, allowing the process to respond to the evolving needs and ideas of the participants. The formation of sustainable relationships is another critical aspect, as it ensures the longevity and ongoing impact of the collaborative effort. Lastly, co-creative practice is deeply rooted in the desire to make a positive community impact, aiming to not only produce artistic outcomes but also to facilitate social change and community development through the power of collective creativity and shared experiences.

This definition encapsulates a practice that is deeply collaborative, respectful of diversity, and focused on both the artistic process and its impact on communities. Co-creative practice in participatory arts is not just a method of producing art; it is a transformative process that fosters personal growth, community engagement, and social change.

But the conceptual and practical journey isn't finished. In participatory arts, the concept of equality itself is multifaceted, encompassing 'equality of value', 'equality of opportunity', and 'equality of outcome'. Each of these represents a distinct approach to defining and implementing equality and inclusivity in both policy and practice, and understanding their differences is crucial for effective and meaningful participatory arts projects. As was discussed in the gathering, we need multiple perspective from which we can form our views of the practice of participatory co-creation:

"Whether it's a triangle of the people involved in the project or a triangle of the beginning, the middle, and the end of the process. And that always co-creation is better if we look at it from three perspectives or more. This would be inclusive and co-productive."

Equality of Value: This concept emphasises the inherent worth and respect for each participant's

contribution, regardless of their skill level, background, or role in the project. In practice, it means valuing diverse perspectives, experiences, and forms of expression equally. It challenges hierarchical structures in the arts, advocating for a culture where everyone's input is seen as valuable and influential. Policy implications include creating frameworks that actively recognise and celebrate diverse contributions, fostering an environment where every voice is heard and respected.

Equality of Opportunity: This aspect focuses on ensuring that all individuals have equal access to participate in arts projects. It addresses barriers to participation, such as socio-economic factors, physical accessibility, or cultural inclusivity. In practice, it involves proactive measures to identify and dismantle these barriers, creating an accessible and welcoming environment for all. Policies under this concept would include outreach initiatives, accessibility accommodations, and targeted support for underrepresented groups, ensuring that everyone has a fair chance to engage in the arts.

Equality of Outcome: This concept aims at achieving equitable results for all participants. It recognises that simply providing equal opportunity does not always lead to equal results due to systemic inequalities. In practice, equality of outcome might involve additional support, resources, or adjustments to ensure that all participants can take part and benefit proportionately from the experience. Policies in this regard would focus on monitoring and evaluating the impacts of arts projects, adjusting strategies to ensure equitable benefits, and addressing any disparities in the outcomes for different groups.

In participatory arts projects, these different facets of equality must be understood as a set of choices that significantly affect both policy and practice. It is not enough to address one aspect without considering the others. A comprehensive approach that integrates equality of value, opportunity, and outcome is essential for fostering truly inclusive, equitable, and impactful participatory arts practices. This holistic view of equality ensures that participatory arts engage diverse communities and empower them and address broader social inequalities.

Hopefully, by hosting the gathering, and providing a space for deliberation and examination of issues related to co-creative practice in participatory arts, members directly benefit by taking part in the ArtWorks Alliance network. These discussions enable members to navigate through the complex and competing claims and challenges inherent in co-creative processes. By facilitating open discussions, sharing of experiences, and exploration of innovative approaches, the gathering hopefully served as a valuable platform for learning and collaboration.

Members benefit from the collective wisdom and diverse perspectives presented, which, we hope, will help them find effective pathways in their own co-creative endeavour's. Engaging with peers who have prior experience or have adopted innovative approaches in participatory arts, provides an opportunity for knowledge exchange and inspiration. This interaction not only broadens an

individual's understanding, but also equips us all with practical insights and strategies to enhance our practice.

Moreover, if the gathering fosters a sense of community and support among the members, then we have achieved one of our co-creative aims. A sense of community is vital in fields like participatory arts, that often involve navigating uncharted and challenging territories. The connections formed during gatherings, we hope, can lead to future collaborations and shared projects, further enriching the network's collective expertise and impact. Ultimately, these gatherings empower members to approach their work in more informed, creative, and effective ways, contributing to the advancement and sustainability of co-creative practices in participatory arts.

ArtWorks Alliance Podcast 003 – Louise Bretland-Treharne

By Rob Watson

<https://artworksalliance.uk/artworks-alliance-podcast-003-louise-bretland-treharne/>

December 3, 2023

Categories: Podcast

Tags: ArtWorks Alliance, Louise Bretland-Treharne



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Louise Bretland-Treharne grew up in a small village called Cribyn near Lampeter in Ceredigion. Louise now lives in Johnstown on the outskirts of Carmarthen town. She is a writer, storyteller and poet living with Ataxia and other medical conditions which involve cognitive changes. Louise is also in recovery from womb cancer.

Louise's writing is based on many themes, such as raising awareness of disabilities, motherhood, animals and nature, grief and loss, landscape, humour, health and social care. Louise has published a memoir, and her short stories and poems have been published in magazines, newspapers and on digital platforms on the national and international scene using the languages of Welsh and English.

Louise spoke with ArtWorks Alliance about the benefits of creative practice, both as a therapeutic activity, and also as a way of realising the creative self that is often inhibited through social

pressures.

Thanks to Bill Taylor-Beales for soundtrack extracts.

Seasons Greetings

By Rob Watson

<https://artworksalliance.uk/seasons-greetings/>

December 20, 2023

Categories: News

Tags: 2023, Chrstitmas, New Year, Seasons Greetings



As 2023 draws to a close, we want to take a moment to express our gratitude to all of you for your support and dedication throughout the year. It's been a positive year for ArtWorks Alliance and our community, marked by steady progress and meaningful engagement in participatory arts.

This year has seen us come together to share knowledge, ideas, and creativity, contributing significantly to our work in participatory arts right across the country. Your involvement in our online discussions and events has been instrumental in fostering a sense of community and enhancing the value of participatory arts in society.

In 2023, ArtWorks Alliance focused on several key areas, emphasising participatory arts and co-creation while addressing challenges and opportunities in the sector.

Training in Participatory Arts Principles: As a network, we recognised the need for training in participatory arts. ArtWorks Alliance concentrated on helping newcomers understand the specific culture of community arts. We've held regular discussions, at our gatherings and our weekly drop-ins, about the need to articulate the value of participatory arts to partners, clients and funding organisations, to ensure a broader understanding of participatory arts practice both for

organisations and for freelancers, building confidence among our network of practitioners and supporters.

Language and Hierarchies in Participatory Arts: The importance of using inclusive and purposeful language was highlighted in our gatherings, recognising that participatory arts should be accessible to everyone and not overly arts-specific or technical. This approach aimed to position practitioners in a way that is relevant across the many participatory arts sub-sectors. The discussions touched on challenging sector hierarchies and being confident in our own sense of value, and then honest with partners and funders about the benefit of our activities, emphasising social justice and the role of participatory arts as tools for societal participation.

Co-Creation and Community Engagement: A consistent theme of our discussion was the need to examine creative approaches to co-creation, discussing models, recipes, and poems that help us to conceptualise participatory arts as a living practice, and recognising the value of what we do. Discussions also covered the challenges in resource allocation and funding, the importance of time in building relationships, addressing power dynamics, and the role of failure in the creative process.

Reflecting on Practitioners' Roles and Wellbeing: Our discussions also underscored the importance of reflection and self-awareness for participatory arts practitioners, balancing engagement with personal wellbeing. The role of the ArtWorks Alliance network in providing support and fostering a sense of community has been re-emphasised, especially for those who might be isolated when they work independently, as freelancers, or as team members in an organisation.

Navigating Challenges and Resource Constraints: There was a focus in our discussions on how to navigate resource limitations, like time and funding, and how these impact co-creative practices. We looked at the need for more creative funding models, and more honest sharing of knowledge with other organisations was also discussed.

Advocacy and Policy Engagement: ArtWorks Alliance emphasised developing an advocacy plan for the participatory arts sector. The differences in focus among various regions (like England, Scotland, and Wales) were noted, and the need to articulate work in a way that resonates with different places, traditions, identities and themes was recognised.

Overall, ArtWorks Alliance's activities in 2023 were marked by a profound engagement with the nuances of participatory arts, a commitment to inclusivity and co-creation, and an emphasis on practitioner wellbeing and sustainable practices. The discussions and activities throughout the year reflected a concerted effort to address both the creative and practical challenges of the sector, while advocating for its recognition and support.

As we approach the festive season, we hope you find time to relax and enjoy the company of friends and family. May this period be a restful and joyful one for you, offering a chance to reflect on the past year's achievements and to look forward to new opportunities in the coming year.

Here's to a peaceful Christmas and a hopeful New Year. Let's continue to support each other and work towards our shared goals in the arts.

Sue, Abi, Hannah, Adrian, Rob

AWA Organising Group

Trauma-Informed Participatory Arts

By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/trauma-informed-participatory-arts/>

January 17, 2024

Categories: Comment

Tags: ArtWorks Alliance, participatory arts, Research, Trauma Informed



Catherine Cartwright is a PhD student at the University of Exeter and University of West of England. Her research focuses on trauma-informed participatory art and its implementation in various settings, including public health and community services. She has collaborated with Devon Rape Crisis and Sexual Abuse Services (DRCSAS) to understand the impact of trauma-informed art practices, particularly through collage projects. Catherine's work aims to shift organizational structures towards a more compassionate approach that prioritizes individual experiences of trauma. The post also invites feedback and participation from the community to further her research and understand the scale of participatory artists in the UK.

What does trauma-informed participatory art look like? This is the question that has been leading my PhD research these past 4-5 years. Being 'trauma-informed' has become a popular way of framing a more human and compassionate approach in public health, in schools, in police, and even across whole cities – both Plymouth and Manchester are striving to become trauma-informed cities.

The overall aim of trauma-informed practice is to put people before protocol and create a 'culture of thoughtfulness' (Wilton and Williams, 2019), to understand how trauma can affect people's

behaviour and to know that our responses and the structural processes in an organisation can make someone's trauma much worse. Trauma-informed approaches began emerging in the early 2000s following a research study in the US where 9508 adults responded to a survey about their adverse childhood experiences (including for example, psychological, physical, or sexual abuse; domestic violence in the home). This influential study proved a correlation between traumatic experiences in childhood and their physical and mental health in adulthood. Add to this a growing awareness of re-traumatising harm caused by some traditional psychoanalysis environments (for example, the use of restraint) – and research emerged proposing changes to how mental health services operated (Sweeney et al 2018, Bloom & Farragher 2020).

To try and answer the question of what does trauma-informed participatory art look like; I have partnered with Devon Rape Crisis and Sexual Abuse Services (DRCSAS) and set up an action-research project open to their service users, mostly women impacted by the trauma of sexual violence and/or childhood abuse. I offered two collage projects, in-person and online, and following these 6 weeks projects, interviewed the women who attended. They spoke to me about how the environment – where we collaged, its urban location, for example – affected their sense of safety, and how collage itself – was a playful and empowering medium. To gather more data about how artists work relationally with communities affected by trauma, I interviewed 24 participatory artists. Thirteen interviews in 2020 which were more open and exploratory, and eleven interviews with artists in 2022 where I asked for their reflections on my first thoughts about trauma-informed arts practice. I called these 'provocations' – aiming not for principles or a manifesto, but to stimulate individual reflection on one's practice. In the future, as a result of this research, I hope to offer reflection sessions using collage explore ideas around trauma-informed practice. If you would be interested in being involved in the testing stage, do get in touch.

Here they are in their short version:

Three Provocations for Trauma-Informed Participatory Arts:

- Artists are looked-after by the organisations who employ them in the form of both emotional and operational support, so that they can be reflexive practitioners able to respond with sensitivity and care to arising challenges and ethical dilemmas.
- Artists and Organisations critically reflect on their power and motivations, prioritising participant-led decision making in all levels of the project, to resist compounding an individual's trauma through oppressive relational dynamics.
- Artists and Organisations ensure a friendly, non-judgmental space where every individual is both seen and heard, where peer support and care is actively encouraged because feeling connected and cared about is central to recovering from trauma.

As well as introducing my research, I have also written this blog to ask a question – *do we know how many participatory artists there are in the UK?* I want to demonstrate in my thesis that this is a

larger-than-realised dynamic sector, and that my research is relevant. Please get in touch if you know where I might find these statistics.

If you would like to chat about trauma-informed practice in your organisation or individual practice, I would be delighted to hear from you (this wouldn't be part of the research as that stage is finished, just a chat).

Catherine Cartwright is an artist and PhD student at University of Exeter and University of West of England, funded by the South West & Wales Doctoral Training Partnership, Arts & Humanities Research Council.

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Recommended Resources:

Training:

Kazzum Arts offer trauma-awareness training: www.kazzum.org/train-with-kazzum

Further Reading:

This is an excellent report written with survivors:

Wilton, J., and Williams, A. (2019) *Engaging with complexity: Providing effective trauma-informed care for women*. London: Centre for Mental Health (Registered Charity).

Felitti et al (1998) Relationship of Childhood Abuse and Household Dysfunction to Many of the Leading Causes of Death in Adults: The Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) Study. *American Journal of Preventive Medicine* 14(4).

Available here: <https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/explore-mental-health/publications/engaging-with-complexity>

<https://www.traumainformedschools.co.uk/>

<https://www.college.police.uk/research/projects/shame-competence-training>

<https://traumainformedplymouth.org/>

<https://www.trgm.co.uk/manchester>

Though not all ACEs are deemed traumatic experiences.

Sweeney, A., Filson, B., Kennedy, A., Collinson, L., and Gillard, S. (2018) A paradigm shift: relationships in trauma-informed mental health services. *Bjpsych Advances* 24(5): 319–333.

Bloom, S. L., and Farragher, B. (2020) *Restoring Sanctuary: A New Operating System for Trauma-Informed Systems of Care*.

Participatory Arts as Community of Practice

By Rob Watson

<https://artworksalliance.uk/participatory-arts-as-community-of-practice/>

February 4, 2024

Categories: Comment

Tags: Community of Practice, Interdisciplinarity



Participatory arts empower individuals by placing them at the heart of the creative process, allowing them to act as co-creators in artistic endeavours. This engagement offers profound personal benefits, including enhanced self-expression, improved emotional and mental well-being, and an increased sense of community and belonging. Through active participation, individuals develop new skills, gain confidence, and foster a deeper connection with others, highlighting the transformative potential of the arts in personal development and social interaction.

ArtWorks Alliance is a pivotal community of practice within participatory arts. By fostering a collaborative environment, the Alliance promotes shared learning and creative engagement among artists, educators, and community advocates who use participatory arts for social advancement. This approach enhances cultural expression and supports professional development across disciplines, underlining the importance of participatory arts in fostering community and innovation.

An interdisciplinary community of practice is a group of people from different disciplines or fields of study or activity who come together to learn from each other, share knowledge, and collaborate on solving complex problems. A community of practice is a rich learning space that supports knowledge creation, social engagement, and practice improvement. This type of community is

organised around a common professional interest and encourages the integration of knowledge and expertise from various sources to address complex issues. Other terms synonymous with “interdisciplinary” include multidimensional, cross-cutting, cross-curricular, cross-sectoral, multi-sectoral, and transdisciplinary.

Acting as an interdisciplinary community of practice offers several benefits, including:

- **Knowledge Integration:** Members can integrate knowledge and expertise from different disciplines, leading to a more comprehensive understanding of complex issues.
- **Innovation and Creativity:** Collaboration across disciplines can foster innovation and creativity, as diverse perspectives and approaches are combined to address challenges.
- **Professional Growth:** It provides opportunities for learning from others, improving skills, and gaining new insights, contributing to professional development.
- **Social Engagement:** These communities support social engagement, knowledge creation, and practice improvement, creating a rich learning environment.
- **Meaningful Learning:** The content is often rooted in real-world experiences, making the learning more meaningful and connected to practical applications.

By participating in an interdisciplinary community of practice, individuals can benefit from the diverse expertise, collaborative problem-solving, and continuous learning opportunities the community offers. Forming interdisciplinary communities of practice can present several challenges, including:

- **Barriers to Collaboration:** Different disciplinary cultures, languages, and methodologies can create barriers to effective collaboration and communication among members.
- **Resource Limitations:** Limited resources, such as time and funding, can hinder the formation and maintenance of interdisciplinary communities of practice.
- **Social Isolation:** Interdisciplinary faculty members may feel like “disciplinary outcasts,” leading to feelings of isolation and a lack of community, which can impede the development of interdisciplinary collaborations.
- **Perceived Cohesion:** Individuals engaged in interdisciplinary research may experience low perceived cohesion within their professional research community, which can affect the formation of new collaborations and the overall success of the interdisciplinary community.
- **Cultural and Organisational Differences:** Differences in organisational structures and cultures across disciplines or fields can pose challenges in establishing common goals and processes within the interdisciplinary community.

Addressing these challenges requires strategies to foster effective communication, build a sense of community, provide adequate resources, and promote understanding of diverse disciplinary perspectives. Some strategies to overcome challenges in forming interdisciplinary communities of practice include:

- **Facilitate Regular Interactions:** Encourage regular meetings, workshops, or social events to facilitate communication and collaboration among members.
- **Provide Training and Support:** Offer training programs and resources to help members understand and appreciate different disciplinary perspectives, fostering a culture of mutual respect and understanding.
- **Create a Shared Language:** Develop a shared vocabulary and common understanding of key concepts across disciplines to enhance communication and collaboration.
- **Foster Leadership and Coordination:** Appoint leaders or coordinators who can facilitate the integration of diverse perspectives and guide the community towards common goals.
- **Promote Inclusive Decision-Making:** Ensure that decision-making processes are inclusive and allow for the integration of diverse viewpoints, promoting a sense of ownership and commitment among members.

By applying these strategies, interdisciplinary communities of practice can effectively address the challenges associated with collaboration across different disciplines. Technology can be used to support interdisciplinary communities of practice in several ways, including:

- **Facilitating Communication and Collaboration:** Tools such as video conferencing, online forums, and collaborative platforms enable members from different disciplines to communicate, share resources, and collaborate on projects, overcoming geographical barriers.
- **Knowledge Sharing and Management:** Technology can be used to create repositories for sharing research findings, best practices, and resources across disciplines, facilitating knowledge management and dissemination.
- **Virtual Learning Environments:** Platforms that support virtual learning, such as online courses and webinars, can provide opportunities for interdisciplinary learning and skill development, enabling members to engage in continuous learning and professional growth.
- **Data Analysis and Visualisation:** Technology tools for data analysis and visualisation can help interdisciplinary teams make sense of complex data sets, leading to new insights and innovations.

By leveraging technology in these ways, interdisciplinary communities of practice can overcome some of the challenges associated with collaboration across different disciplines and enhance their effectiveness in knowledge creation, social engagement, and practice improvement.

The benefits of developing an interdisciplinary community of practice include:

- **Knowledge Creation:** It supports the integration of knowledge and expertise from different disciplines, leading to a more comprehensive understanding of complex issues.
- **Social Engagement:** These communities provide a rich learning space that supports social engagement, knowledge creation, and practice improvement.

- **Innovation and Practicality:** Interdisciplinary collaboration fosters creativity and practicality in addressing pressing social issues by effectively mobilising research and knowledge.
- **Meaningful Learning:** The content is often rooted in real-world experiences, making the learning more meaningful and connected to practical applications, resulting in deeper learning.
- **Professional Growth:** It offers opportunities for learning from others, improving skills, and gaining new insights, contributing to professional development.

By fostering these benefits, interdisciplinary communities of practice play a crucial role in addressing complex challenges and promoting continuous learning and improvement across various fields and disciplines.

Interdisciplinary communities of practice contribute to solving complex problems by fostering collaboration, knowledge integration, and innovation. They provide a platform for individuals from different disciplines to share expertise, leading to a more comprehensive understanding of complex issues. By effectively mobilising research and knowledge, these communities can address pressing social issues with creativity and practicality.

Successful interdisciplinary teams build on individual and group motivations, create opportunities for the sharing of skills and strengths, and resolve emerging challenges through active communication. Additionally, interdisciplinary communities of practice prioritise a collective learning process rooted in relationships of mutual benefit to practice and social change. Therefore, by leveraging diverse knowledges and expertise, these communities play a crucial role in developing innovative approaches to solve complex problems.

For participatory artists, acting within a community of practice offers significant benefits by fostering an integrated and developmental approach to their craft. This collective framework not only strengthens individual artistic skills but also advances the broader aims of participatory arts. Through shared experiences and collaborative learning, artists enhance their capacity for innovation and social engagement, effectively contributing to the evolution of participatory arts as a dynamic and inclusive field.

ArtWorks Alliance Members Gathering March 2024 – Developing a Community of Practice

By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/artworks-alliance-members-gathering-march-2024-developing-a-community-of-practice/>

February 29, 2024

Categories: Gathering, News

Tags: ArtWorks Alliance, Community of Practice, Gathering



At the ArtWorks Alliance members' online gathering on **19th March 2024**, the focus will be on the development of the network as a community of practice (CoP). The discussion will centre on the principles that inform and drive communities of practice, including knowledge exchange, collective learning, mutual engagement, and the creation of a shared stock of resources. The session aims to foster an exchanging of ideas and experiences on sustaining and enhancing the CoP model for long-term impact in the participatory arts sector.

Book Tickets: <https://www.brownpapertickets.com/event/6258598>

A Community of Practice (CoP) is a group of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better through regular interaction. In its community development work, as a member's run network, ArtWorks Alliance tries to exemplify this concept, as we evolve through the interests of our members, who are practitioners and advocates of participatory arts. Alliance members recognise the developmental nature of our activities. Through this shared vision, the alliance shapes itself as a growing community, dedicated to the

advancement and advocacy of participatory arts.

The discussion topic is Artworks Alliance as a Self-Organising Community of Practice for People Who:

- Are actively involved in using creativity to achieve positive social change and believe in the transformative power of creative processes.
- Want to share experiences, ideas, opportunities and understanding of the power of creativity in effecting positive change in social and community settings.
- Recognise the dual importance of artistic and social aspirations and are committed to sustaining and developing both their own part in this practice, and the sector, in a spirit of mutual support.
- Recognise we are experiencing an environmental and ecological crisis and are interested in being part of a collective effort to limit further damage, addressing the causes and impact of climate breakdown.

ArtWorks Alliance is a community of practitioners who value:

- Spaces for reflection, learning, sharing, and creating that sit in the sweet spot between safety and bravery.
- Openness and honesty in our discussions and our work.
- A culture that embraces diversity, respects our differences and different needs, and works to achieve equity for all.

We are really looking forward to this event, given the positive response to our last open gathering. We are happy to also make this an open event, so please promote with colleagues, associates, and friends.

Tickets: <https://www.brownpapertickets.com/event/6258598>

Notes from AWA Oversight Group Development Discussion: ArtWorks-Alliance-Development-Day-February-2024-002-2024-02-29

Thanks to Anita Holford for notes on Communities of Practice:

<https://www.wenger-trayner.com/introduction-to-communities-of-practice/>

<https://hbswk.hbs.edu/archive/cultivating-communities-of-practice-a-guide-to-managing-knowledge-seven-principles-for-cultivating-communities-of-practice>

Communities of practice start-up_guide_PDF

Facilitating Online Communities of Practice – Lessons Learned

ArtWorks Alliance Gathering April 2024 — Embers: Creative Placemaking

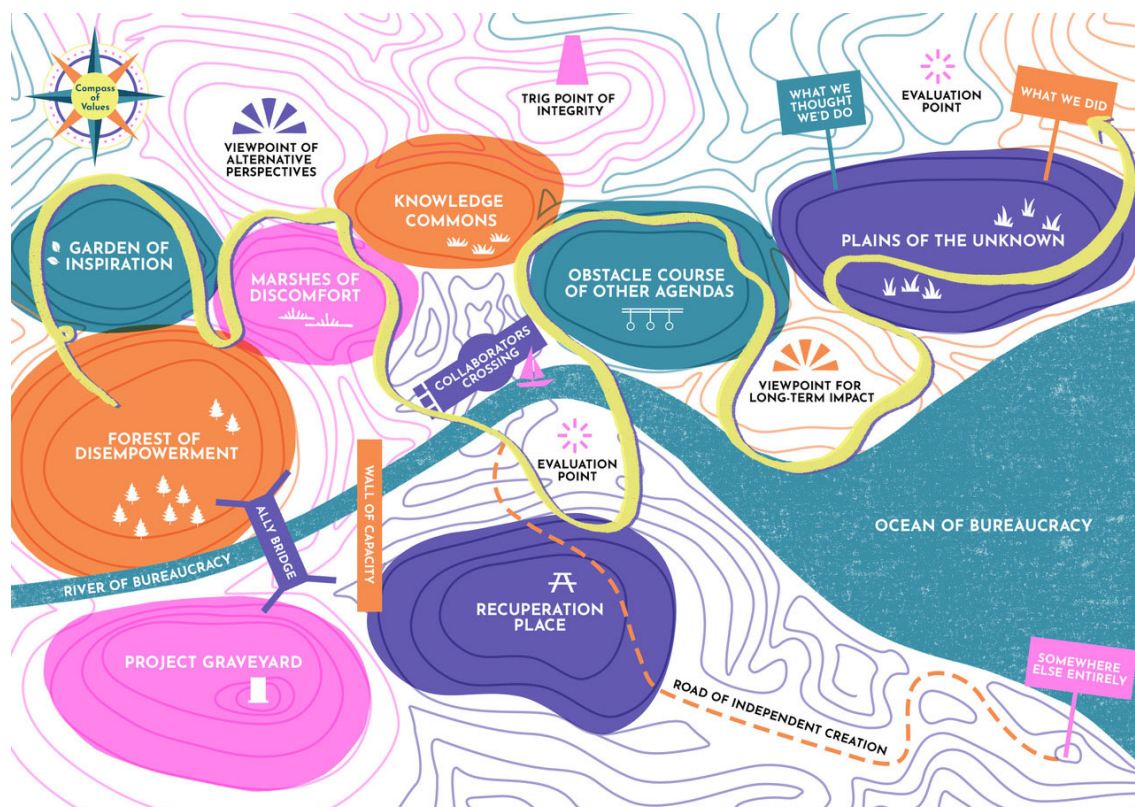
By ArtWorks Alliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk/artworks-alliance-members-gathering-april-2024-embers-creative-placemaking/>

March 10, 2024

Categories: Gathering

Tags: ArtWorks Alliance, Creative Placemaking, Katherine Wheeler, What We Do Now



On April 17th, ArtWorks Alliance, in partnership with the What We Do Now network, will be hosting our first joint gathering for 2024. Taking the theme of **Crossing Boundaries**, Katharine Wheeler will be facilitating the session, based on her experience of **Creative Placemaking**.

Katharine is a Visual and Social Practice Artist who co-ordinates Partnerships and Project Development for ArtWorks Alliance member organisation The Stove Network in Dumfries. She has just published *Embers*: a handbook aimed at groups and individuals who are active, or wanting to be active, in bringing about positive change in the places they live. It introduces creative placemaking as a way of making those changes led from within communities.

Katharine will be running an online workshop for the ArtWorks Alliance, based on the *Embers Handbook*.

"How do we work together in communities with others to provoke new ways of doing things? What is our contribution to the foundations required for places to take work forward in the long-term? In this workshop we will look at this through the different lenses of Creativity, Community, Space / Place, Activism, Power, and Impact to think about how participatory practice supports a form of creative exploration that is about asking questions together and trying on possible answers in ways that make room for different experiences and perspectives."

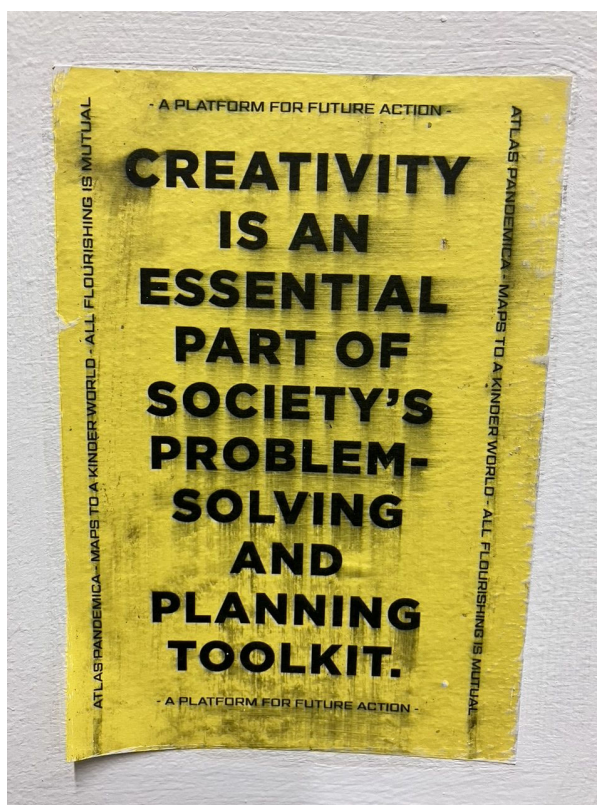
Event Details:**Date:** 17th April 2024**Time:** 10am – 12pm**Location:** Hosted on Zoom (Link to be provided upon registration)**Book Tickets:** <https://www.brownpapertickets.com/event/6252685>

Image credit: Atlas Pandemica by Katie Anderson

Artworks Alliance is a self-organising Community of Practice for people who are actively involved in using creativity to achieve positive social change and who believe in the transformative power of creative processes.

Our members:

- want to share experiences, ideas, opportunities and understanding of their work in effecting positive change in social and community settings.
- recognise the dual importance of artistic and social aspirations and are committed to sustaining and developing both their own part in this practice, and the sector as a whole, in a spirit of mutual support.
- recognise we are experiencing an environmental and ecological crisis and are interested in being part of a collective effort to limit further damage, addressing the causes and impact of climate breakdown.

In 2024

Artworks Alliance is taking the theme of “Crossing Boundaries” for its gatherings, blogs, podcasts etc—what does it mean to work and to think across boundaries, to be interdisciplinary. Our three gatherings will focus on creative placemaking; on cross art-form work, and on working across national boundaries.

Meeting Summary – Community of Practice Gathering March 2024

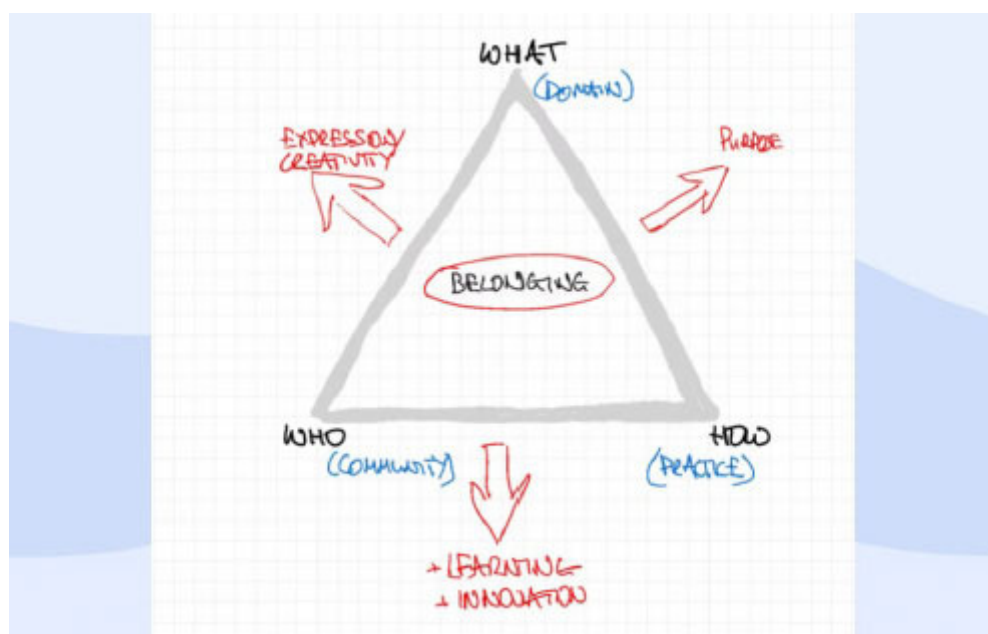
By Rob Watson

<https://artworksalliance.uk/meeting-summary-community-of-practice-gathering-march-2024/>

April 2, 2024

Categories: Gathering

Tags: Community of Practice, Discussion, Gathering, Summary



The ArtWorks Alliance gathering on March 19th, 2024, was an engaging event that brought together participatory artists and practitioners to delve into the evolving landscape of participatory arts. Facilitated by Adrian Sinclair from Union Arts, the gathering centered on enhancing communication, collaboration, and community practice beyond traditional boundaries. This blog post aims to synthesize the topics covered and outline the direction for future discussions and activities within the alliance.

Download the Full Summary Here

Key Themes and Insights:

- **Community and Practice:** The gathering highlighted the essence of ArtWorks Alliance as a vibrant community of practice, underscored by a shared passion for participatory arts. Discussions focused on future plans, the importance of community, connection, and the development of resources to support individual and collective practice.
- **Diverse Participation:** Attendees' motivations for joining the gathering varied from curiosity and exploration to nourishment, community, contribution, networking, and learning. This diversity underscores the multifaceted appeal and the role of the gathering as a platform for engagement, development, and collaboration.

- **Strategic Breakout Discussions:** Organised around five thematic areas—Activism, Social Change, and Climate Change; Ethics, Good Practice, and Models; Wellbeing, Health, and Impact; Mentoring, Career Development, and Training; Lucky Dip—the breakout sessions facilitated deep dives into specific areas of interest. These sessions aimed to harness collective knowledge and experience to foster collaboration and identify opportunities for action.
- **Feedback and Reflections:** The use of digital tools like Mentimeter facilitated a rich exchange of ideas and reflections. Key feedback included the value of meetings, the experiential nature of a Community of Practice (CoP), the importance of collaboration over competitiveness, and the necessity of both online and face-to-face meetings to accommodate diverse needs.
- **Themes for Future Focus:** Discussions identified critical areas for the alliance's development, including support for freelancers, advocacy, community expansion, learning and development, collaboration, and co-creation. These areas reflect the complex challenges and aspirations within the participatory arts community.
- **Offering Support:** Participants expressed a strong willingness to contribute their skills, experience, and resources, ranging from enhancing communication strategies to sharing expertise in specific sectors. These offers highlight a collective commitment to the alliance's development as a self-organising community of practice.

Moving Forward:

The insights from the gathering underscore the importance of continued engagement, feedback, and collaboration as we develop the ArtWorks Alliance further. The document outlining the gathering's outcomes is a draft, poised for iterative development through additional sessions, stakeholder engagement, and member feedback. This developmental approach ensures that our strategies and objectives evolve in alignment with our community's needs and aspirations.

Future discussions will continue to build on the themes and ideas explored, incorporating a wide range of perspectives to enrich our community of practice. By fostering an environment of open dialogue, mutual support, and shared learning, we aim to enhance the impact and reach of participatory arts, advocating for its transformative power in creating social change.

As we move forward, we invite all members, stakeholders, partners, and supportive guides to actively participate in shaping the future of the ArtWorks Alliance. Together, we will navigate the challenges and opportunities ahead, strengthening our community and amplifying the role of participatory arts in society.

ArtWorks Alliance – Creative Placemaking Gathering Summary

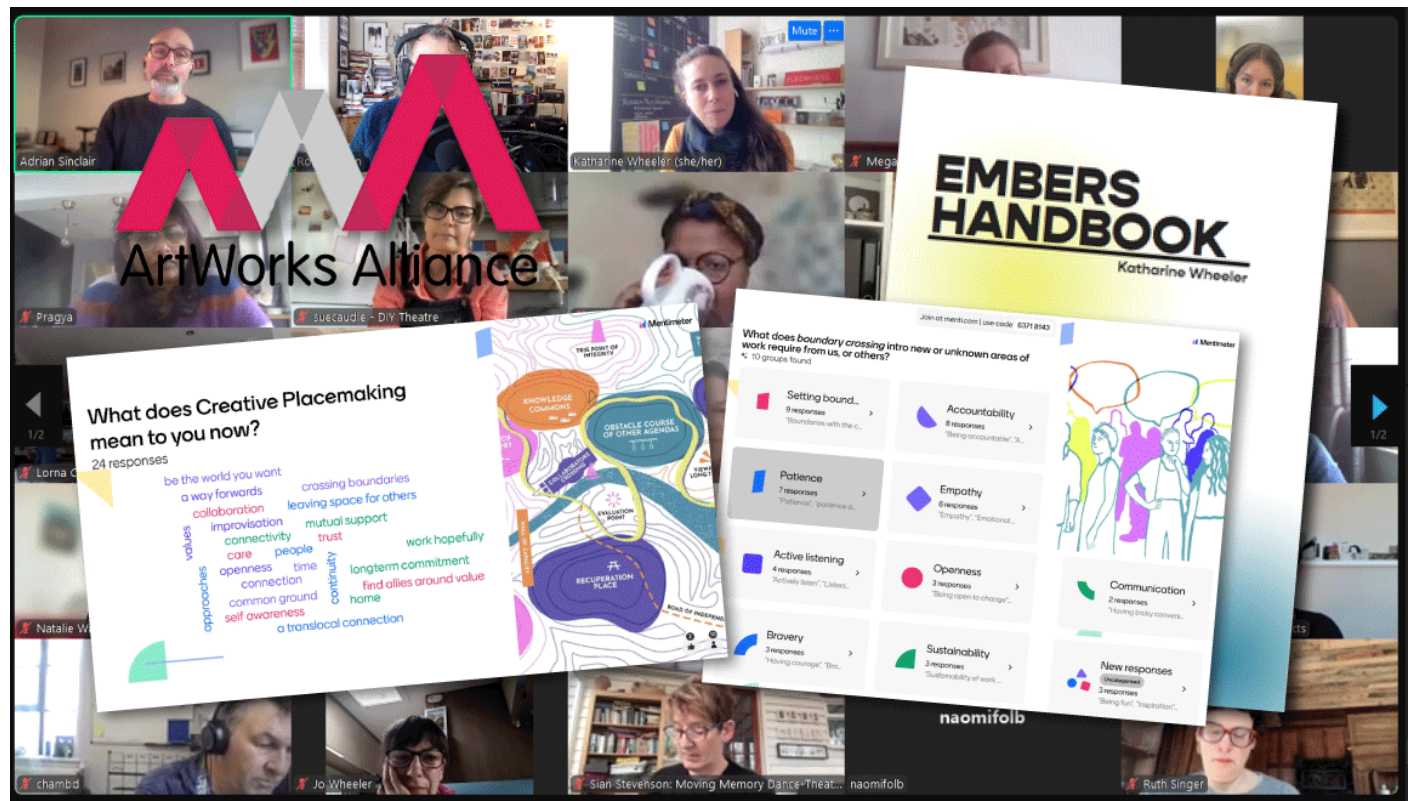
By Rob Watson

<https://artworksalliance.uk/artworks-alliance-creative-placemaking-gathering-summary/>

May 6, 2024

Categories: Gathering

Tags: Creative Places, evaluation, Gathering, Katharine Wheeler, Placemaking, Reflection, Report



Our discussion at the ArtWorks Alliance April Gathering in April focused on creative placemaking. We brought together practitioners and advocates of participatory arts from many different places and locations, so we could examine how creative activities can support community development. Led by Katharine Wheeler, the discussion focussed on Embers Handbook that Katharine has recently published through her work with The Stove Network and What We Do Now network. In this post, we will outline the main topics discussed, explore the concept of creative placemaking as discussed during the gathering, and summarise the potential actions identified by participants and facilitators to advance this practice.

[Download a Detailed Summary Report of the Gathering](#)

[Download the Slides and Responses](#)

Our April Gathering brought together participatory artists and advocates from across the UK and other countries to discuss and collaborate on creative placemaking. The Gathering drew a wide range of individuals engaged in the field of participatory arts, from various regions within the UK to

international locales. The gathering was held online, allowing those from distant areas to participate effectively. This setup facilitated a productive exchange of ideas and practices, providing a forum for participants to connect, share experiences, and explore new approaches to community engagement through the arts.

Creative Placemaking, as outlined by Katharine in the Embers Handbook, is understood as a collaborative and community-driven process where arts and cultural practices are used to actively shape the physical, social, and economic characteristics of a community. The approach is centred on empowering communities to craft vibrant and sustainable spaces that reflect their values and aspirations. It emphasises the importance of initiatives being driven from within the community, ensuring that actions are responsive and relevant to local contexts.

As Katharine noted, the handbook highlights the role of creativity in fostering social engagement, transforming public spaces, and enhancing community well-being. Additionally, it advocates for the integration of diverse community voices and perspectives in the placemaking process to ensure inclusivity and equity, underscoring the belief that participatory and collaborative arts practices can lead to meaningful social transformation and enhanced communal life.

Key Themes of the Gathering

Several key themes emerged that underscored the essence and challenges of creative placemaking:

- **Community-Led Initiatives:** The discussions emphasised the importance of initiatives being driven by the communities themselves. By ensuring that projects are responsive to local needs and aspirations, participants noted that creative placemaking becomes more effective and meaningful.
- **Integration of Diverse Perspectives:** A core element of creative placemaking discussed was the inclusion of diverse perspectives in the planning and execution phases. Participants highlighted how bringing together varied voices can lead to richer, more inclusive outcomes that reflect the true fabric of communities.

The gathering also provided an opportunity for us to make a deeper exploration of creative placemaking, revealing various dimensions and insights:

- **Definition and Evolving Concepts:** Participants engaged in thoughtful dialogues about their personal and collective definitions of creative placemaking. These discussions highlighted the evolving nature of creative placemaking as not just an artistic intervention but a comprehensive community engagement strategy.

This was an opportunity to utilise breakout sessions so we could delve deeper into specific

aspects of creative placemaking, offering participants a more focused discussion environment, including:

- **Individual Contributions:** Participants reflected on their personal roles and the unique contributions they bring to creative placemaking. These discussions highlighted the diverse skills and experiences that everyone adds to the collective effort of transforming community spaces.
- **Collaboration and Networks:** The importance of networks and collaborations was a focal point. Participants shared how their connections with other artists, community leaders, and various organisations enhance their projects, providing a broader support system and richer resources for impactful placemaking.
- **Boundary Crossing:** The sessions also addressed the concept of boundary crossing, where participants explored the challenges and strategies for stepping into unfamiliar disciplines or collaborating across different cultural and professional sectors.

Proposed Actions and Recommendations

The discussions culminated in a series of actionable recommendations to advance the practice of creative placemaking:

- **From Discussion to Action:** Facilitators and participants identified specific strategies that could be implemented to address the challenges discussed. These include enhancing community engagement through targeted outreach, utilising technology to bridge communication gaps, and fostering inclusive practices within projects.
- **Role of Facilitators and Participants:** Facilitators played a crucial role in guiding the discussions and ensuring that all voices were heard. Participants, on their part, contributed insights based on their experiences and expertise, proposing innovative approaches to creative placemaking.
- **Supporting Emergent Participatory Arts Practices:** The gathering emphasised the need to support and recognise emergent forms of participatory arts. Suggestions included creating platforms for showcasing innovative projects and establishing partnerships with academic institutions to document and study these practices.

The gathering proved to be a highly productive session, bringing to the forefront numerous valuable issues for participatory artists and advocates of place-based arts practice. The discussions were rich and multifaceted, covering a range of topics critical to the advancement of creative placemaking. Participants delved into how community-led initiatives can be effectively implemented, the importance of integrating diverse perspectives to enrich placemaking projects, and the evolving role of technology in the arts.

Overall, the gathering facilitated a meaningful exchange of ideas, strategies, and best practices,

providing attendees with new insights and connections that will enhance their work in their respective communities, and we will be looking forward to learning about how our members apply these lessons, innovate in their practice, and evaluate their work so we can learn about applying creative approaches placemaking more widely.

ArtWorks Alliance Podcast: David Richmond – Arts In Development

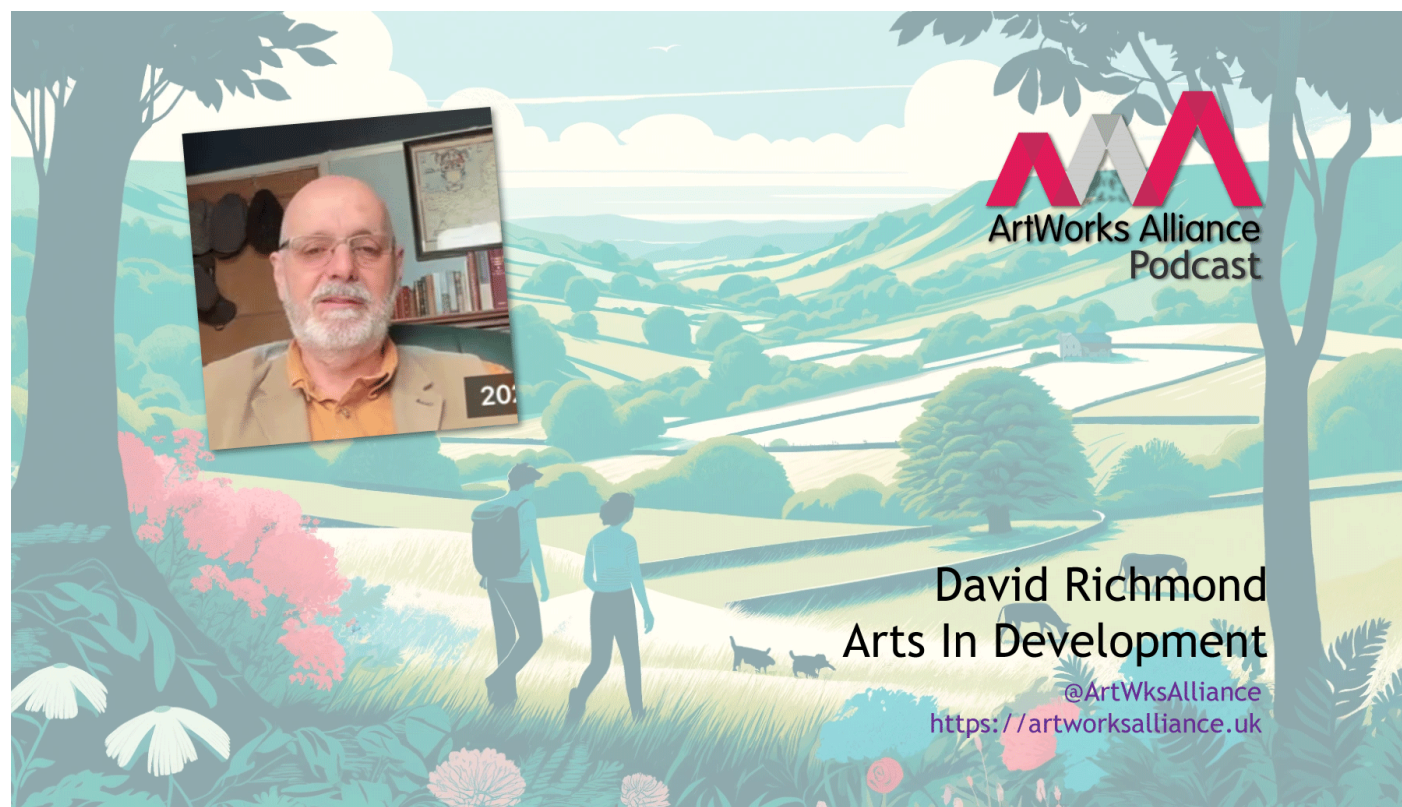
By Rob Watson

<https://artworksalliance.uk/artworks-alliance-podcast-david-richmond-arts-in-development/>

May 24, 2024

Categories: Podcast

Tags: Arts in Development, Arts Practice, David Richmond, development, Walking



Podcast: Download

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In this episode of the ArtWorks Alliance podcast, Rob Watson chats with David Richmond, the key figure behind Arts in Development. Dave provides an overview of Arts in Development, an initiative focused on nurturing and empowering artists through community-based practices. He highlights the importance of creating supportive environments where artists can thrive.

A central theme in Dave's work is the concept of walking, both as a metaphor and a practical activity. He explains how walking alongside artists helps in processing experiences, sparking creativity, and fostering personal development. The physical act of walking encourages a natural flow of ideas and a deeper connection with the environment. David draws inspiration from historical figures like Coleridge and Wordsworth, who valued walking as a means of creative and philosophical exploration. He also references thinkers such as Nietzsche, emphasising the importance of engaging with the natural world to gain insights and foster creativity.



The conversation delves into the developmental aspects of David's approach. Unlike traditional consultancy, his method is active and engaged, focusing on the journey and shared experiences rather than passive reflection. This approach helps artists and individuals develop a deeper understanding of themselves and their work. Dave discusses the need for sustainable social change through the arts. He critiques the short-term nature of many art projects and emphasises the importance of creating lasting impact by integrating meaningful personal and community development into artistic practices.

The episode touches on the challenges faced by artists, including issues of validation and recognition. Dave shares how his approach helps artists navigate these challenges by fostering a supportive community where their work is valued, and their creative journeys are respected. Looking ahead, David envisions expanding the reach of Arts in Development, building more robust networks of support for artists, and continuing to explore innovative ways to integrate art into community development.

This episode provides a rich exploration of David Richmond's philosophy and practice in arts development, offering valuable insights into how walking and community engagement can transform artistic practice and personal growth.

Members Online Gathering – ‘Dear Powers That Be’ Session on 4th July 2024

By Rob Watson

<https://artworksalliance.uk/members-online-gathering-dear-powers-that-be-session-on-4th-july-2024/>

June 19, 2024

Categories: Gathering

Tags: Dear Powers That Be, Gathering, General Election, Members, participatory arts





The Arts Hustings 2024 | With What Next? and the Campaign for the Arts

https://youtube.com/watch?v=SIH8KWxh_Zo



What would you say to the people who make decisions about Participatory Arts in the UK? How would you express your hopes, frustrations, and visions for this vital and vibrant sector? If you had a chance to speak directly to the policymakers, funders, and influencers, what would you ask them

to do differently?

These are some of the questions that the ArtWorks Alliance, the UK community of practice and network for Participatory Arts, is asking our members and supporters in an innovative and timely exercise called 'Dear Powers That Be'. The aim is to collect and amplify the collective voices of those who work in and care about Participatory Arts, especially at this critical juncture of social, economic, and political change. In this blog post, we share the details of how you can get involved and make your voice heard.

This members-only event will provide a platform for you to discuss your expectations and aspirations for policy approaches to Participatory Arts. Led by Abi Horsefield from Collective Encounters, the session aims to reflect the perspectives of both freelancers and organisations active in the field of Participatory Arts.

Event Details:

- **Date:** Thursday, 4th July 2024
- **Time:** 10am – 12pm
- **Location:** Zoom/Online (*instructions sent to separately to members and associates*).

The outcome of this session will be a letter, representing our collective voice, which will be sent to the new Ministers for Arts and Culture once they are appointed in the new government.

To participate in this important discussion, please ensure your membership with the ArtWorks Alliance is up-to-date. If you are not yet a member, we encourage you to sign up and join our community via our website.

Your insights and experiences are invaluable as we advocate for policies that support and enhance the Participatory Arts sector. We look forward to your active participation in this crucial session.

Participatory Arts Election Promises

The main political parties in the UK, including those in Wales and Scotland, recognise the importance of participatory arts and culture and have included various policies in their manifestos to support and enhance community engagement in these areas. Here is a summary of their positions and proposed policies:

Conservative Party

Tax Incentives: The Conservatives pledge to ensure creative sector tax incentives remain competitive and support museums and libraries through philanthropy.

Community Support: The Conservatives propose launching a new Seaside Heritage Fund to preserve and restore coastal cultural assets and extend funding schemes like the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and Community Ownership Fund to support local cultural activities.

Nighttime Economy: The Conservatives also aim to review the nighttime economy to revive cultural venues such as pubs and clubs.

- The Conservatives are defending their record while in Government, citing £1 billion in tax reliefs for creative industries and £446 million for cultural organisations over 3 years.
- Pledges to ensure creative sector tax incentives remain competitive and support museums, libraries, and leveraging philanthropy.
- Promises to launch a review of the nighttime economy and create 100,000 more apprenticeships per year.
- Commits to protecting the BBC, Channel 4, and other public service broadcasters.
- Pledges to continue supporting museums, libraries, and leveraging philanthropy for cultural institutions across the UK.
- Promises to launch a new Seaside Heritage Fund to preserve and restore coastal cultural assets.
- Plans to extend funding schemes like the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and Community Ownership Fund to support local cultural activities.
- Proposes reviewing the nighttime economy to revive cultural venues like pubs and clubs.

Labour Party

Arts Funding: Labour plans to increase arts funding by working with the sector and investors to develop new private finance models for arts organisations.

Freelance Careers: Labour aims to ensure that a freelance career in the arts remains viable through their “New Deal for Working People”, which provides flexibility for creators.

Cultural Exchange: Labour seeks to facilitate easier touring and cultural exchange for British artists by arranging agreements with the EU.

Community Development: The Labour Party says that it recognises the intrinsic value of arts and culture beyond economic contributions.

National Loans: They plan to encourage national museums and galleries to loan out more collections to improve access across the country.

Arts Education: Labour plans to boost arts education by reinserting creative subjects into the core curriculum.

- Labour also promises to “end the ministerial merry-go-round” and treat the culture brief with more respect after frequent changes of Culture Secretary under the Conservatives.
- Plans to boost arts funding by collaborating with the sector and investors to create new private finance models for arts organisations.
- Aims to ensure a freelance career in the arts remains viable through their “New Deal for Working People” providing flexibility for creators.
- Seeks arrangements with the EU to facilitate easier touring and cultural exchange for British artists.
- Aims to boost arts education by reinserting creative subjects into the core curriculum.
- Sees the arts as vital for creating thriving communities and improving wellbeing.

Liberal Democrats

Funding Crisis: The Liberal Democrats criticise Conservative cuts to local authority budgets that have impacted community arts funding and commit to addressing this crisis.

Health and Wellbeing: The Liberal Democrats aim to promote the role of arts in health and wellbeing and highlight the economic contribution of creative industries.

Community Focus: The Liberal Democrats emphasise the importance of arts for a thriving society and aim to maintain free museum access while protecting the independence of public broadcasters.

- Criticises Conservative cuts to arts funding and barriers for touring artists in Europe post-Brexit.
- Pledges to tackle the funding crisis facing local authorities for arts and culture.
- Aims to promote the role of arts in health/wellbeing and maintain free museum access.
- Strongly committed to protecting the independence of the BBC and other public broadcasters.
- Criticises Conservative cuts to local authority budgets that have impacted community arts funding.
- Commits to tackling this local funding crisis faced by councils for arts and culture.
- Highlights the economic contribution of creative industries and importance of arts for a “thriving society”.

Green Party

Funding Restoration: The Green Party pledges to restore arts funding to pre-2010 levels, accusing the Conservatives of “cultural vandalism” through underfunding.

Universal Basic Income: The Green Party will advocate for a Universal Basic Income to give

people the freedom to pursue their artistic potential.

Local Arts: The Green Party highlights the importance of local arts funding from councils and promises significant investment to support community sports, arts, and culture facilities.

- Accuses the Conservatives of “cultural vandalism” through underfunding and pledges to restore arts funding to pre-2010 levels.
- Advocates for a Universal Basic Income to give people freedom to reach their artistic potential.
- Highlights the importance of local arts funding from councils.
- Wants to ensure visa-free travel for musicians touring in the EU.
- Views arts, culture and sports as “central to people’s mental and physical wellbeing, and to thriving communities”.
- Promises £5 billion investment to support community sports, arts and culture facilities.
- Aims to keep local museums, theatres, libraries and art galleries open and thriving.
- Advocates for a Universal Basic Income to give people freedom to pursue artistic potential.

Scottish National Party (SNP)

Community Engagement: The SNP places a strong emphasis on community engagement in arts and culture, aiming to enhance access and participation at the grassroots level.

Cultural Investment: They propose increased investment in local arts projects and community cultural initiatives, recognising the role of arts in fostering community cohesion and identity.

Plaid Cymru

Welsh Arts: Plaid Cymru focuses on supporting Welsh language arts and culture, promoting local artists and cultural projects that reflect Wales’ unique heritage.

Funding and Support: They advocate for greater funding for community arts initiatives and support for local cultural organisations to enhance participation and engagement across Wales.

Summary

The main political parties in the UK, as well as regional parties in Scotland and Wales, see participatory arts and culture as vital to community development, wellbeing, and identity. Their policies reflect a commitment to increasing funding, supporting local initiatives, and promoting engagement in arts and culture at the community level. So, most parties see vibrant community arts and cultural offerings as key to developing strong local economies, improving wellbeing, and creating a sense of identity and cohesion. Policies aim to boost funding, access and education

around the arts at a local level.

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ArtWorks Alliance Podcast – Resolve Collective Going Beyond Aesthetics – Design for Social Change

By Rob Watson

<https://artworksalliance.uk/artworks-alliance-podcast-resolve-collective-going-beyond-aesthetics-design-for-social-change/>

June 24, 2024

Categories: Podcast

Tags: alternative pedagogy., ArtWorks Alliance podcast, built environment, collaborative projects, community engagement, gentrification, interdisciplinary design, marginalised communities, material reuse, participatory arts, Resolve Collective, social challenges



Podcast: Download

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In this episode of the ArtWorks Alliance podcast, host Adrian Sinclair welcomes three visionary members of the Resolve Collective—Melissa Haniff, Akil Scafe-Smith, and Seth Scafe-Smith—for a compelling discussion on the theme of “crossing boundaries.” This conversation delves into the heart of Resolve Collective’s interdisciplinary design practice and their innovative approach to community engagement.

Listeners will gain insights into how Melissa Haniff explains the convergence of diverse backgrounds in architecture, urban design, and creative arts within Resolve Collective to tackle social challenges in the built environment. The episode explores the significance of incorporating varied perspectives to enhance community engagement and drive meaningful change.

Akil Scafe-Smith recounts the organic beginnings of Resolve Collective, highlighting their reactionary approach to addressing the adverse effects of gentrification and displacement in South London. This narrative underscores the importance of fluidity and responsiveness to local contexts in community-focused work.

Seth Scafe-Smith outlines the collective's strategic pillars, including "Nurturing Ecologies," "Material Store," "Starting from the Ends," and "Thinking Through Making." These frameworks highlight their commitment to supporting marginalised communities, redistributing resources, and fostering alternative pedagogies.

The episode features in-depth discussions on notable projects such as the Liverpool initiative with Tate and the engagement project in Whitechapel's Angel Alley. These examples illustrate Resolve Collective's emphasis on collaboration, material reuse, and creating spaces that reflect the needs and narratives of local communities.

The conversation extends to the broader implications of Resolve Collective's methodologies for participatory arts. Adrian and the Resolve team discuss the value of co-operative work, the necessity of redefining project briefs, and the challenges of maintaining a commitment to inclusive, community-led design practices.

This episode is a must-listen for anyone interested in the intersections of art, design, and social justice, offering valuable perspectives on how interdisciplinary and collaborative approaches can transform participatory arts and community engagement practices.

Keywords: ArtWorks Alliance podcast, Resolve Collective, interdisciplinary design, community engagement, participatory arts, social challenges, built environment, gentrification, marginalised communities, collaborative projects, material reuse, alternative pedagogy.

Arts Hustings 2024

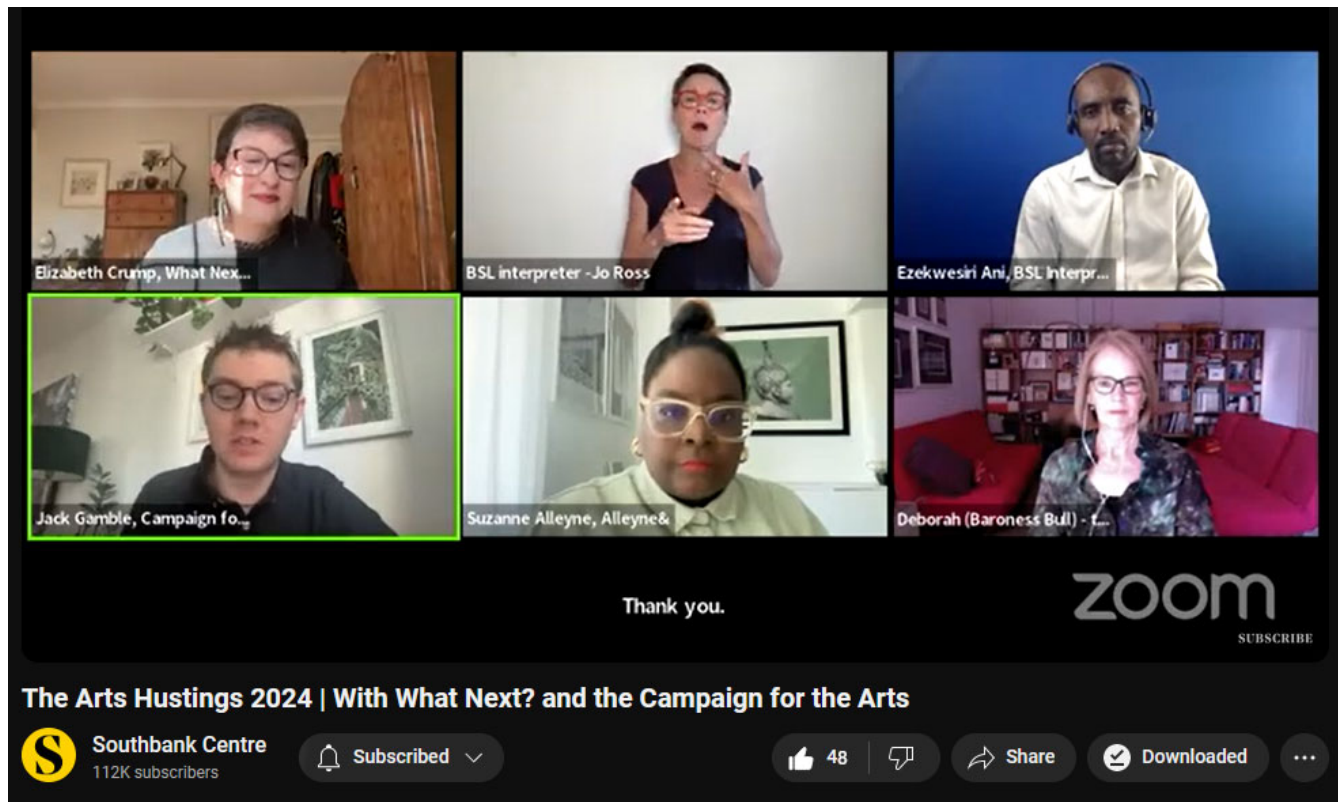
By Rob Watson

<https://artworksalliance.uk/arts-hustings-2024/>

June 26, 2024

Categories: News

Tags: Arts & Culture, Arts Hustings, General Election, participatory arts





The Arts Hustings 2024 | With What Next? and the Campaign for the Arts

https://youtube.com/watch?v=SIH8KWxh_Zo



This is the video from the Arts Hustings event for the 2024 elections focusing on the arts, culture, and heritage sector in the UK. Lizzie Crump and Jack Gamble, co-directors of What Next and the Campaign for the Arts, respectively, introduce the event. They emphasize the non-partisan nature

of the discussion and the goal of shedding light on party positions regarding arts and culture.

Key participants include:

- **Suzanne Alain:** A cultural thinker discussing power dynamics in the arts.
- **Baroness Deborah Bull:** Chair of the event, former principal dancer of the Royal Ballet, and creative director of the Royal Opera House.

The panel comprises representatives from various UK political parties who discuss their policies on arts and culture:

- **Stephen Parkinson (Conservatives):** Emphasizes increased funding for the Arts Council and the need for its independent operation.
- **Jack Lennox (Green Party):** Advocates for broad access to the arts and highlights the importance of independence from government interference.
- **Chris Bryant (Labour):** Stresses the importance of arts in society and the need for a comprehensive review of the Arts Council.
- **Jan Bonham Carter (Liberal Democrats):** Supports multi-year settlements for councils and emphasizes the importance of independent arts organizations.
- **Helen Mary Jones (Plaid Cymru):** Advocates for a cultural strategy that ensures accessibility to arts for all demographics.
- **Shan Molland (Alliance Party):** Discusses the need for better funding and advocacy for the arts, emphasizing the role of the Arts Council.
- **Claire Hanna (SDLP):** Highlights the underfunding of the arts in Northern Ireland and advocates for better support for creative workers.

The event also covers topics like local government funding, support for freelancers, and the inclusion of disabled people in the arts. The representatives discuss various strategies to improve funding, accessibility, and participation in the arts across the UK, highlighting the importance of maintaining the arts as a vital part of society.

The main topics discussed in the hustings were:

1. Role and Funding of Arts Councils

- The purpose and independence of Arts Councils.
- The necessity of funding arts organizations to foster innovation and accessibility.
- Reviews and reforms needed for better operation and impact of Arts Councils.

2. Local Government Funding for the Arts

- The significant reduction in local government funding for the arts since 2010.

- Strategies to restore and increase funding for local cultural institutions like museums, libraries, and theatres.
- The economic and social benefits of investing in local arts.

3. Support for Freelancers in the Arts

- The unique challenges faced by freelancers in the creative sector.
- Policies to provide equitable working conditions, fair pay, and financial support.
- The impact of Brexit on touring artists and the need for easier travel arrangements.

4. Inclusion of Disabled People in the Arts

- Ensuring accessibility for disabled artists, participants, and audiences.
- The role of the Arts in advocating for and improving the rights of disabled people.
- Specific measures to improve access to artistic spaces and events for disabled individuals.

5. Arts and Creativity in Education

- The place of arts subjects and creativity in the school curriculum.
- The importance of arts education from early years through higher education.
- Addressing cuts and closures of arts courses in universities and promoting their value.

6. Wider Public Policy Contributions of the Arts

- The role of arts and culture in broader public policy areas such as social change, health and well-being, economic growth, and environmental sustainability.
- Specific examples of how the arts can positively impact other sectors and societal issues.

These topics were addressed by representatives from various political parties, each outlining their perspectives and proposed policies to enhance the arts and culture sector in the UK.

Differences Between Parties

The main differences between the political parties in regard to participatory arts discussed in the hustings can be summarized as follows:

Conservatives

- **Support and Funding:** Highlighted increased funding for the Arts Council and emphasized the role of arts and culture in delivering broader societal benefits, such as health and economic growth.
- **Independence:** Stressed the importance of the Arts Council operating independently of

government interference.

- **Programs and Initiatives:** Mentioned specific programs like the refreshed national plan for music education and the development of a new cultural education plan.

Labour

- **Accessibility and Equity:** Focused on ensuring every child receives a proper creative and artistic education regardless of their background, proposing a shift from STEM to STEAM (including the arts).
- **Review and Reform:** Called for a comprehensive review of the Arts Council to ensure funding is effectively allocated and to address the decline in arts education.
- **Rights and Protections:** Advocated for new rights at work, reforms to the apprenticeship levy to suit the creative sector, and stronger support for freelancers.

Green Party

- **Broad Access:** Emphasized making arts accessible to all communities and demographics, with a focus on active participation over passive consumption.
- **Independence:** Stressed the importance of the Arts Council's independence from government.
- **Environmental Focus:** Highlighted the role of the arts in addressing the climate and biodiversity crisis by promoting a hopeful vision for the future.

Liberal Democrats

- **Local Engagement:** Supported the idea of Enterprise zones to help private-public investment in local arts projects.
- **Flexibility and Representation:** Proposed replacing the apprenticeship levy with a more flexible training levy and appointing a creative freelance commissioner to address the needs of creative freelancers.
- **EU Engagement:** Emphasized the importance of re-engaging with Creative Europe to support the arts sector.

Plaid Cymru

- **Welsh Context:** Highlighted the specific challenges and strategies within Wales, such as the new Welsh curriculum which includes creativity as a core component.
- **Local Focus:** Advocated for a cultural strategy that explicitly supports local services and infrastructure to make the arts more accessible.
- **Freelancer Support:** Proposed creating a Welsh Freelancers fund and learning from the basic income scheme for artists in the Republic of Ireland.

Alliance Party

- **Balance and Advocacy:** Discussed the balance between the Arts Council as a fund distributor and as an advocate for the arts sector.
- **Funding and Facilities:** Called for increased per capita spending on the arts and more subsidized artistic workspaces.
- **Inclusivity:** Emphasized the importance of inclusive initiatives and accessible artistic spaces for disabled individuals and other underrepresented groups.

SDLP

- **Underfunding Concerns:** Highlighted the chronic underfunding of the arts in Northern Ireland and the need for better support for creative workers.
- **North-South Cooperation:** Discussed the potential for more north-south cooperation to enhance arts funding and support in Northern Ireland.
- **Freelancer Support:** Mentioned the success of artists' basic income schemes in the Republic of Ireland and advocated for similar support in Northern Ireland.

Overall, while all parties recognize the importance of participatory arts and support increased accessibility, their approaches vary in terms of specific funding mechanisms, the role of government, and the integration of arts into broader societal and educational frameworks.

ArtWorks Alliance Podcast – Exploring Participatory Arts and Cultural Belonging

By Rob Watson

<https://artworksalliance.uk/artworks-alliance-podcast-exploring-participatory-arts-and-cultural-belonging/>

June 27, 2024

Categories: Podcast

Tags: Anita Holford, Community of Practice, participatory arts, Podcast, Sara Longfield



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Welcome to the latest episode of the ArtWorks Alliance Podcast, hosted by Rob Watson. In this conversation, Rob is joined by Anita Holford and Sarah Longfield, two professionals with extensive experience in participatory and community arts.

Anita Holford is a freelance communications practitioner, copywriter, and editor dedicated to making music and the arts more accessible. She collaborates with organisations focused on social, educational, or wellbeing purposes, helping them communicate their value and impact effectively. Sarah Longfield, a theatre director, social entrepreneur, and coach, has a background in participatory arts and a history of working with young people and community groups to foster creativity and social engagement.

In this episode, the discussion covers several key topics. Anita and Sarah share their perspectives

on the essence of participatory arts, emphasising the importance of creativity, inclusion, and social impact. They explore the complexities of cultural belonging, personal identity, and how heritage and place shape individual and community identities. Both guests reflect on their professional journeys and how their experiences have influenced their approach to community arts and engagement.

The conversation also addresses the challenges of measuring and funding participatory arts, the professionalisation of arts administration, and the need for flexibility in supporting diverse communities. Anita and Sarah offer personal reflections on their sense of cultural belonging and the role of arts in their lives, highlighting the transformative power of creative expression.

This episode provides valuable insights into the value of participatory arts and the dynamic nature of cultural identity. It is particularly relevant for practitioners, supporters, and enthusiasts of community arts, offering inspiration and practical insights for fostering creativity and social connection.

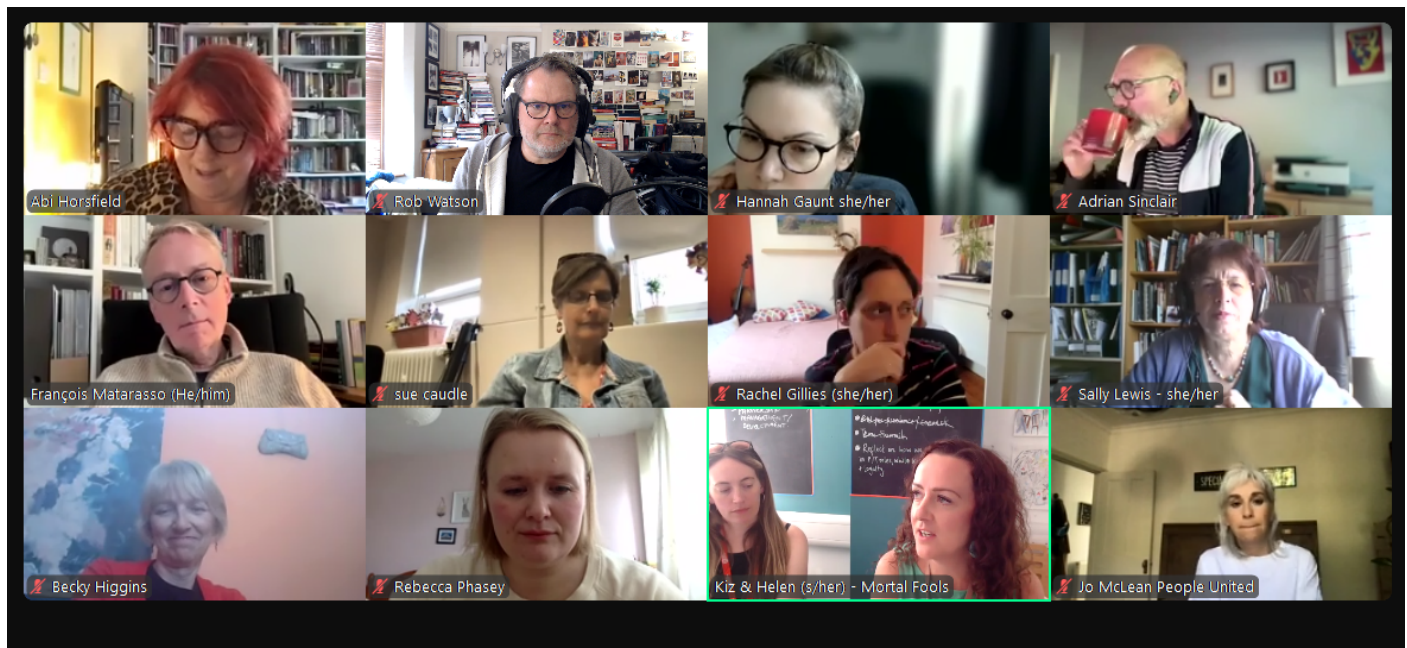
ArtWorks Alliance Gathering – July 2024: Advocating for Participatory Arts

By Rob Watson

<https://artworksalliance.uk/artworks-alliance-gathering-july-2024-advocating-for-participatory-arts/>
July 8, 2024

Categories: Gathering

Tags: advocacy, Dear Powers That Be, Gathering, participatory arts



On Thursday, 4th July 2024, ArtWorks Alliance held a gathering of its members to articulate and craft key messages for the new team of ministers in the UK government. This meeting focused on the importance of participatory arts, discussing their definition, impact, and the challenges faced by practitioners in this field.

Defining Participatory Arts

Participants began by sharing their perspectives on what participatory arts mean to them. Common themes included community collaboration, co-creation, empowerment, social change, inclusivity, and the importance of the creative process over the final product. These discussions highlighted the multifaceted nature of participatory arts, emphasising their role in fostering personal and community development.

Impact on Individuals and Communities

The conversation moved to the transformative impact of participatory arts. Participants noted how these activities empower individuals by giving them a platform to express their stories and experiences, particularly those from marginalised communities. Participatory arts also play a crucial role in community building and social cohesion, personal development, mental and

emotional well-being, and providing educational benefits. Additionally, they serve as powerful tools for social change and cultural enrichment.

Motivations Behind Participatory Arts

When asked why they engage in participatory arts, participants expressed a deep commitment to social and personal values. They are driven by a passion for social change, the desire to empower communities, facilitate personal growth, build social connections, promote well-being, and advocate for cultural democracy. The love for the arts and the professional fulfilment derived from seeing the tangible benefits of their work also motivate these practitioners.

Key Messages to the Powers That Be

Participants articulated clear and urgent messages for the new ministerial team:

- **Recognise the Value:** Emphasise the significant social, educational, and economic value of participatory arts.
- **Provide Sustainable Funding:** Advocate for long-term, equitable funding models to ensure the stability and impact of participatory arts projects.
- **Support Professional Development:** Invest in resources and training to enhance the skills and effectiveness of participatory arts practitioners.
- **Promote Inclusivity and Accessibility:** Prioritise making the arts accessible to all, breaking down barriers to participation.
- **Acknowledge Well-being Benefits:** Integrate the therapeutic benefits of participatory arts into public health strategies.
- **Champion Cultural Democracy:** Support policies that ensure cultural expression is a right for all, celebrating diversity and challenging traditional hierarchies.
- **Enhance Public Engagement:** Support campaigns and initiatives to raise public awareness about the benefits of participatory arts.
- **Facilitate Cross-Sector Collaboration:** Promote partnerships between the arts and other sectors like education, health, and social services.
- **Advocate for Policy Support:** Ensure supportive policies at local, regional, and national levels that recognise the arts as integral to social and community development.

The gathering concluded with a call for the new ministers to listen to the voices of practitioners and communities, to better understand their needs, challenges, and successes.

For a detailed summary of the discussion and the draft collective letter to the new ministerial team, please click [here](#) to read the AWA-Gathering-July-2024-Dear-Powers-That-Be-NOTES-2024-07-08.

We hope this account of our meeting will help inspire significant support and recognition for participatory arts, ensuring their continued impact on individuals and communities across the UK.

If you are passionate about the value and potential of participatory arts, we invite you to join us in our mission. By becoming a member of the ArtWorks Alliance, you will be part of a network of practitioners, researchers, funders, and policymakers who share knowledge, resources, and opportunities to advance the field of participatory arts. You will also have a voice in advocating for the recognition and support of this vital sector, both nationally and internationally. To find out more about the benefits and process of joining the ArtWorks Alliance, please visit our website, or contact us. We look forward to hearing from you and welcoming you to our community of practice.

Resources

The document mentions several resources and citations along with their URLs. Here is a list of these resources:

1. Reflective Piece on Socially Engaged / Community-Based Projects:

– URL:

2. The 2020 Rome Charter:

– URL:

3. Creative Health Quality Framework:

– URL:

4. Europeana Impact Playbook:

– URL: (<https://pro.europeana.eu/page/europeana-impact-playbook>)

5. Article by Eleanor Belfiore on the 'Hidden Costs of Labour' in SEAP:

– URL:

Call-Out to ArtWorks Alliance Members – September Gathering ‘Cross Art-Form Practice’

By Rob Watson

<https://artworksalliance.uk/call-out-to-artworks-alliance-members-september-gathering-cross-art-form-practice/>

July 19, 2024

Categories: Gathering, News

Tags: Cross Art-Forms, Crossing Boundaries, Gathering



We are excited to announce the upcoming ArtWorks Alliance gathering, “Crossing Boundaries: Cross Art-Form Practice within the Participatory Arts Sector,” scheduled for **Wednesday, 4th September 2024**, from 10am to 12pm online.

Book Tickets: <https://www.brownpapertickets.com/event/6362142>

This session, facilitated by Sue Caudle of DIY Theatre Company, who will explore the value and challenges of cross art-form practice in the participatory arts sector. We aim to:

- Enhance communication across disciplines to foster collaboration.
- Highlight the benefits of cross art-form practice for community participants.
- Discuss the advantages for participatory arts practitioners.
- Identify opportunities and challenges in interdisciplinary work.

Sue will share DIY Theatre Company’s experiences with multisensory work involving artists with

lived experiences of learning disabilities.

We invite our members to contribute to this event. Your stories, insights, and experiences with cross art-form participatory arts are invaluable. Contributions can be shared live during the session or through other formats such as project resources or blog posts.

Please let us know by the end of July if you would like to participate and contribute to the session. Your input will be instrumental in developing and enriching this event.

- **Email:** info@artworksalliance.uk
- **WhatsApp:** <https://chat.whatsapp.com/EpEKV0QPWjoHQvIxL10GK2>

We look forward to your participation and to the vibrant exchange of ideas and experiences.

Best regards,

Sue Caudle

ArtWorks Alliance

ArtWorks Alliance Podcast – Trauma Informed Community Arts Practice

By Rob Watson

<https://artworksalliance.uk/artworks-alliance-podcast-trauma-informed-community-arts-practice/>

August 5, 2024

Categories: Podcast

Tags: Care, Community Arts Practice, Healing, Trauma Informed



Podcast: [Download](#)

Subscribe: [RSS](#)

Trauma-informed practice is crucial for participatory arts, as it ensures that art projects are safe, inclusive, and supportive spaces for all participants, especially those who have experienced trauma. It aligns with the broader goals of participatory arts to empower communities, promote cultural democracy, and facilitate personal and social transformation through creative expression. The insights shared by the guests highlight the importance of sensitivity, ethical considerations, and ongoing professional development in achieving these aims.

In this episode of the ArtWorks Alliance Podcast, Rob Watson talks with Catherine Cartwright, Katie Smith, and Theresa Easton, who are all experienced in community arts practice. The central topic of discussion is trauma-informed community arts practice.

Catherine Cartwright has recently submitted a PhD thesis on trauma-informed community arts practice and has extensive experience as a community artist working with women affected by

gender-based violence. Katie Smith is a retired social practice artist and trained psychotherapist, with experience working in challenging settings and integrating therapy with social arts practice. Theresa Easton is a community artist and academic, with experience in working on projects during austerity cuts and focusing on cultural democracy through arts.

The podcast begins with an exploration of what trauma is and what being trauma-informed means. The term “trauma-informed” originates from public health and involves understanding trauma’s impact on individuals’ ability to self-regulate and engage in social interactions. Trauma is discussed not only as individual incidents but also as structural and cultural phenomena, such as poverty, racism, and misogyny, which create chronic stress and impact well-being.

The guests share their experiences working with different communities, highlighting the importance of understanding trauma to avoid harm and foster healing. For example, Catherine talks about her work with women affected by violence, while Katie discusses her transition to psychotherapy to better support her practice. They emphasise the necessity of self-awareness and professional support for practitioners to handle the emotional demands of trauma-informed work.

The discussion includes the challenges of working within funding constraints and the need for time and reflection in trauma-informed practices. The guests highlight the tension between funders’ expectations for measurable outcomes and the nuanced, often intangible, successes in community arts projects. Also discussed are the ethical implications of ensuring that practitioners are adequately trained to handle trauma without re-traumatising participants are stressed.

Despite the challenges, the guests express the joy they find in their work, particularly when they see participants form lasting connections and communities through their engagement in the arts. They note that true success often lies in small, significant moments, such as participants returning to sessions or forming supportive relationships, which indicate healing and empowerment.

The podcast concludes with a discussion on how to expand trauma-informed practices within the arts, advocating for broader recognition of the value of these approaches and the need for professional support and training for artists.

Catherine provides a video presenting a summary and key points from her research. The video discusses the importance of feeling connected and cared for as central to recovering from trauma. It emphasises the roles that organisations and artists play in creating safe and inclusive environments for individuals to feel seen and heard.

Watch the Video <https://youtu.be/CQ90SIXDhrw?si=6GbeB7iGfJcEOdp5>

Key Points Discussed:

Importance of Connection and Care

- Feeling connected to others and being cared about is crucial for trauma recovery.
- Organisations and artists should ensure that individuals feel both seen and heard to create a safe space of collective care.

Impact of Oppressive Structures

- Structural forces such as racism and misogyny cause trauma.
- This trauma can be exacerbated by disempowering dynamics in relationships.
- Artists and organisations should reflect on their work intentions to avoid reinforcing oppressive power relations.

Building Trust

- Trauma survivors often have issues with trust, making them feel unsafe easily.
- Developing trusting relationships requires generous amounts of time.
- Time for individual and shared reflection, self-care, and specialist support is essential.

Supporting Artists

- Trauma is common, and artists might be managing their own life experiences.
- Organisations need to provide emotional and operational support to artists.
- Supported artists can be reflective practitioners, responding with sensitivity and care to challenges and ethical dilemmas.

Conclusion

The discussion highlights the significance of care, connection, and support in trauma recovery, particularly within the context of the work done by artists and organisations. It calls for a thoughtful approach to avoid reinforcing trauma and to build trusting, supportive relationships.

AWA September Gathering – Exploring Cross Art-Form Practice in the Participatory Arts Sector

By Rob Watson

<https://artworksalliance.uk/awa-september-gathering-exploring-cross-art-form-practice-in-the-participatory-arts-sector/>

August 13, 2024

Categories: Gathering, News

Tags: AWA, Cross-Arts Practice, Gathering, participation



Are you passionate about participatory arts and curious about how collaboration across different artistic disciplines can spark creativity and innovation? The ArtWorks Alliance is excited to invite you to our September Gathering, where we will delve into the dynamic world of cross art-form practice within the participatory arts sector.

Event Details:

Date: Wednesday, 4th September 2024

Time: 10:00 AM to 12:00 Noon

Location: Online

Book Tickets: <https://www.brownpapertickets.com/event/6362142>

About the Event:

The theme for this gathering is “Crossing Boundaries between Disciplines: Cross Art-Form Practice within the Participatory Arts Sector.” As artists, we often find ourselves confined within the boundaries of our own disciplines. However, this session is designed to challenge those boundaries and explore the rich possibilities that emerge when we step beyond them.

Through a combination of case studies, interactive activities, and group discussions, we will explore key questions such as:

- How can we effectively communicate across disciplines to enhance collaboration?
- What is the value of cross art-form practice for community participants and participatory arts practitioners?
- What challenges arise when we attempt to cross these boundaries, and how can we overcome them?

The gathering is facilitated by:

- **Sue Caudle** – Artistic Director of DIY Theatre, a company that challenges perceptions and barriers, celebrating diversity and creativity, particularly among artists and leaders with learning disabilities.
- **Sarah Atter** – A Manchester-based musician with extensive experience in community projects, including work in healthcare, education, and criminal justice, as well as collaborative cross-art form projects.

Contributors:

We are thrilled to have contributors who will share their experiences and insights through case studies:

- **Ruthie Collins** – A writer and arts practitioner specialising in socially engaged and participatory arts, known for making the arts inclusive and accessible.
- **Conrad Molleson** – An Edinburgh-based artist and educator who integrates music with moving images to create engaging and playful experiences.
- **John Whall** – Participation and Outreach Lead at MBD, with expertise in leveraging VR, 3D animation, and digital skills for participatory artwork creation.

Why Attend?

This gathering is a unique opportunity to connect with like-minded artists, practitioners, and community leaders who are passionate about pushing the boundaries of their practice. Whether you're looking to collaborate across disciplines or simply want to learn more about the benefits and challenges of cross art-form practice, this event promises to be both enlightening and inspiring.

How to Attend:

Attendance is free, but spaces are limited, so we encourage you to sign up early. To register for the event, simply visit our event listing on Brown Paper Tickets, and complete the sign-up form. Once registered, you'll receive all the details you need to join the online session.

Join the AWA Community:

If you're not already a member of the ArtWorks Alliance, this is also a great opportunity to join our community of practice. AWA is a network of freelance professionals and organisations dedicated to supporting participatory arts practices. By becoming a member, you'll gain access to our online resources, events, and connections that can help you grow your practice and collaborate with others in the field. [Join Here](#).

We Look Forward to Seeing You There!

Don't miss this chance to be part of a vibrant discussion on the future of cross-disciplinary collaboration in the arts. Mark your calendar, sign up today, and get ready to explore the exciting possibilities that arise when we cross boundaries together.

Responding to Uncertainty in Community Arts

By Rob Watson

<https://artworksalliance.uk/responding-to-uncertainty-in-community-arts/>

September 3, 2024

Categories: Comment

Tags: Budget Cuts, Civic Disorder, College Closure, community engagement, participatory arts, Social Cohesion



In recent months, the arts and educational sectors have faced a series of significant challenges that have sparked widespread discussion and concern. The unexpected closure of Schumacher College, a respected institution known for its focus on ecological education and sustainability, has left a void in the academic community and raised questions about the future of specialised learning. Simultaneously, the decision by Creative Scotland to cease funding for individual artists has sent shockwaves through the artistic community, particularly affecting those involved in community and participatory arts projects. Adding to these concerns, the recent civil disorder in England has prompted the arts sector to respond with initiatives aimed at promoting community cohesion and healing, even as questions about artistic freedom and government influence have come to the fore.

This post aims to explore these developments in depth, considering their implications for community and participatory arts practitioners. By examining the closure of Schumacher College, the funding cuts in Scotland, and the arts sector's response to social unrest, we seek to raise pertinent questions that encourage reflection and dialogue within the community arts field. As we navigate these challenges, it is crucial to consider how they shape our work and the broader role

of the arts in fostering resilient, cohesive communities.

Closure of Schumacher College

The recent closure of Schumacher College has sent ripples through the educational and environmental communities, eliciting a strong reaction from various stakeholders. Founded on the principles of holistic and ecological education, Schumacher College has been a beacon for sustainability studies, attracting students and educators committed to exploring innovative approaches to ecological literacy and environmental stewardship.

The decision to close the college has been met with widespread disappointment and concern. Students and staff have expressed feelings of betrayal, particularly due to the timing of the closure, which has left many in a state of uncertainty just as the academic year was set to begin. This abrupt disruption has had a profound emotional impact, raising questions about the future of the college's educational mission and the wellbeing of those who are part of its community.

Beyond the immediate concerns of students and staff, the closure is viewed as a significant loss for the field of ecological education. Prominent figures in environmental advocacy, such as George Monbiot, have voiced their dismay, highlighting the critical role that Schumacher College played in fostering an understanding of sustainability at a time when ecological literacy is more important than ever. The closure has sparked broader conversations about the sustainability of niche educational institutions, particularly those that serve a vital, yet often underfunded, area of study.

For community and participatory arts practitioners, the closure of Schumacher College raises several important questions. First, it challenges us to consider how the principles of ecological literacy and sustainability can continue to be integrated into our work, even in the absence of institutions like Schumacher College. What role can community arts play in preserving and advancing the educational and cultural legacy of such institutions? Additionally, how can practitioners contribute to the broader discourse on the sustainability of specialised education, particularly in fields that intersect with environmental and social justice?

The closure of Schumacher College also prompts reflection on the vulnerability of educational institutions that operate outside of mainstream frameworks. As community and participatory arts practitioners, we must ask ourselves how we can support the sustainability of these institutions, ensuring that their missions continue to thrive even in challenging times. How can we advocate for the preservation of spaces dedicated to ecological and holistic education, and what partnerships or initiatives might we pursue to safeguard their future?

These questions are vital as we move forward, seeking to understand and address the implications of Schumacher College's closure for the broader field of community and participatory arts. By engaging with these issues, we can contribute to a dialogue that not only honours the

legacy of Schumacher College but also explores new ways to sustain and enrich the intersection of arts, education, and environmental stewardship.

Creative Scotland's Funding Cuts

The recent decision by Creative Scotland to cease funding for individual artists through the Open Fund for Individuals has reverberated across the Scottish arts community, eliciting widespread concern and criticism. This move, which comes amidst broader budgetary constraints, has been labelled “devastating” by many within the arts sector, particularly those who rely on such funding to sustain their work in community and participatory arts.

The backlash from artists has been immediate and vocal. High-profile figures like Alan Cumming and Sam Heughan have publicly condemned the decision, arguing that it undermines the very fabric of Scotland's cultural landscape. For many artists, the Open Fund represented a crucial source of support, enabling them to pursue creative projects that contribute to the cultural richness and social fabric of their communities. The abrupt withdrawal of this funding has left many questioning the future of arts projects that rely on such financial backing.

Beyond the immediate impact on individual artists, the decision has sparked a broader critique of how arts funding is managed in Scotland. Some have questioned whether Creative Scotland's resources have been allocated effectively, with concerns raised about potential inefficiencies or mismanagement. This has led to a wider discussion about the role of government in supporting the arts, particularly in times of economic austerity.

For community and participatory arts practitioners, the cessation of individual artist funding presents significant challenges. These cuts threaten to reduce the availability of grassroots arts initiatives that engage local communities, particularly those that operate on tight budgets and depend heavily on such funding. Without access to these funds, many artists and small arts organisations may struggle to continue their work, potentially leading to a reduction in the diversity and accessibility of community arts projects across Scotland.

This situation prompts several critical questions for practitioners. How can we sustain our work in the face of reduced funding opportunities? What alternative funding models or sources of support can be explored to ensure that community and participatory arts projects remain viable and vibrant? Additionally, how can we collectively advocate for more transparent and equitable funding policies that recognise the value of community arts and the need for ongoing investment in this sector?

The funding cuts also raise important considerations about the future direction of the arts in Scotland. As practitioners, we must consider how to respond to these challenges creatively and constructively. How can we collaborate more effectively to pool resources and support one another

in this difficult time? What role can advocacy play in influencing future funding decisions and ensuring that the voices of community and participatory artists are heard in the broader cultural policy debate?

In confronting these questions, it is essential to maintain a focus on the long-term sustainability of community and participatory arts. By exploring new strategies for funding and support, and by engaging in dialogue with policymakers and the broader arts community, we can work towards ensuring that the arts remain a vital and accessible part of Scotland's cultural landscape, even in the face of financial challenges.

Arts Sector's Response to Civil Disorder in England

The civil disorder that unfolded across England in August 2024 has had profound social and political implications, with the arts sector responding in a variety of ways. These events have prompted a multifaceted approach from artists and cultural organisations, who are striving to use their work to foster community cohesion and provide a platform for healing and reflection in the aftermath of the unrest.

In the wake of the riots, the Arts Council England and other cultural bodies have expressed solidarity with those affected, offering support to both communities and artists impacted by the events. This response underscores the belief that the arts can play a crucial role in addressing the underlying social tensions that contributed to the unrest. By promoting messages of unity and resilience, the arts sector is seeking to contribute to the rebuilding of trust and understanding within communities that have been deeply affected by the violence.

However, this response is not without its challenges. The political climate following the riots has raised concerns about the potential for government influence over artistic content, particularly as the UK Prime Minister has suggested restrictions on certain forms of expression related to the unrest. This has sparked a broader debate within the arts community about the balance between artistic freedom and social responsibility, particularly in times of heightened political tension.

For community and participatory arts practitioners, these developments raise critical questions about the role of the arts in times of social unrest. How can we, as practitioners, use our work to address the root causes of such disorder, while also promoting healing and cohesion within divided communities? What are the ethical considerations when creating art that responds to such sensitive and potentially polarising events?

Moreover, the potential for government restrictions on artistic expression poses a significant challenge. How can practitioners navigate these restrictions while maintaining the integrity of their work? What strategies can be employed to ensure that the arts continue to serve as a platform for free expression and critical dialogue, even in the face of political pressures?

The response to the riots also highlights the need for collaboration between the arts sector and other community-based initiatives. In many instances, sports and arts organisations have been urged to work together to promote peace and understanding. For community and participatory arts practitioners, this presents an opportunity to explore new partnerships that leverage the power of both arts and sports to bring communities together.

As we consider these questions, it is essential to reflect on the broader role of the arts in society. The events of August 2024 remind us that the arts are not just a form of expression, but also a means of engaging with and addressing the most pressing social issues of our time. By using our work to foster dialogue, understanding, and resilience, we can contribute to a more cohesive and just society, even in the face of significant challenges.

The arts sector's response to the civil disorder in England underscores the importance of community and participatory arts in times of crisis. As practitioners, we must continue to explore how our work can contribute to healing and rebuilding, while also navigating the complex ethical and political landscape that accompanies such efforts. By doing so, we can help to ensure that the arts remain a vital and powerful force for positive change in our communities.

Moving Forward

The recent events affecting the arts and educational sectors have highlighted the intricate challenges that community and participatory arts practitioners face in navigating an increasingly complex and uncertain landscape. The closure of Schumacher College, the funding cuts by Creative Scotland, and the civil disorder in England are more than isolated incidents; they are symptomatic of broader shifts that demand careful consideration and strategic responses from those working in the arts.

Schumacher College's closure has brought to the fore the fragility of institutions dedicated to niche, yet vital, areas of study such as ecological education. This event challenges us to think creatively about how we can preserve and carry forward the educational and cultural legacies of such institutions within our own work.

Creative Scotland's funding cuts have sent shockwaves through the arts community, particularly impacting those involved in grassroots and community arts projects. This decision compels us to re-evaluate our approaches to funding and sustainability, exploring new models of support and advocating for more transparent and equitable funding policies that recognise the unique value of community arts.

The arts sector's response to civil disorder in England has underscored the critical role of the arts in promoting healing and cohesion in times of social unrest. However, it also raises important questions about the balance between artistic freedom and social responsibility, especially in a

politically charged environment where government influence may challenge the autonomy of artistic expression.

In light of these challenges, it is essential for community and participatory arts practitioners to engage in reflective dialogue, not only to address the immediate impacts of these events but also to consider their long-term implications for the field. By asking the hard questions—about sustainability, funding, ethics, and the role of the arts in society—we can better prepare ourselves to navigate these turbulent times.

ArtWorks Alliance will continue to discuss and call attention to the key issues at play and raise pertinent questions that practitioners must grapple with as they continue their work. The road ahead may be fraught with challenges, but it is also an opportunity to reaffirm the importance of community and participatory arts in fostering resilience, cohesion, and positive change in our society.

As we move forward, let us use these events as a catalyst for deeper reflection, collaboration, and advocacy. By doing so, we can help ensure that the arts not only survive but thrive, continuing to enrich the lives of individuals and communities in profound and meaningful ways.

Reflecting on the ArtWorks Alliance Gathering – Crossing Boundaries in Participatory Arts

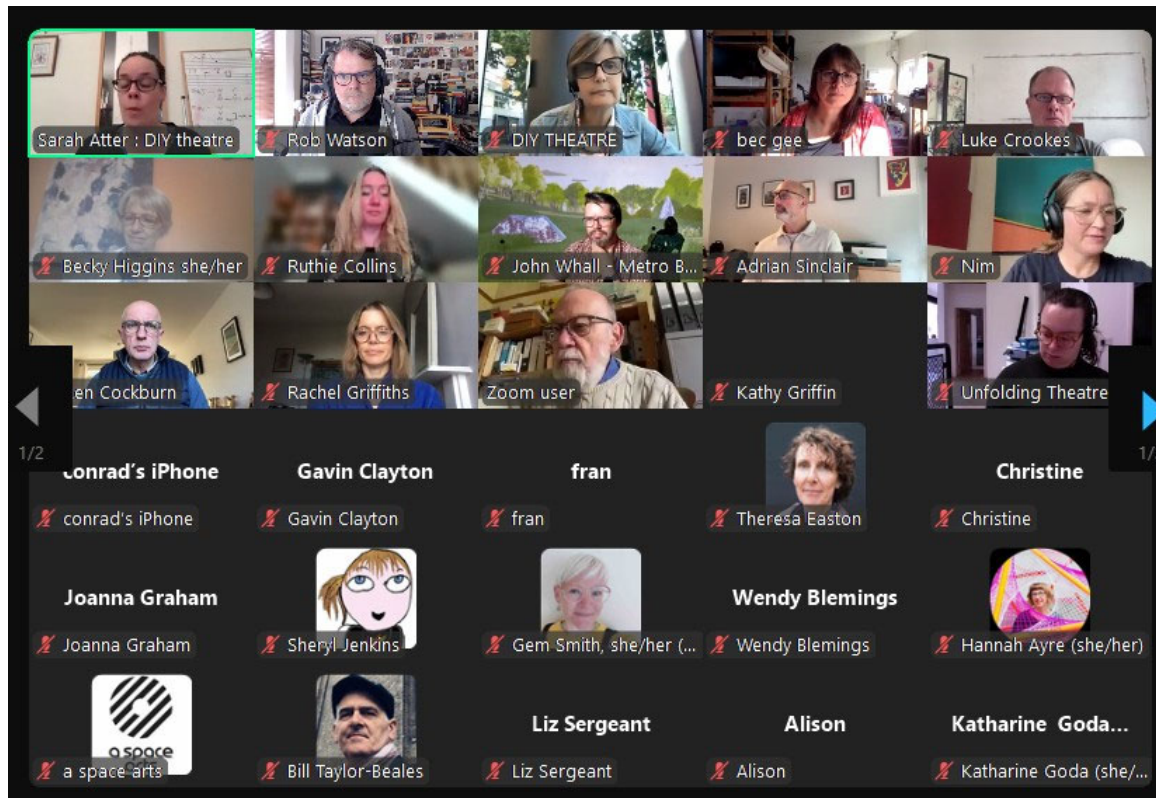
By Rob Watson

<https://artworksalliance.uk/reflecting-on-the-artworks-alliance-gathering-crossing-boundaries-in-participatory-arts/>

September 4, 2024

Categories: Gathering, News

Tags: ArtWorks Alliance, Cross-Arts, Gathering, September, Total Communication



Exploring Cross-Art Form Collaborations

ArtWorks Alliance was delighted to bring together a diverse group of participants for the recent ArtWorks Alliance gathering earlier today. Focused on the theme of Crossing Boundaries, this session explored how cross-art form collaboration, particularly in participatory arts, can create meaningful, inclusive, and impactful practices for artists and communities alike. The discussions and activities sparked plenty of reflection, and we're excited to share the key insights from this rich session. *(This is a quick AI-generated summary, hopefully it's reasonably accurate, but do let us know so we can improve the final summary – RW).*

Cross-Art Form Practice at the Core

The workshop centred around how different art forms—music, theatre, visual arts, and movement—intersect to enhance participatory arts. Facilitators emphasised the importance of using multiple art forms to create more accessible and engaging projects, allowing participants from all

backgrounds and abilities to find modes of expression that suit them.

Inclusivity and Total Communication

A particularly poignant part of the discussion was around “Total Communication”—the idea that all forms of communication, whether verbal, non-verbal, visual, or sensory, should be valued equally. This concept is essential in working with individuals who have learning disabilities or sensory impairments. The workshop highlighted how multi-sensory approaches allow everyone to participate fully, regardless of their verbal or written abilities.

A Multi-Sensory Journey

Facilitator Sue Caudle of DIY Theatre shared a fascinating case study about their current project *Hanging by a Thread*, a performance with environmental themes designed for participants with sensory impairments. This project illustrated how using touch, sound, movement, and other sensory experiences can engage participants more deeply and allow them to express themselves in ways that transcend traditional communication methods.

Collaborative Creation, not Prescription

One of the standout messages was how far the practice of co-creation has come. Instead of traditional top-down approaches, where specialists deliver specific aspects of a project, participants are now more directly involved in the creative process from start to finish. For instance, musicians and theatre practitioners work together throughout the entire process, ensuring that the music is not simply an add-on, but integral to the creative experience.

Challenges and Opportunities

Of course, collaboration across multiple art forms can bring challenges. Facilitator Sarah Atter reflected on the slower, more iterative process involved in cross-art form work. She described how participants often need more time and flexibility to explore and experiment. While this can be frustrating at times, it also leads to deeper engagement and a stronger sense of ownership among participants.

Training Gaps

Another critical issue raised during the workshop was the lack of adequate training for artists working in inclusive settings. DIY Theatre’s training programme with youth musicians was highlighted as a model to develop the necessary skills for those working with diverse participants. This example underscored the need for more structured support for practitioners to confidently navigate cross-art form and participatory settings.

The Role of Technology

In a world where remote participation is increasingly common, the session explored the role of digital tools in cross-art form practice. The experiment of using Zoom for remote music facilitation proved insightful, showing how technology can offer flexibility for facilitators while still providing participants with the full experience.

Reflective Practice

The interactive format of the session encouraged everyone to take part in breakout rooms, where participants experimented with cross-art form collaboration using all five senses. The lively discussion highlighted the power of reflective practice in understanding how these techniques could be applied in different settings.

Case Studies

We would like to extend our heartfelt gratitude to Ruthie Collins, Conrad Molleson, and John Whall for sharing their invaluable expertise and experiences in working on multi-sensory projects. Their insights into the integration of various art forms and the application of reflective practices have enriched our understanding and inspired new approaches to participatory arts.

- **Ruthie Collins** – A writer and arts practitioner specialising in socially engaged and participatory arts, known for making the arts inclusive and accessible.
- **Conrad Molleson** – An Edinburgh-based artist and educator who integrates music with moving images to create engaging and playful experiences.
- **John Whall** – Participation and Outreach Lead at MBD, with expertise in leveraging VR, 3D animation, and digital skills for participatory artwork creation.

Looking Ahead

We were thrilled with the energy and ideas that emerged from this gathering. From deepening our understanding of multi-sensory approaches to exploring how cross-art form collaborations can break down barriers, this event demonstrated the value of shared practice in participatory arts.

If you're eager to continue the conversation, remember that ArtWorks Alliance is active on social media (Twitter, Instagram, and Blue Sky) and is always looking to bring together practitioners passionate about the future of participatory arts.

Join ArtWorks Alliance and contribute to our future events, discussions and access our resources.

Thank you to everyone who participated and to our wonderful facilitators from DIY Theatre and

across the Arts Works Alliance. We look forward to future gatherings and further exploration of how we can create more inclusive, vibrant, and transformative art together.

Stay connected and keep creating!

Crossing Boundaries – Socially Engaged Arts in a Global Context

By Rob Watson

<https://artworksalliance.uk/crossing-boundaries-socially-engaged-arts-in-a-global-context/>

February 25, 2025

Categories: Gathering, News

Tags: Crossing Boundaries, Gathering, Placemaking



Socially engaged arts often take place within local communities, yet similar practices are happening around the world in different contexts and under different challenges. This online event will bring together artists and practitioners from across the globe to explore:

- How can socially engaged artists from different parts of the world inspire new ways of thinking in the UK?
- What innovative approaches can help artists and organisations navigate challenges and create meaningful change?
- How can we work across boundaries—cultural, structural, and systemic—while ensuring sustainable and ethical practices?

A partnership event by Take A Part & Art Works Alliance

 **Thursday, 20 March 2025**

 **10:00 AM – 12:00 PM (UK time)**

 **Online**

This event, hosted by **Take A Part** and **Art Works Alliance**, will feature speakers from **India, Malaysia, and Europe**, sharing their experiences of working within and across different social and cultural landscapes. Through discussion, breakout sessions, and provocations, we will explore fresh perspectives and practical ideas to strengthen the socially engaged arts sector in the UK.

Speakers

-  **Anurupa Roy** (India) – Katkatha Puppet Theatre
-  **Shaq Koyok** (Malaysia) – Indigenous artist and activist
-  **European Speaker TBC**

What to Expect

- ◆ **Thought-provoking talks** from international artists and practitioners
- ◆ **Small group discussions** to reflect on innovation and challenges in your own work
- ◆ **Panel Q&A** to share insights and explore ideas together

Event Programme

- 🕒 **10:00 AM** – Welcome & introduction
- 🕒 **10:05 AM** – **Provocation:** What can we learn from global approaches to innovation?
 - Introduction to the concept of **jugaad** – creative problem-solving in challenging conditions
 - Case study: **Katkatha Puppet Theatre** (India)
 - Breakout discussions on **working across boundaries** and **unlocking new possibilities**
- 🕒 **11:00 AM** – Insights from **Shaq Koyok (Malaysia) & European speaker (TBC)** on innovation in their work
- 🕒 **11:30 AM** – **Panel Q&A** – Open discussion with all speakers
- 🕒 **12:00 PM** – Event close

Book Your Place

This event is free for members of ArtWorks Alliance, and associates of Take A Part. A link for access to the event will be sent to members of ArtWorks Alliance and associates of Take A Part.

To join ArtWorks Alliance as a member and access these events, please visit the ArtWorks Alliance Join Online Page on our website.

This event is presented in partnership by **Take A Part CIO and Art Works Alliance**.

- ◆ **Bookings hosted by Art Works Alliance**
- ◆ **Promotion via Take A Part e-newsletter and social media**

Join us for an inspiring and interactive session as we explore new ways forward for socially engaged arts.

ArtWorks Alliance Podcast with Kate Stanley Frameworks UK

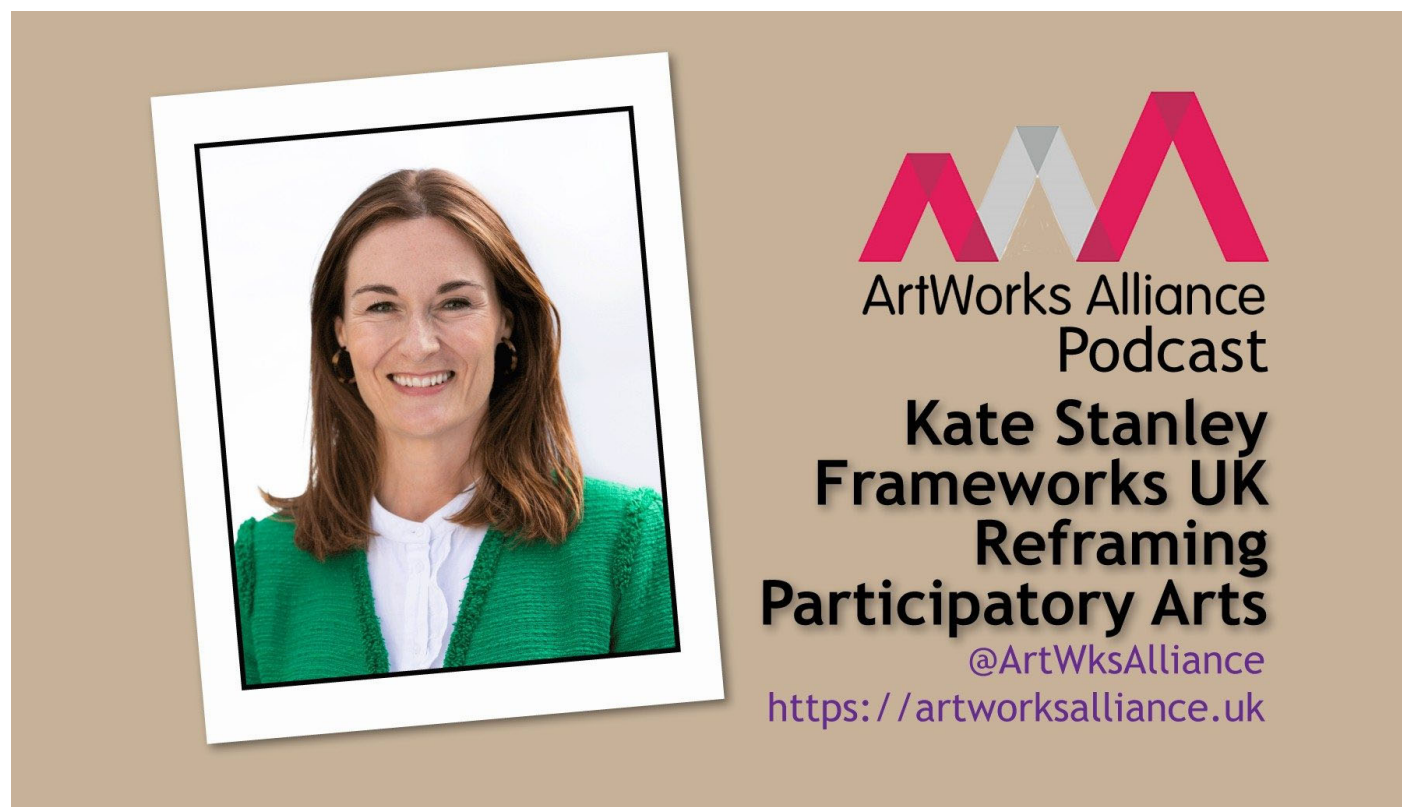
By Rob Watson

<https://artworksalliance.uk/artworks-alliance-podcast-with-kate-stanley-frameworks-uk/>

March 3, 2025

Categories: News, Podcast

Tags: Framing, Kate Stanley, Podcast



Podcast: [Download](#)

Subscribe: [RSS](#)

What makes a story resonate? How do we communicate the value of participatory arts in ways that build public understanding and policy support? These were some of the key questions explored in the latest ArtWorks Alliance podcast, featuring a conversation between Rob Watson and Kate Stanley of FrameWorks UK.

Kate, Director of FrameWorks UK, introduced the organisation's work in evidence-based communication strategies. Unlike traditional approaches that rely on intuition, FrameWorks UK applies rigorous research to understand how people think about social issues and how different narratives can shape attitudes, policies, and action. The conversation delved into why framing matters, particularly for participatory and community arts.

The Power of Framing: Moving Beyond Intuition

One of the central insights Kate shared was the importance of treating communication as a science rather than a gut-driven exercise. Using examples from previous research, she illustrated how changing the way we discuss issues can shift public perceptions. For instance, FrameWorks UK's work on childhood obesity revealed that the phrase itself triggered blame-focused narratives about poor parenting. However, reframing the discussion around children's health and food helped to centre the conversation on systemic solutions rather than individual responsibility.

For participatory arts practitioners and advocates, this insight is particularly relevant. Too often, the arts are framed in economic terms, with policymakers and funders asking about financial returns rather than social and cultural impact. Kate emphasised the need to lead with values—whether it's about the importance of human potential, community well-being, or creativity as a public good—before getting into specifics about individual projects or funding.

A New Approach to Arts Advocacy

Rob and Kate explored how these framing strategies could be applied to participatory arts. Too often, community arts are positioned as a secondary or 'nice-to-have' aspect of cultural policy, rather than being recognised as essential to social cohesion, public health, and democratic engagement. If we want to shift this perception, we need to rethink how we communicate about the role of the arts in everyday life.

Kate highlighted how narratives that focus solely on individual creativity or personal well-being can sometimes backfire, making participatory arts seem like a luxury rather than a necessity. Instead, framing participatory arts as a collective and structural necessity—one that benefits public life in the same way as education or healthcare—can help strengthen the case for long-term support and investment.

Building Consistent and Unified Messaging

Another key takeaway from the conversation was the importance of consistency in messaging. Too often, the participatory arts sector is fragmented, with organisations using different languages to make similar arguments. Kate advised that a stronger and more unified approach—one that consistently reinforces the same values—would help amplify the impact of advocacy efforts.

Rob noted that one of the challenges participatory arts faces is that it doesn't fit neatly into existing policy frameworks. Unlike the creative industries, which are well-defined in economic terms, community-led and participatory arts operate in a more decentralised and diverse way. The challenge, then, is to frame this diversity as a strength rather than a weakness, reinforcing its role in fostering social connection, civic engagement, and collective creativity.

What's Next?

The conversation between Rob and Kate highlighted the urgent need for a reframed approach to advocacy in participatory arts. By shifting the narrative, focusing on values, and maintaining consistency in messaging, we can build stronger public and policy support for participatory arts.

ArtWorks Alliance is committed to continuing this conversation and working with partners to develop new ways of communicating the value of participatory and community arts. If you're interested in being part of this discussion, we'd love to hear from you.

Listen to the full podcast episode and explore more about how framing can transform the way we communicate about participatory arts.

Join the conversation. Share your thoughts. Let's shape the future of participatory arts together.

ArtWorks Alliance Podcast – Justin O'Connor Culture is Not an Industry

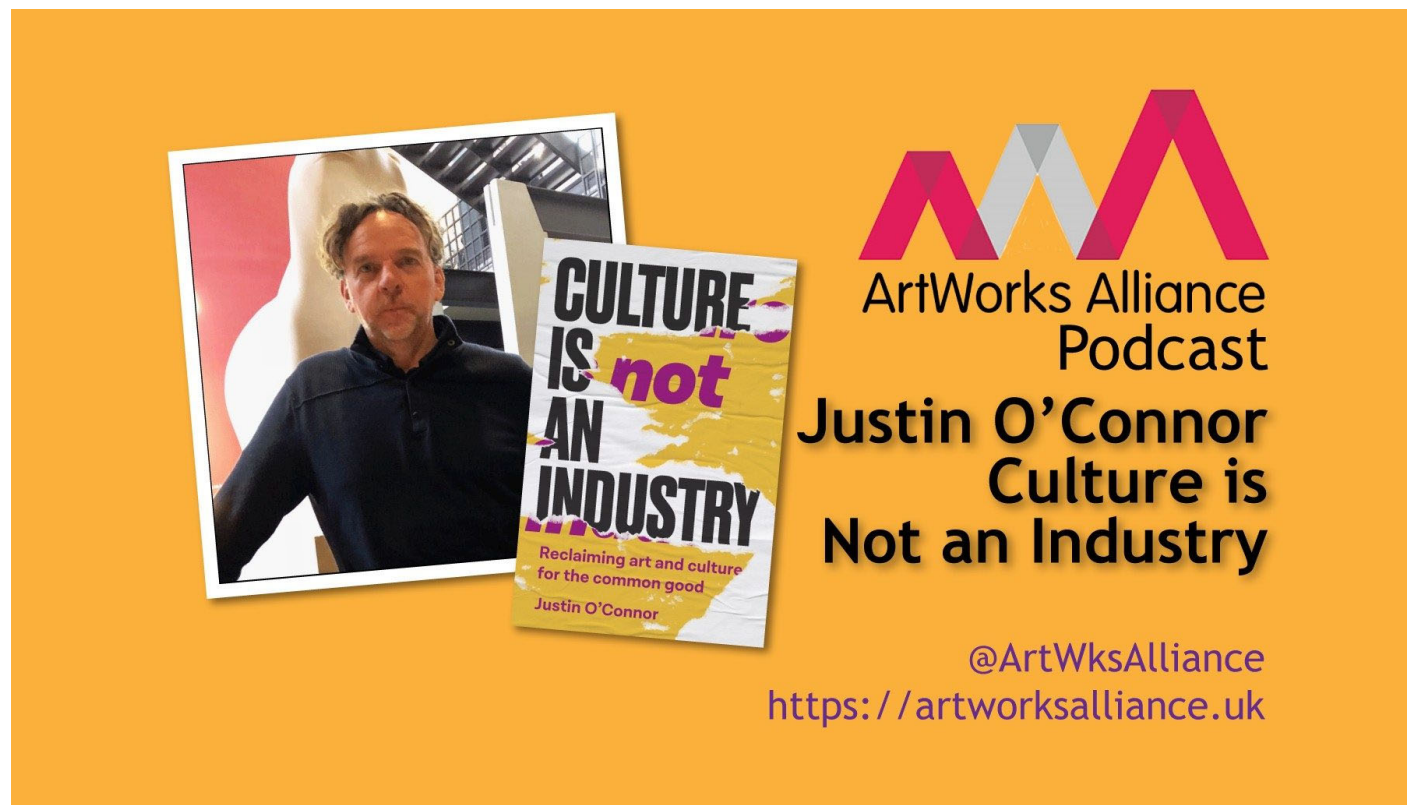
By Rob Watson

<https://artworksalliance.uk/artworks-alliance-podcast-justin-oconnor-culture-is-not-an-industry/>

April 3, 2025

Categories: News, Podcast

Tags: arts, Economy, Justin O'Connor



Podcast: [Download](#)

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In this conversation, Rob Watson speaks with cultural policy thinker and writer Justin O'Connor about the ideas behind his book *Culture is Not an Industry*, and what they mean for artists, policymakers and communities engaged in participatory and community-based practice.

They begin by locating the personal and political moment from which the book emerged. Justin is Professor of Cultural Economy at the University of South Australia. Justin reflects on his early experiences in Manchester's music and cultural scenes in the 1980s and 1990s, and how what once seemed like a hopeful model for urban renewal and creative regeneration slowly became absorbed into a more instrumental, economised framework—one that often sidelined the very cultural values and community aspirations it was supposed to promote.

As Rob notes, the book resonates because it feels like a reckoning with a story many of us have lived through: the promise that culture could transform lives and places, followed by a sense that

this promise was hollowed out by managerialism, short-termism and the shift towards “creative industries” as a catch-all policy tool. Justin and Rob discuss what are the consequences of treating culture as a sector rather than a shared space of meaning-making? How did the language of economic growth and innovation come to dominate the ways we talk about and support cultural work?

Throughout the conversation, there’s an insistence on slowing down and paying attention to the terms we use. Justin talks about the disappearance of the word “art” in cultural policy documents, replaced by more marketable language like “creative” or “innovation.” What gets lost in that substitution? Who benefits when symbolic and expressive practices are reframed as drivers of economic productivity? And how do these shifts affect the conditions in which participatory and community artists are expected to work?

Rob shares his own experience of cultural education and media production, noting the tensions between artistic expression and technical skill, and the way institutional boundaries often reinforce unhelpful distinctions. In thinking through these tensions, the discussion returns to the need to recognise artistic practice as something distinct—not because it is elite or rarefied, but because it speaks to human meaning, ritual, imagination, and collective life. Why do we continue to undervalue this, particularly when it comes to participatory forms of practice that emerge from people’s everyday lives and experiences?

There’s a shared frustration with the instrumentalisation of art as a tool for solving social problems that originate elsewhere in society. The pressure to prove impact—to deliver measurable outcomes—risks displacing the deeper, slower processes through which culture supports social connection, identity, and reflection. What does it mean to create spaces where people can explore, make, and share cultural expression without the expectation of economic return or social improvement? Can we reimagine cultural policy not as an investment strategy, but as a form of care?

Justin introduces the idea of the *foundational economy* as a way of rethinking the role of culture in society—not as an industry, but as part of the everyday infrastructure of life, alongside education, health and housing. Culture, in this framing, is a shared resource that needs maintenance, support, and access for all. If we approached cultural provision in this way, what would it look like? How might this affect how we fund, organise, and talk about participatory and community-based work?

The conversation doesn’t shy away from the structural challenges—precarity, underfunding, and the dominance of digital platforms that commodify attention and narrow our imaginative horizons. But there’s also a steady thread of care, curiosity and commitment to finding new ways of coming together. Where are the spaces where people can meet, talk, and make meaning beyond the metrics? What forms of local cultural infrastructure need to be rebuilt or reimaged? How can we

sustain those practices that don't show up in economic data, but matter deeply to people's sense of self and connection?

By the end of the discussion, the focus returns to people: to the artists, organisers and communities who continue to work in difficult conditions, holding open the space for cultural expression that is rooted, accessible, and transformative. It's not a question of saving the sector, but of asking what kind of cultural life we want to build, and how we can care for the conditions that make it possible.

Insights and Themes from ArtWorks Alliance Gathering – March 2025

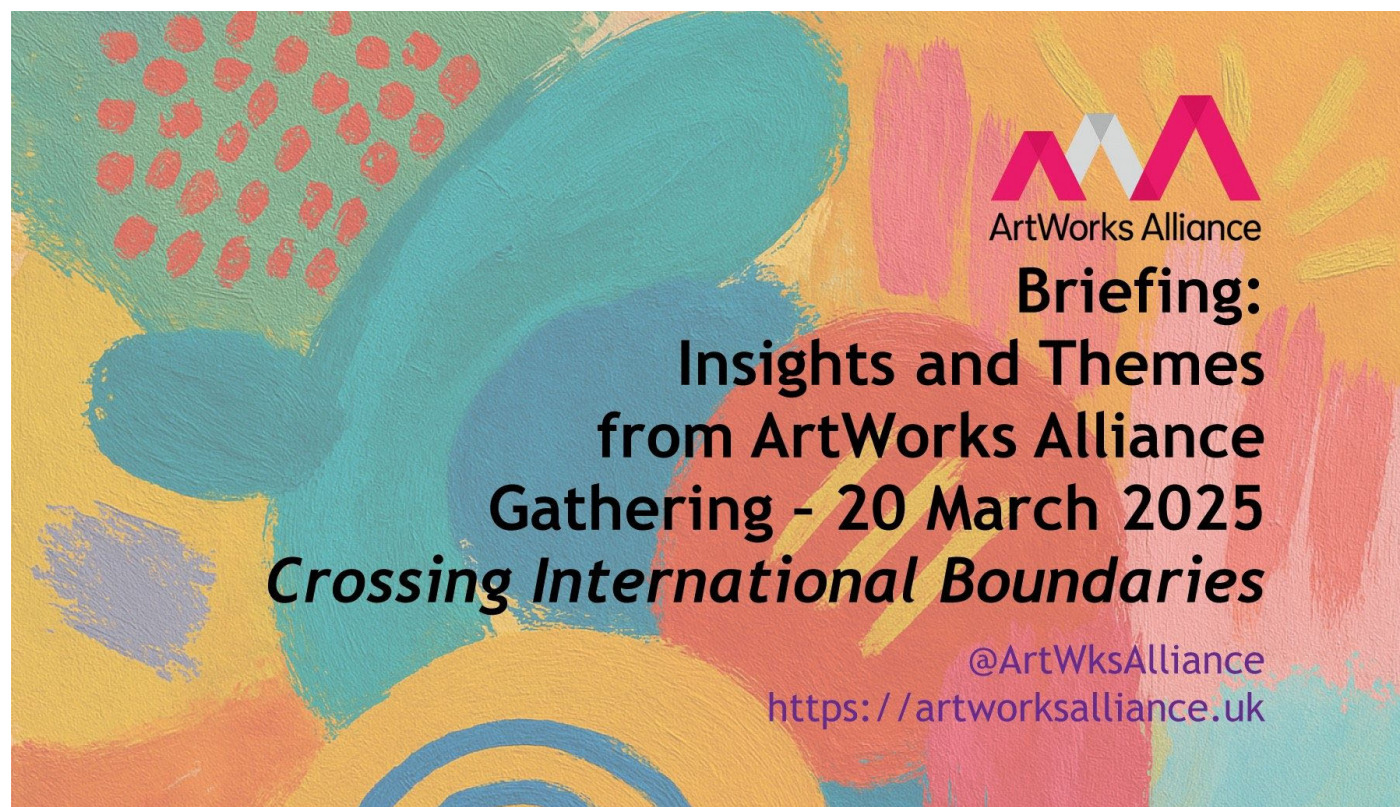
By Rob Watson

<https://artworksalliance.uk/insights-and-themes-from-artworks-alliance-gathering-march-2025/>

April 9, 2025

Categories: Gathering, News

Tags: Crossing Boundaries, International Practice, participation



On 20th March 2025, ArtWorks Alliance and Take A Part co-hosted *Crossing Boundaries*, an online gathering focused on socially engaged arts practices in a global context. The event brought together practitioners from India, Malaysia, and across the UK to explore how creative work rooted in community and place responds to local challenges—ranging from social injustice and funding constraints to environmental degradation and cultural displacement.

The gathering opened with a prompt from **Kim Wide** (Take A Part) and **Anurupa Roy** (Katkatha Puppet Theatre, India), followed by breakout discussions among UK-based practitioners. A final session featured insights from **Shaq Koyok**, an Indigenous artist from Malaysia whose work integrates environmental advocacy, oral storytelling, and intergenerational collaboration.

Across the sessions, several recurring themes emerged:

- Innovation through **constraint and adaptation**
- The role of **informal and overlooked spaces** in creative placemaking
- Challenges of **working within and against institutional systems**

- The importance of **care, cultural continuity, and community-defined leadership**

This event was particularly relevant to **ArtWorks Alliance members** as it highlighted practical, grounded strategies for sustaining meaningful arts work in contexts of uncertainty. By listening to voices from beyond the UK, participants were invited to question their assumptions, recognise shared struggles, and identify new possibilities for place-based, participatory practice.

The insights summarised in this briefing are offered as a resource for reflection, dialogue, and future action within the ArtWorks Alliance **Community of Practice**. They are accompanied by reflective questions that can be used in workshops, team meetings, or individual practice reviews.

Creative Placemaking and Working with What Exists

Kim Wide (Take A Part) reflected on the challenges facing the UK cultural sector—including diminishing resources and democratic erosion—and made a case for learning from global majority contexts. Drawing on asset-based community development, she encouraged practitioners to work with existing networks and avoid over-reliance on institutional permission or funding.

She challenged the notion of ‘best practice’ and highlighted the value of diverse networks as a way to surface new ways of thinking and acting in communities. Her remarks positioned artists as part of the community asset base.

Reflective questions to go forward with include:

- What are the tangible assets in my community that I might be overlooking?
- In what ways do I or my organisation replicate hierarchical thinking?
- What’s stopping me from starting a project with what I already have?

Innovation Through Constraint – The Concept of Jugaad

Anurupa Roy (Katkatha Puppet Theatre) introduced the Indian concept of ‘jugaad’—a form of improvised problem-solving. She described performance strategies that bypassed formal restrictions, including cricket-themed puppet theatre in public parks, and working with girls resisting child marriage in rural India.

Puppetry served as both a distancing mechanism and a storytelling method, enabling sensitive issues to be explored safely. Anurupa stressed cultural relevance and accessibility, such as using TikTok to reach young boys during lockdown.

Reflective questions:

- What symbolic or everyday forms could we draw on to make our work more locally

resonant?

- How do we design projects that invite participation without requiring formal permission?
- In what ways can abstraction, metaphor, or non-verbal forms be used to explore sensitive topics?

Breakout Room Discussions and Collective Reflections

Breakout discussions offered practical insights from practitioners across the UK. Key themes included care for freelance workers, use of alternative spaces (e.g. launderettes) as community hubs, challenges posed by rigid funding systems, and leadership models such as rotating responsibilities inspired by the 'goose formation'.

Participants reflected on the tension between creative autonomy and funder expectations, and the need to create informal infrastructures of care to sustain collaborative work.

Reflective questions:

- What do we need in place to care for ourselves and others in a freelance-led project?
- Are there informal or unexpected spaces in our community where creative work could thrive?
- How can we be more transparent about the compromises and choices behind our projects?

Environmental Arts and Indigenous-led Activism

Shaq Koyok (Malaysia) shared a practice grounded in the defence of Indigenous land, language, and cultural identity. His work includes turning children's drawings into puppetry-based performances and organising public parades to protest land encroachment and overdevelopment. He emphasised the use of art as a medium for civic expression and community memory.

Shaq also described symbolic gestures—such as children presenting illustrated memoranda to politicians—as acts of quiet but direct advocacy. His work connects oral storytelling, environmental knowledge, and intergenerational leadership.

Reflective questions:

- What environmental or cultural issues are present in the communities we work with, and how might art offer a means to respond?
- How might we involve young people not just as participants, but as authors and narrators of their own stories?
- What does cultural continuity mean in my context, and how can creative practice support it?

Summary

This gathering offered a valuable moment of connection between practitioners working in vastly different contexts but facing shared challenges—uncertain resources, contested public space, and the need for more equitable and locally grounded cultural work. The stories shared by Anurupa Roy and Shaq Koyok, alongside the reflections from ArtWorks Alliance members, illustrate that socially engaged arts is not a fixed method but a set of evolving practices shaped by circumstance, culture, and care.

For ArtWorks Alliance members, this is both an invitation and a reminder: the strength of our community lies not just in shared values but in the active exchange of experience. The learning doesn't end with the event—it deepens when we continue the conversation together.

Ways to Stay Involved and Share Your Practice

Watch the Recording: An edited version of the event will be made available via a private link, exclusively for members. It will include subtitles and segment markers to make it easier to revisit and share with your teams.

Join the Community Conversations: Regular online discussion sessions are held for members to reflect on practice, share challenges, and ask questions in a supportive space. Keep an eye on your inbox for the next invitation.

Connect with Peers: Use the members' email list or tag #artworksalliance on social media to share reflections, ask questions, or point to your own projects. A short post or comment might spark a valuable new exchange.

Contribute to the Podcast Series: We're developing a podcast led by members, featuring short, reflective interviews and practice-based insights. If you'd like to share a story from your work or suggest a theme, get in touch with the AWA team.

Document and Discuss Your Story: You might want to:

- Write a short piece about a project you've recently completed
- Share a dilemma or learning moment in a member session
- Pair up with another member to interview each other and reflect on your practice

These small actions help build a richer, more representative picture of the socially engaged arts field.

By continuing to reflect, share, and support one another, we strengthen not just our practices, but the wider infrastructure that socially engaged arts depends on. If this event left you with questions, ideas, or a sense of possibility—follow it. Take one next step. And invite someone else to do the same.

Framing the Future – But Who's Holding the Brush?

By Rob Watson

<https://artworksalliance.uk/framing-the-future-but-whos-holding-the-brush/>

April 24, 2025

Categories: Comment, News

Tags: community arts, Framing the Future, participatory arts

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Framing the Future: The Political Case for Strengthening the Visual Arts Ecosystem



Garth Gratrix, *Flamboyant Flamingos*, 2024, Grundy Art Gallery. Photo by Benjamin Nuttall



The publication of *Framing the Future: The Political Case for Strengthening the Visual Arts Ecosystem* arrives at a pivotal moment for the cultural sector. It sets out an articulate argument for embedding the visual arts more firmly within national policy priorities, positioning them not as an afterthought or adornment, but as a necessary component of how society addresses its wider challenges—from education and mental health to regional inequality and economic growth.

For those of us whose work is grounded in participatory and community-based practice, this report represents both a source of encouragement and a prompt for further reflection. It confirms what practitioners, facilitators, and community organisers have long understood: that cultural engagement is most powerful when it is collective, when it grows from shared experiences, and when it supports individuals and communities to express, connect, and navigate change on their own terms.

While the report is framed around the economic and strategic benefits of a well-supported visual arts ecosystem, it also contains a deeper current—one that quietly acknowledges the cultural labour taking place every day in community centres, libraries, schools, hospitals, and temporary studios. This is the work that happens between people, often without public attention or

institutional endorsement. It is the work of participation, and its significance lies in the relationships it fosters as much as in the outputs it produces.

The report's case studies offer clear examples of this. Project Art Works in Hastings, the NewBridge Project in Newcastle, and Take A Part in Plymouth are not simply delivering programmes or exhibitions; they are sustaining spaces where creativity is relational and embedded in the life of a place. Their achievements are not only artistic but social—cultivating trust, expanding access, and giving form to experiences that might otherwise go unacknowledged.

In the field of health and wellbeing, the report makes room for participatory practice through its attention to arts-based interventions in mental health and dementia care. It cites initiatives such as Hospital Rooms and The King's Trust's placement at John Hansard Gallery as evidence of what is possible when people are invited to engage with the arts in supportive, non-clinical settings. These are not quick fixes or diversions. Rather, they reflect sustained efforts to create environments where individuals can rediscover agency, rebuild confidence, and find moments of recognition and connection through shared creative processes.

In education, too, participatory approaches feature prominently, even if not always by name. The examples drawn from the National Saturday Club, Baltic's early years programmes, and Newlyn Art Gallery's support for teachers all rest on the premise that learning happens through doing, and that creative engagement flourishes when it is inclusive, responsive, and rooted in dialogue. These projects challenge assumptions that art education is the preserve of the talented or the resourced, and instead work towards more democratic models of creative development.

Despite these examples, the report tends to describe such work without fully naming it as participatory. This absence matters, not for reasons of branding or professional territory, but because what is not named is easily overlooked. Participatory arts practice—whether described as community-led, socially-engaged, or co-created—is not simply an extension of the visual arts. It is a distinctive and vital field in its own right, with its own methodologies, ethics, and forms of expertise. It relies on skills that are not always visible in exhibition catalogues or economic statistics: facilitation, listening, negotiation, care. These skills are often undervalued, yet they are precisely what make this work impactful in the contexts of social care, education, and place-making.

What this report makes possible is a more open conversation about how the visual arts ecosystem might better account for and support participatory practice. If the visual arts are to be seen as infrastructure—as the report argues they should be—then we need to ask what kinds of structures are required to support the fragile, relational work that participation entails. This means considering funding models that are not solely tied to project outcomes or visitor numbers, but which allow time for trust to develop and for collaborative approaches to take root. It also means valuing artists who choose to work in community settings not as a fallback or stepping stone, but

as a sustained and committed practice in its own right.

The report's proposals for a grassroots fund, a cultural investment partnership, and the expansion of education programmes all contain potential for strengthening this part of the ecosystem. However, this potential will only be realised if these measures are shaped in dialogue with those who work in and alongside communities. Structural investment will be important, but so too will be the quieter forms of support: opportunities for reflection, peer exchange, and long-term accompaniment.

At ArtWorks Alliance, we see the visual arts not just as a sector or an economy, but as a social field—one that comes alive through participation, and one that draws its strength from the diversity of those who contribute to it. We welcome the clarity and momentum offered by *Framing the Future*, and we encourage those leading its implementation to keep participatory and community-based practice in view. The future we wish to frame is not one in which a few speak for the many, but one in which everyone has the means and the space to speak, create, and be heard.

ArtWorks Alliance Podcast – Holding the Space for Emergent Arts

By Rob Watson

<https://artworksalliance.uk/artworks-alliance-podcast-holding-the-space-for-emergent-arts/>

April 29, 2025

Categories: News, Podcast

Tags: Emergent Art, Holing Place, In-Situ



ArtWorks Alliance

Podcast

**In-Situ: Anna Taylor
Holding Space
for Emergent Art**

@ArtWksAlliance

<https://artworksalliance.uk>



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In this episode of the ArtWorks Alliance podcast, Rob Watson is joined by Anna Taylor, co-director at In-Situ Arts, to explore the values, practices, and tensions that shape a long-standing commitment to socially engaged art in Pendle, Lancashire. Their conversation moves beyond familiar labels—community arts, participatory arts, socially engaged practice—to reflect on how creative work unfolds when the emphasis is placed not on definitions, but on attentiveness, process, and the shared experience of place.

Anna begins by describing her own journey into In-Situ, a process marked by a shift from communications work to what she now sees as a more reflective practice of “holding space.” This concept becomes a recurring touchstone throughout the conversation. Rather than directing outcomes or designing projects to fit institutional frameworks, Anna speaks of creating space in which others can bring themselves fully into a process. That space, she explains, is not neutral—it carries the tension of different values, expectations, and lived experiences—but it offers a way of

working that invites something meaningful to emerge.

The idea of emergence runs deeply through In-Situ's practice. Drawing on metaphors of scattering seeds or cultivating soil, Anna talks about making room for the unknown, and recognising that not all growth is predictable or harmonious. The organisation's embedded approach is not about parachuting in with solutions, nor about producing cultural outputs to meet external agendas. It is grounded instead in long-term presence, reciprocity, and dialogue with the people who live and work in Pendle. For In-Situ, place is not simply a backdrop, but an active participant in shaping what is possible.

This orientation extends to how In-Situ defines itself as an organisation. Eschewing traditional hierarchies, the team describes itself as a group of co-directors with a fluid structure and consensus-based decision-making. Anna reflects on the importance of this approach in ensuring that the work remains connected to the people and context it serves. It also demands a high degree of self-awareness, particularly around power, voice, and representation. In-Situ's code of ethics, developed early in its history, remains a vital reference point for navigating these complexities.

Rob and Anna also discuss how socially engaged art can resist the dominant narratives of the creative industries. In-Situ's work is not driven by metrics of success, spectacle, or exportable cultural products. Instead, it values the quiet, sometimes invisible labour of relationships, the incremental shifts in confidence or connection, and the shared acts of making, talking, and thinking together. This includes work with groups like Mums to Mums, a longstanding collective of local women who have come to see their everyday creativity—through food, home-making, and care—as part of a broader artistic life.

Rather than offering a model to be replicated elsewhere, Anna suggests that the work of In-Situ points to the value of unique responses in unique contexts. What might be transferable, however, is the spirit of inquiry, the refusal to settle for easy categories, and the emphasis on cultural democracy as a lived, negotiated process. The conversation often returns to the idea of not knowing—of making space for difference and dissonance without needing to resolve it.

Throughout, Anna resists simplifications. Whether discussing the role of artists, the language of participation, or the legacy of Pendle's history—including its association with the persecution of women during the witch trials—she brings a nuanced and grounded perspective to how creative practice can both reflect and shape the cultural life of a place. The conversation is not about outcomes or models, but about ongoing processes of listening, adapting, and caring—for one another, for place, and for the possibilities that emerge when we give space to what matters.

To listen to the full conversation with Anna Taylor, visit artworksalliance.uk or subscribe to the podcast via your usual platform.

Rebalancing the Arts Economy — Beyond Crowding In, Towards Foundational Culture

By Rob Watson

<https://artworksalliance.uk/rebalancing-the-arts-economy-beyond-crowding-in-towards-foundational-culture/>

May 20, 2025

Categories: Comment

Tags: Foundational Economy, Grass-Roots Arts, Social Funding



A recent report commissioned by Arts Council England, *Leading the Crowd: A report on the role of public investment in Crowding In*, offers compelling evidence that public investment in arts and culture remains essential. It documents how institutions such as the National Theatre, Southbank Centre, and English National Opera have used public grants as leverage to secure significant additional income from private sources. This “Crowding In” effect—where public funding enhances credibility, reduces risk, and attracts sponsorship, philanthropy, and earned revenue—underpins what is commonly called the UK’s “mixed economy model” for the arts.

But while the report offers detailed and well-documented case studies, its focus remains narrowly fixed on large, high-profile institutions—National Portfolio Organisations with established development teams and the capacity to manage capital campaigns. What’s missing is any consideration of how this approach translates to the *foundational level* of our cultural ecology: the freelance artists, voluntary associations, micro-organisations, and place-based creative networks that exist well beyond the reach of metropolitan arts philanthropy or corporate sponsorship.

This omission is more than a blind spot. It reflects a long-standing structural imbalance in the way the UK funds the arts. Institutions with stature, buildings, and legacy status naturally attract investment and attention. But the foundational layer—the grassroots cultural life that sustains community participation, civic creativity, and everyday expression—is too often left with precarious access to funding, if any at all.

The problem is not simply that public investment is too small. It's that it is too centralised, too bureaucratised, and too narrowly targeted. As we face the prospect of a possible break-up or reorganisation of the Department for Culture, Media and Sport, and a growing emphasis on devolution to English regions and the devolved nations, a more radical mindset is needed. Policymakers and funding bodies must ask: how do we *push funding down* to the lowest levels of society—not just to support culture that is *seen*, but culture that is *lived*?

We cannot build a resilient arts ecosystem by relying solely on high-status institutions to trickle down benefits. Nor should we respond by simply expanding centralised grant schemes. What's needed is a rebalancing of our expectations—towards supporting *socially grounded, local, and regenerative arts economies*. This means creating the conditions for small-scale arts organisations, collectives, and practitioners to thrive without being trapped in the cycles of application writing, compliance, and gatekeeping that characterise much of the current system.

We need to reimagine what a healthy cultural economy looks like, not as a hierarchy of prestige, but as a *distributed network of cultural value*. This is where the principles of the **Foundational Economy** become vital. Just as we argue for foundational services in housing, care, and transport, so too must we recognise foundational culture: the shared creative life that binds communities, supports wellbeing, and gives meaning to place.

This will require public funding to be more than a badge of prestige or a lever for match-funding. It must become an *enabler of local cultural capacity*. Investment models should be designed to support co-created, low-cost, high-impact cultural activity—often informal, always place-rooted. Rather than expecting every project to become self-sustaining or commercialised, we should nurture *circular, place-based economies* where cultural value is recognised, reciprocated, and reinvested in community life.

It also means trusting practitioners. Freelance artists and community facilitators are too often expected to function as administrators, fundraisers, and evaluators. We should be building mechanisms that *free up creativity*, not bury it under process. Let's invest in intermediaries who can carry the administrative burden and make space for artistic work. Let's develop shared infrastructure—civic studios, neighbourhood venues, digital platforms—that reduce cost and complexity.

Above all, let's treat foundational cultural work not as an afterthought, but as a strategic priority. If

we want to crowd in meaningful investment, we must first *crowd in belief*—that the everyday, participatory, community-based arts are not marginal, but essential.

We at ArtWorks Alliance call on policymakers, funders, and local authorities to rethink the logic of cultural investment—not to abandon the institutions that inspire us, but to extend opportunity and sustainability to those working at the roots of cultural life. Only then can we build an arts economy that is not only mixed, but balanced, just, and enduring.

ArtWorks Alliance Gathering – Tough Times Refresh and Revitalise

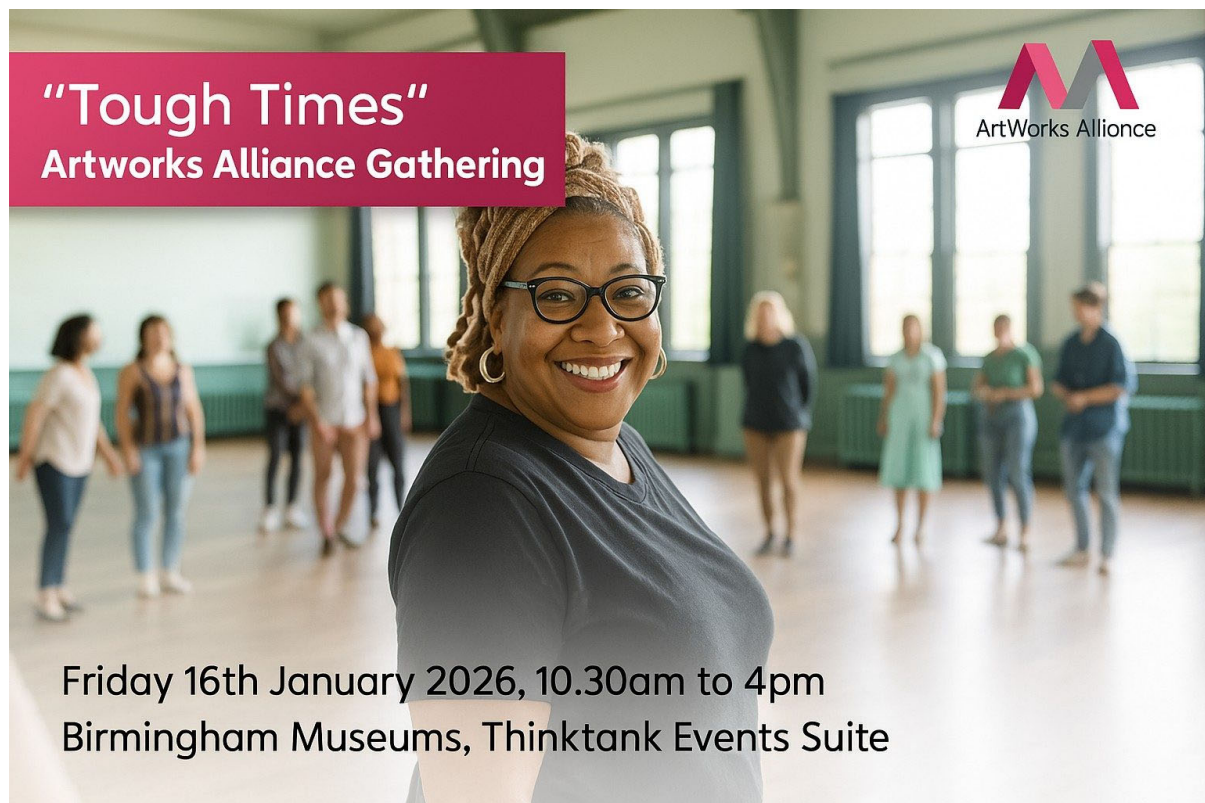
By Rob Watson

<https://artworksalliance.uk/artworks-alliance-gathering-tough-times-refresh-and-revitalise/>

November 19, 2025

Categories: Gathering, News

Tags: Gathering, Revitalisation, Tough Times



Participatory Arts has rarely been more needed than in the tough times we are currently experiencing.

Artworks Alliance will be holding our first in-person meeting for several years.

It is crucial that within this time of fragmentation and division that we come together to share our experiences, frustrations, fears, hopes and strategies and find ways to support each other.

This Gathering will be an opportunity for anyone involved in participatory arts, socially engaged practice and creative activism to come together to create a safe space in which we can:

- Refresh and revitalise ourselves whilst inspiring and energising one another.
- Creatively explore some important topics of the moment, including power-sharing; care; reaffirming our values & maintaining our integrity; developing tactics for togetherness and progress.
- Share practice and strategies for confronting “the fierce urgency of now” (Martin Luther

King).

- Create and manage our own agenda using an Open Space approach.

Our aspiration is that everyone who attends the Tough Times Gathering will go away with a renewed energy and faith in the crucial community practice we are involved in each and every day. Together, we will move forwards to shape the future with a shared sense of energy and purpose.

The situation is hopeless. We must take the next step (Pablo Cassals)

It's tough out there? Do we need to be safe, or safe and brave? Or just a space!

Date and Venue

Friday 16th January 2026, 10.30am to 4pm Birmingham Museums, Thinktank Events Suite,

Thinktank, Birmingham Science Museum, Millennium Point, Birmingham, B4 7XG

For Sat Nav use postcode B4 7AP.

The entrance to Thinktank is located on the ground floor, level 0.

Accessibility Information.

Registration

This event costs £20, covering basic venue and refreshment costs. To register for the ArtWorks Alliance "Tough Times" Gathering, please use the PayPal link or QR code here:

Buy Now



Powered by **PayPal**

Follow the link to the secure PayPal page, enter your details, and complete the £20 payment to confirm your place. If you are using the QR code, scan it with your phone to open the same payment page. Once your payment has been processed, you will receive a confirmation email. Your registration is not complete until payment has been received. Please register as soon as possible so we can finalise numbers for the event.

Catering

Catering will be provided on the day, and basic dietary needs will be covered. If you have specific requirements that we should be aware of in advance, please contact us after registering so we can

make suitable arrangements.



"Tough Times"
Artworks Alliance Gathering

Friday 16th January 2026, 10.30am to 4pm
Birmingham Museums, Thinktank Events Suite

Participatory Arts is needed more than ever. "Tough Times" invites the sector to share experiences, fears, hopes and strategies. We're bringing together artists, activists, and community practitioners to share ideas and inspire action.

Through Open Space discussions, we'll explore care, integrity, and collective progress. Together, we'll confront "the fierce urgency of now" (Martin Luther King) and strengthen our shared purpose for the future.

"The situation is hopeless. We must take the next step."
Pablo Cassals

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Where is Participatory and Community Arts in the Hodge Review?

By Rob Watson

<https://artworksalliance.uk/where-is-participatory-and-community-arts-in-the-hodge-review/>

December 18, 2025

Categories: Comment

Tags: Cultural Value, evaluation, participatory arts, Policy Development



The independent review of Arts Council England (ACE), led by Baroness Margaret Hodge, is now part of the policy landscape in which participatory and community arts will have to operate for the next several years. The review is candid about bureaucracy, uneven cultural investment, weakened local cultural infrastructure, and the need to rebuild trust in the funding system. It also points towards a structural shift, including stronger local and regional decision-making and a more explicit relationship between culture and place.

For participatory and community arts, however, one feature of the review is striking: there is no direct encapsulation of the field as a coherent artistic and civic practice with its own history, standards, and ethical disciplines. The review frequently addresses participation, access, and local cultural life, but it does not treat participatory and community arts as a distinctive practice domain in the way that (for example) touring, national institutions, or talent pipelines are typically treated in policy discourse.

This absence matters because what is named tends to become legible in funding criteria, local strategies, and evaluation expectations. What is not named is more easily reduced to a set of

secondary functions: audience development, outreach, social cohesion delivery, “community engagement”, or “workforce support”. Those functions may be valuable, but they are not the same thing as participatory and community arts understood as art, as cultural democracy, and as a set of negotiated practices rooted in place and relationship.

There is a second reason the absence matters. The review is not simply a commentary on ACE’s internal operations. It is also a staging point for ongoing government engagement with the public about the purpose and shape of ACE. The Department for Culture, Media and Sport ran a call for evidence as part of the process, and ministers have indicated that a formal government response is expected in the new year. In other words, interpretation and implementation are still live, and the sector’s framing still has leverage.

At the same time, England’s wider policy direction is towards deeper devolution. The English Devolution White Paper and subsequent legislative work signal an environment in which local and combined authorities, and new local governance arrangements, may have greater influence over cultural priorities, partnerships, and (in some models) decision-making structures. If this trajectory intersects with the review’s proposals for stronger local and regional funding mechanisms, then participatory and community arts will increasingly succeed or fail because of local strategy, local evidence, and local coalitions, not solely on national rhetoric.

The question, then, is not whether the review is “for” or “against” participatory and community arts. The question is whether the field is ready to define itself clearly enough, and organise itself coherently enough, to shape what happens next.

Matarasso’s reminder: participation can be normalised without being understood

François Matarasso’s account in *A Restless Art* offers a useful lens for interpreting what is happening here. One of his central arguments is that participation has become normalised across cultural policy and practice, but that normalisation carries a risk: participatory practice can be absorbed into institutional agendas in ways that weaken its cultural-democratic character. In that framing, the core question is not whether institutions “include” participation, but whether participation is treated as a serious artistic practice built on shared purpose, negotiated standards, consent, and attention to power.

Put bluntly, *participatory work can be widely praised while still being treated as structurally subordinate*. It can be the thing that is expected to deliver access, inclusion, and local legitimacy, while being granted the least stable funding, the least policy attention, and the most burdensome reporting conditions. The review’s limited direct articulation of participatory and community arts as a field should be read in that context. It is not necessarily hostility. It is a familiar pattern of misrecognition.

The Centre for Cultural Value and The Audience Agency: how to make everyday culture legible without flattening it

This is where the interim work by the Centre for Cultural Value and The Audience Agency is especially useful for those working in participatory and community contexts. Their Cultural Indicator Suite project is premised on a practical problem that participatory and community arts professionals recognise immediately: traditional indicators overemphasise formal, ticketed, institution-based activity and underrepresent informal, community-driven cultural life. It also argues that culture should be understood ecologically, as an interconnected system of participation, infrastructure, access, diversity, policy context, civic engagement, and wellbeing.

This matters for England's next phase because a more devolved environment increases the importance of what can be evidenced at local level. If local cultural strategies and local decision structures become more influential, then the field needs ways to demonstrate cultural vitality that reflect lived experience, not only venue attendance or high-level economic metrics. The interim report's insistence on mixed-method evidence, combining quantitative and qualitative approaches, is not an academic preference. It is a survival mechanism for everyday culture that is "statistically invisible" precisely because it happens in relational, informal, low-infrastructure ways.

For participatory and community arts, this is a strategic opening. It offers a sector-legible, policy-relevant way to say: *if you want culture to reach under-served places, you have to measure and value the kinds of culture that actually live there*, including participation that is not captured by ticketing systems, formal membership data, or institution-led programming.

The movement challenge, reframed as a membership and practice network challenge

The question raised here, then, is how might we, as a community of practice, focus on building a movement that can maintain open and inclusive membership while simultaneously dealing with the problems of being a network of practice? What is the right level of specificity? In the present English context, the idea of forming a "movement" is viewed within the lens of protest formation, rather than as a sustained, practice-based coalition that can do three things at once.

- First, it can provide a shared language and standards for what participatory and community arts are, and what good work looks like, without imposing a single aesthetic or method.
- Second, it can translate that language into governance and policy settings where decisions will increasingly be made: local cultural strategies, devolution-related boards and partnerships, combined authority frameworks, health and education collaborations, and local infrastructure debates.
- Third, it can produce credible evidence that protects practice from being reduced to either "nice to have" community engagement or a low-cost delivery arm for other service agendas.

This is precisely where a membership and practice network such as ArtWorks Alliance can add value. It can hold collective memory (what the field has learned), collective language (how the field describes itself), and collective infrastructure (how the field organises to be present where decisions are made).

The practical question is: *what should the network ask its members to consider now, while the government response to the review is still pending and devolution trajectories remain fluid?*

Questions for the sector, and an invitation to shape the discussion through ArtWorks Alliance

Question 1. If the Hodge Review does not directly define participatory and community arts as a field, what definition should we use in England (and learnt from Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland) that are clear enough to travel across local strategies, while still respecting local variation and artistic plurality?

Question 2. In a system that repeatedly returns to an “excellence versus participation” story, how do we describe excellence in participatory practice in ways that are assessable, ethical, and intelligible to decision-makers who may not have specialist experience of the work?

Question 3. If devolution strengthens local and regional influence over cultural priorities, who is currently in the room when local cultural strategy is written, and where should participatory and community arts practitioners be positioned to prevent “everyday culture” being treated as peripheral?

Question 4. What would it mean, in practice, to adopt an ecological model of cultural vitality locally, so that informal and community-led participation becomes visible without being forced into inappropriate metrics? What would we stop measuring, what would we start measuring, and what would we describe through narrative and lived experience rather than counts?

Question 5. How do we resist the pattern in which participatory and community arts are valued rhetorically but funded precariously, and what would a credible “minimum viable infrastructure” for participatory practice look like in an under-served area, beyond short-term projects?

Question 6. If government intends to respond formally to the review in the coming months, what should the sector ask for that is specific, implementable, and locally actionable, rather than an abstract call for “more recognition”?

Question 7. What should a membership and practice network commit to doing, collectively, that individual organisations cannot do alone, particularly in relation to shared evidence protocols, peer learning, ethical standards, and local governance literacy?

Question 8. If we accept that much everyday culture leaves no “paper trail”, what is our shared plan for capturing it responsibly, proportionately, and ethically, without turning participation into surveillance or collapsing it into administrative labour?

Question 9. Where do artists and educators sit in this picture, and how do we ensure that professional development pathways in participatory practice are not treated as optional extras, but as core infrastructure for quality and sustainability?

Question 10. If participatory and community arts are increasingly relied upon to contribute to wellbeing and civic connection, how do we safeguard the artistic autonomy of the work so that it is not reduced to non-clinical service delivery, while still being a credible partner across public services?

ArtWorks Alliance can host and structure this discussion as a membership and practice network, not as a single-position lobbying body. If the next phase in England is likely to involve both policy change and governance reconfiguration, then the sector’s immediate need is not only external advocacy. It is internal alignment: shared language, shared evidence practice, and shared readiness to engage locally as devolution accelerates. The invitation is simple: join the discussion by participating through ArtWorks Alliance membership, and help shape what the field says next, in its own terms, before other institutions define it for us.

Endnotes

1. Department for Culture, Media and Sport, *Arts Council England: an independent review by Baroness Margaret Hodge* (policy paper, published 16 December 2025).
2. Department for Culture, Media and Sport, *Arts Council England review* (call for evidence page, published 20 February 2025; last updated 23 April 2025).
3. The Guardian, reporting that the government plans to respond formally in the new year following publication of the Hodge review (16 December 2025).
4. UK Government, *English Devolution White Paper: Power and partnership: Foundations for growth* (published 16 December 2024).
5. House of Commons Library, *English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill 2024–25* (research briefing, published 20 August 2025).
6. François Matarasso, *A Restless Art* publication page (Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian).
7. François Matarasso, “TL;DR: A Restless Art in 10 minutes” (summary page highlighting normalisation and appropriation themes).

8. Centre for Cultural Value and The Audience Agency, *Developing a Cultural Indicator Suite: Interim Report (July 2025)*.

Tough Times: A Gathering – Friday 20 March

By Rob Watson

<https://artworksalliance.uk/tough-times-a-gathering-friday-20-march/>

February 18, 2026

Categories: Gathering

Tags: Gathering, Manchester, Union

TOUGH TIMES: A GATHERING



“THE SITUATION IS HOPELESS. WE MUST TAKE THE NEXT STEP”

PABLO CASALS

A participatory workshop hosted by UNION and ArtWorks Alliance. Come together to reflect, connect, and find creative responses to challenging times through shared exploration and discussion.

- **Refresh & Revitalise**

Inspire and energise while connecting with others.

- **Explore Key Issues**

Discuss power-sharing, care, reaffirming values, and maintaining integrity.

- **Share & Develop**

Exchange practices and tactics for togetherness and progress.

WHEN & WHERE

Friday 20th March

10:30am–4:00pm

Bridge 5 Mill, 22A Beswick St,
Manchester, M4 7HR

£10 contribution

(or free if you can't afford it)

Hosted by:

UNION



In a period shaped by division and uncertainty, how do we sustain the work that holds communities together?

ArtWorks Alliance, in partnership with UNION, is hosting **Tough Times: A Gathering**, a participatory workshop designed to create space for reflection, dialogue, and collective thinking. Using an Open Space format, the day will be shaped by those in the room, enabling shared exploration of the challenges we face and the possibilities ahead.



The Gathering offers an opportunity to reconnect with core values, consider questions of power-sharing and care, and exchange practical approaches for working with integrity. The intention is straightforward: to leave with renewed energy and a strengthened sense of purpose in the essential work we carry forward each day.

Friday 20th March, 10:30am–4pm

Bridge 5 Mill, Manchester

£10 contribution, with free places available where needed

Further details and booking information are available via Eventbrite.

TOUGH TIMES: A GATHERING



**"THE SITUATION IS
HOPELESS. WE
MUST TAKE THE
NEXT STEP"**

PABLO CASALS

In these challenging times, marked by divisions, polarisation, anger, and violence, finding creative responses is more vital than ever. Join us at the Tough Times Gathering, hosted by UNION and ArtWorks Alliance, to come together, share experiences, and support one another.

At the Gathering you will have the opportunity to work alongside others to creatively reflect on the current situation, and contribute to future planning using an Open Space approach to manage the content of the day. Our goal is for everyone to leave with renewed energy and belief in the essential community work we do every day.

Why Attend?

Refresh & Revitalise: Inspire and energise yourself while connecting with others.

Explore Key Issues: Engage in creative discussions on power-sharing, care, reaffirming values, and maintaining integrity.

Share & Develop: Exchange practices and tactics for togetherness and progress.

Where & When?

Friday 20th March - 10:30-4pm

**Bridge 5 Mill 22A Beswick St,
Manchester, M4 7HR**

Cost: £10 contribution
(Or free if you can't afford it.)



UNION



The Tough Times Gathering is hosted by UNION and ArtWorks Alliance with support from a variety of organisations and individuals including DIY Theatre, Engage, and Collective Encounters
Photo: Flornatu Sessay at UNION 24 © Karol Winczalski

Power Shift – An Artworks Alliance & Engage Peer Learning Event

By Rob Watson

<https://artworksalliance.uk/power-shift-an-artworks-alliance-engage-peer-learning-event/>

August 17, 2026

Categories: Gathering

Tags: AWA, Bristol, Engage, Gathering



Join Engage and Artworks Alliance in Bristol for a day of peer learning on the topic of power-sharing and power shifting.

Stuck operating within unjust power dynamics that disadvantage and disempower individuals and communities? Want to stretch your practice and thinking around co-creation, community-led and socially engaged arts practices? Not sure what any of it means, or how to apply it practically? Or perhaps you have been working in this way for some time, and want to share your learning with peers, and gain critical feedback and new perspectives?

Join Engage and Artworks Alliance in Bristol for a day of sharing, discussing, and making together on the topic of 'Power Shift'. **How can we share or shift power in our practices, arts programmes, projects and commissions**, and what new or reimagined approaches will help us to navigate the changing socio-political landscape.

When: Monday, 14 September 2026, 11:00 am – 3:00 pm

Where: Bristol Bricks (St Annes House), Brislington, Bristol, BS4 4AB

Booking: FREE, optional donation of £20 for non-members

Who is it for? Artists and arts organisations (in any artform), local authority culture teams, community organisers, producers, curators based in the South West and beyond. You don't need to be a member of either Artworks Alliance or Engage to attend, though we encourage you to consider joining our networks to keep the conversation going. We encourage people at any stage of their career to attend.

The most important thing is you are involved in some form of social, community, place-based or participatory art practice and are willing to be part of a **dialogue exploring the pitfalls, challenges, benefits, and joys of arts-based approaches which challenge hierarchies and power dynamics** e.g. co-creation/production, community-led practices, collaborative practice.

What to expect

- Practice sharing, and an invitation to share your own practice where it relates to the theme
- Honest and practical discussions led by those in the room, with provocations and questions
- A tasty lunch and the opportunity to network informally
- Facilitation which uses practical and creative making across a range of art forms

Background

Earlier this year, Artworks Alliance hosted two 'Gatherings', one in Birmingham and one in Manchester. These events reflected on the current participatory arts landscape around the theme of 'Tough Times'. As an Artworks Alliance steering group member, Engage is pleased to build on these conversations to bring together colleagues in the South West and beyond who will collectively explore practical (and impractical) ways forward, strategies for change, and positive disruptions to the status quo.

Special thanks to: Bricks Bristol, Take A Part, and Engage South West Reps Bettina Wenzel, Rebecca English and Bethany Richards who have supported the coordination of the event, as well as fellow Artworks Alliance steering group members Adrian Sinclair, Sue Caudle, Abi Horsfield, Kim Wide, and Rob Watson.

Booking information

This event is free to attend for members of Engage and Artworks Alliance; however, we kindly request all attendees consider paying a £20 donation towards the cost of room hire and lunch.

If you or your organisation need to pay by invoice for the event, please email info@engage.org by writing 'pay by invoice: Power Shift' in the subject.

Booking is essential as places are limited. If you are no longer able to attend, please request a refund via Eventbrite to free up your space for someone else to attend.

When booking, you will be asked if you would be interested in sharing or contributing to the event. This is optional, and we will follow up directly with those whose suggestions are most relevant and provide a mix of approaches. Please note that all contributors and participants are responsible for their own travel and accommodation.

Accessibility

If you have any access requirements, please let us know on the booking form how we can help you participate in this event.

Information about the venue is here: <https://stanneshouse.org/visit-us/>

Dietary requirements

Lunch will be provided. Please indicate your dietary requirements when booking.

Artworks Alliance is a self-organising Community of Practice for people who are actively involved in using creativity to achieve positive social change and who believe in the transformative power of creative processes.

Engage is the professional body for art engagement, with a network of over 700 members across the UK. Engage is supported by Arts Council England and Creative Scotland.

Come ready to listen, learn, participate, and contribute.

