

# LEARNING ACROSS BORDERS



Contact Building Trip, 2012

This is a report on one aspect of the Landscapes Cities People (LCP) project.

## The Project

LCP was a three-year (2009-2012), European-funded collaborative project of exhibitions, conferences and other events incorporating Audience Development. The project comprised six partners across three northern European regions; Belgium (Netwerk in Aalst and Boem vzw in Zwalm), France (L'H du Siège in Valenciennes, La Malterie in Lille) and the UK (Aspex in Portsmouth and Fabrica, Brighton, Lead Partner). The organisations range from those with a permanent building and a number of full time workers to, for example, Boem vzw with no permanent base or full time workers. See <http://lcpeurope.eu> for more details of each of the partners.

The development and diffusion of creative programmes is a core activity for each of the galleries and gave the partners a common point of exchange throughout the project. Despite this the partners often used different methods to achieve their aims and objectives. The project was also characterised by their shared ambition to play an active part in their local communities.

Here we are concerned with Activity 2 (sections 1-4, teaching and learning activities). The

project identified different audience groups and how the partners engaged with these groups: -

1. people with physical and/or mental disabilities
2. socially disadvantaged people, people who are isolated and/or on low incomes
3. young people aged 6-11
4. young people (12-20 years)

There is a summary of the project at the end of this report.

## The Detail: A Socially Inclusive Model of Engaging with Contemporary Art

Focusing on these groups not only benefitted those audiences directly involved in the project but also helped the galleries work towards a more socially inclusive model of engaging with contemporary art. For each audience group the LCP partners ran events for gallery educators such as fact-finding activities, practical making sessions (making, discussing), mini conferences, skill sharing and culturally focussed visits, and wrote learning reports which documented the exchange of expertise between organisations. The aim was to provide positive experiences for participants involved in the art-educational

activities. However unlike those projects that have been solely concerned with measuring the impact of the experience on the targeted groups, this project also aimed to consider the experience for the artists and gallery educators- the *médiateurs* as the French language designates the role – those mediating between the art work and its possible audiences.

The aim of the partners was to support each other in working towards an inclusive model of gallery education; one that would recognise different audiences and consider what they would bring to and take from an experience with contemporary art.

Inclusion is about recognising that each individual, whatever their ability and experience, has the right to full participation in contemporary society and culture, including visual art. As all individuals belong to a variety of communities, (social, cultural, educational, language and class-based etc.) this project allowed us to work with and learn from a range of people and organisations, attract matched funding, find out about practices outside the arts sector and reflect on the successes and failures of the various constituent parts.<sup>1</sup>

Each organisation – depending on its size, character and reach was able to bring different experiences of audiences to the project. This created a supportive but critical space for exploring creative programmes as a way of engaging with the four groups; most of which have traditionally been marginalized as arts audiences. As each partner brought different experience, expertise and funding partnerships to the project, so this report aims to reflect both the diverse starting points and the range of results that occurred and consider the conditions for success. Not all partners worked with all four groups though in some cases their ambitions developed as a result of the exchange. In some instances a partner who did not originally anticipate

working with a particular group, found that their enthusiasm and confidence grew to such an extent that they adjusted their plan to include the development of additional groups within their programme of work. This was an important benefit of peer group learning, as even those who had started with a clearly defined set of interests felt empowered to explore new areas. The expertise of the galleries was complementary with all partners having strengths in some areas and weaknesses in others. So, one of the strengths of the peer learning was the way partners were able to identify overlapping expertise, learn from partners who had much more experience, share concerns about challenging circumstances and celebrate successful outcomes.

The LCP project was important in supporting the artists and cultural workers involved in their own professional development. We hope that this account will be useful to those professionals engaging in similar work. The role of the *médiateurs*/gallery educators and their relationship to the partner organisations was seen as essential to the success of Audience Development. One outcome of the project is the recognition of their role. The aim of this report is to share information about the roads taken and the results of the project in ways which we hope other artists, arts educational professionals, local communities and cultural organisations will find informative and the basis of a model of practice. It comprises an overall picture of working with each of the groups in turn; some detail of events and programmes that offer a particularly rich opportunity for more reflection; and some conclusions we have drawn from what we have learnt.

The impact of working with galleries, artists and art educators has been evaluated in the past, for instance, the work of Engage in the UK (<http://www.engage.org/home/index.aspx>). We hope that these case studies can

<sup>1</sup> These terms (social, cultural, educational, language and class-based etc.) are very basic designations of groups of people. There is in reality much blurring of the edges and crossover between groups, for example, within the project several of the activities could have been attributed to benefitting more than one category of community.



*Mini makers, 2011*

further add to existing resources by clearly demonstrating the benefits of creative education on artists, young people and others who could be considered socially, culturally or economically marginalised.

The partners recognised that each organisation operated within its own regionally specific political and socio-economic context. They therefore knew that methods of working could not be directly transferred on to other organisations in a simplistic way; but that the project and particularly the peer learning could provide a stimulus for imaginative thinking around shared agendas and future programmes of individual organisations. The first step for all the partners was to identify the strengths and weaknesses within their organisations and to jointly decide which audiences they would target.

One important aspect at the outset was the recognition that each organisation was starting from a different point in terms of their strategies for audience development. This was useful both in terms of evaluating the overall project and for providing a wide range of scenarios and experiences that the partners brought to the table and which are evidenced through this report.

Knowledge and understanding are important steps towards creating inclusion in any organisation. The sharing of experiences between partners provided the opportunity

to get to know and build trust between individuals across the six organisations. Each area of work started with a fact-finding activity aimed at sharing knowledge, hearing presentations from specialists and establishing the theoretical basis and strategies of peer group learning. This was important for the success of the whole project and the combination of formal and social meetings enabled a strong group identity to emerge.

## The Strands

### 1. Working with people with mental or physical disabilities.

According to the World Health Organisation "disability is a complex phenomenon, reflecting an interaction between features of a person's body [and/or mind] and features of the society in which he or she lives." (see <http://www.who.int/topics/disabilities/en/>).

A full and fair society acknowledges the rights of its people to engage fully with that society and so equal access to culture is a fundamental right. It is important to note that in an aging population it is inevitable that there will be more people living with disabilities and this awareness will benefit our whole understanding of an aging society. It highlights the importance of thinking about people living with disabilities not as 'other', in a separate category, but as each of us, either now or as we are likely to be as we get older. The four organisations involved in this work were Fabrica, Aspex, L'H du Siège and Network and they took as a starting point where each gallery was, its own experience in this field and possible working partners. It culminated in a conference at Fabrica in March 2012.

We can take one disability as an example, that of sight impairment. Visual disabilities fall along a continuum from poor vision to total loss of sight and whilst this may be something intrinsic to the person from birth, it is also clear that many conditions associated with aging



*Second Sight, Cluster, 2012*

affect sight. Fabrica has worked on a project, Second Sight (for details see <http://fabrica.org.uk/education/community-groups/>), which explores ways in which blind and visually impaired people engage with contemporary art. Drawing in new and existing partners they developed new 'multi-sensory' workshops (see <http://amultisensoryapproach.blogspot.co.uk/>). It used the LCP project to extend its reach applying its expertise, for instance in an intergenerational gallery education project bringing together visually impaired older people with younger people. The project benefited from working with new partners outside the gallery sector, including a day centre that offered a programme of activities for adults with physical and mental disabilities and a further education college for students with special educational needs. With increased expertise and confidence they were able to offer gallery education for older people with a range of disabilities (see also the Rendezvous project below). In a good example of peer mentoring, they worked with the Belgian partners Network and Boem vzw who then designed and provided sessions for blind and visually impaired guides through engaging with art through sound and touch.

### **Network**

Network was not originally due to work with this particular group as it was not a target audience for their organisation. This is an example of a partner finding out more about the types of workshops that their peer galleries were running and, after taking part in the discussions, they felt more confident about their own ability to work with this potential audience group. Through matched funding from the Elia Foundation, they were able to provide two years of working with four schools on specific activities within this strand. It became apparent through working together that special schools had more scope for working with them, as they were not so tied to a tight curriculum as regular secondary schools.

Network also ran a series of workshops for young people with mental and physical disabilities led by the artists Yves Van Pevenage and Rik Moens. These artists have a particular interest in the material and tactile qualities of art (for more information see <http://lcpeurope.eu/lcp-education/people-with-mental-or-physical-disabilities/network/>).



*Art in the Dark, 2011*

Throughout the life of the project Network addressed the problem of the physical access to the building and installed a lift to make the exhibition spaces accessible to visitors with mobility issues. This positive engagement with people with disabilities is fairly unique in their area of work, and the experiences and confidence that they have gained through working with this audience group via the project has led them to offer their new expertise to other regional and national organisations who want to work with this audience group. Aside from providing professional development for the exhibition guides, there were sessions for other students interested in working with people with mental and physical disabilities.

### **Boem vzw**

This organisation based in Belgium hosts Kunst&Zwalm a small non-building based arts festival which is a biennial exhibition in the landscape in the Zwalm valley (see <http://lcpeurope.eu/project-development/kunst-zwalm-biennial-2011/>). For 2011 it developed a new partnership with Levensvreugde (Joy of Life), an association that works with blind and visually impaired people (see [\[mental-or-physical-disabilities/kunst-zwalm-art-in-the-dark/\]\(#\)\).](http://lcpeurope.eu/lcp-education/people-with-</a></p></div><div data-bbox=)

To support blind and partially sighted visitors to the exhibition, Boem vzw provided tandem bicycles (as well as the regular bicycles) to ride around the installations with a sighted person. Additionally, an installation was housed in a shipping container where visually impaired people guided visitors around the installation within a pitch black box – helping sighted and non-sighted visitors to explore the work through touch. In this way they shared a non-visual experience of art giving the visitors an insight into the experience of a visually impaired person.

### **Aspex**

Integrated into its regular family programme, Aspex offered a series of Saturday workshops for young people on the autism spectrum and with other special educational needs. Each session comprised a morning visit to the gallery and an afternoon practical session based at their school in response to the exhibition. The success of this programme influenced Network who then organised similar workshops. The knowledge and skill sharing activities gave Network the



*A Distance Travelled, 2011*

confidence to set up an after-school club for children with disabilities.

### **L'H du Siège**

During LCP L'H du Siège were able to explore new partnerships and developed projects with Foyer Bethesda & Foyer Notre Dame, organisations that care for people with disabilities.

In their work with older people in care settings, L'H du Siège found that participants welcomed opportunities for discussion and other sorts of interactive engagement, which the gallery offered, rather than just being talked to. Other feedback from the gallery claimed: "The impact of the exhibitions on this public is clearly visible. They want to come back to the gallery with pleasure and they have fun to do activities around the exhibitions".

### **Fabrica**

Fabrica extended their activities to include working with people from the Sussex MS Treatment Centre and older people with decreasing physical abilities. In their Very Private Views, personalised visits provided dedicated time at the gallery so that guests could be guided around the exhibitions in appropriate ways –acknowledging that they may have difficulties in walking and standing, talking and muscle control and that they might be physically weak and easily tired.

### **Fact Finding**

As lead partner, Fabrica delivered early fact finding sessions in Lille and Ghent on working with people with physical and/or mental disabilities. In March 2012 Fabrica held Permeate: the Distance Travelled, a mini-conference showcasing work placements hosted by arts organisations in the South East of England for people with disabilities and people from black & ethnic minorities (see <http://www.permeate.org.uk/>), which was attended by Aspx and Netwerk. The conference was inspiring in participants' accounts of what the project had meant for them (and often their families too). The Permeate programme gave the participants a sense of identity beyond that of a person with a disability, as one who may be disabled in some particular way but who has a voice and can begin to develop their potential as an artist or arts professional. Whilst Permeate as a whole is a wider project, in terms of LCP the significant findings included the need to:

- involve the whole organisation, especially those at senior level in inclusivity
- devise and deliver bespoke events according to each potential audience
- employ appropriate language throughout any activity
- learn from feedback
- ensure appropriate ways of different audiences' own voices being heard.

The conference also reflected on the experiences of some of the host institutions and explored the insights learnt by them through the project.

As we have seen Fabrica and Aspex each had some experience in working in this area. For L'H du Siège, Netwerk and Boem vzw their experiences were new. Throughout the project they were able to benefit from working with more experienced galleries to gather ideas and gain confidence to develop their own ways of working, to give feedback on how their activities were received by their audience groups, and in further discussions, share their ideas for future developments. The more experienced galleries had to explain how and why they did things in certain ways and benefitted from constructive criticism of their working methods by the less experienced partners.

## **2. Working with socially disadvantaged groups (disadvantaged through a wide range of factors including ethnicity, educational experience, cultural differences, age, health, economic position).**

Social disadvantage concerns those groups who (without regard to their individual qualities) do not participate in what are generally considered to be key aspects of civic life (e.g. the cultural and educational offer; employment; the democratic process; the legal system). For instance disadvantage could result from mental and/or physical disability as we have seen in the first section of this report. Here we encompass a wider definition.

Each gallery was working with a different group relevant to their organisation and

region. The first step was to identify potential audiences who might be interested in finding out more about the galleries and their work. By recognising different groups in different circumstances whilst working together through the project, each gallery was able to benefit from the lessons learnt by their partners. In this way the range of experience that was shared was significant.

Some galleries were already working with organisations that supported marginalised groups. These partnerships relied on the galleries combining their expertise in working with artists and ideas with the expertise of the co-ordinator or social worker supporting the (marginalised) group to create new activities that complemented other aspects of the groups' programme. Other partners instigated partnerships such as these for the first time as part of this project and were able to draw in matched funding from other sources to increase their work in this area<sup>2</sup>. The partners worked with older people, travellers, and people on low incomes, in addition to those with physical and/or mental disabilities as described in the previous section.

Fabrica and Aspex took lead roles in sharing their previous experience with this audience group and working with partner galleries. They were both part of Permeate as we saw in the previous section. This drew on the Arts Council of England South East's funding to provide work experience for people with physical and mental disabilities and members of minority ethnic groups (who are underrepresented in the arts).

### **Fabrica**

Fabrica brought its research and experience of working with older people living both independently and in care settings into this theme via its Growing an Older Audience project (<http://www.growingfabrica.org.uk/>)

<sup>2</sup> Aspex received match funding from Find Your Talent Legacy Fund (<http://www.findyourtalent.org/>) & Artsworld Creative Worlds to support work at Kane's Hill site for settled travellers. Fabrica received funds from Arts Council England to support the *Growing an Older Audience/Rendezvous* programme.

an Arts Council South East funded project. The Growing an Older Audience project developed older audiences who fell into four categories (arts engaged, socially motivated, most marginalised, independently mobile) and focussed on creating new activities and new marketing strategies. The LCP project enabled Fabrica to significantly extend its programme of work with this audience group and disseminate the learning accrued during the research and delivery phases of the Growing an Older Audience project to project partners.

### **Aspex**

Alongside its Permeate work, Aspex worked with Roma communities who have experienced social exclusion and isolation, poverty, non-enrolment of children in schools, poor housing conditions, poor health, employment constraints and racism (see [http://equality.uk.com/Resources\\_files/strategicguide.pdf](http://equality.uk.com/Resources_files/strategicguide.pdf)). The gallery offered workshops which supported work with settled travellers. All the participants were new to working with Aspex. Aspex's intention is that this work will continue beyond the LCP project, even though the Find Your Talent scheme is now discontinued.

### **L'H du Siège**

For L'H du Siège working with people on low incomes benefitted from an existing partnership between the gallery and regional organisations that work with people on low incomes and/or who are homeless. The gallery was able to forge a new partnership with a community centre, Centre Social et Culturel de Landrecies who work with marginalised people, and the Maison d'Arrêt (Valenciennes prison). The organisations were invited to see various exhibitions over the life of the LCP project. At each visit there was an opportunity to discuss the work informally with gallery staff. These activities tended to be a relatively low cost, high impact activity, and L'H du Siège will continue the partnership with the Maison d'Arrêt after LCP has concluded.

### **Network**

Network also made contact with new organisations that provide services to people on low incomes (and who may be experiencing some form of cultural and social exclusion). With LCP funding they were able to offer regular visits to the gallery which included a talk by an artist or curator, a discussion and free refreshments.

Network has also become involved in a scheme to encourage better access to culture for people on low incomes. Aalst, where Network is located, is part of a pilot to introduce an entrance pass, called the UITpas, so the inhabitants can take part in events at Network for only €1.5. This is due to the fact that Aalst is increasingly accommodating an overspill of economically and socially disadvantaged people from nearby Brussels. Network's events are now listed in a local neighbourhood paper, which reaches a large local audience. The gallery also collaborated with a group called Babelonië, a project that supports newcomers to Belgium by helping them complete the Belgian citizenship requirements on language and culture. During the first session with the Babelonië group there was a discussion about contemporary art in accessible Dutch. The participants were then invited to a guided tour of an exhibition on Identity in Network. The partnership with Babelonië will continue beyond the life of the project.

Network did not initially indicate that it wished to develop older audiences but, as part of the project, commissioned a survey to analyse why older people were less likely to attend their exhibitions and events. The survey showed that older people were more interested in heritage than contemporary art, so Network devised ways of encouraging older people to visit the gallery and make them feel comfortable. One example of this was when Network invited visitors to share their memories about the building's previous use as a cord-making factory.





*Working with rural communities, 2011*

Other activities were programmed to be free at the point of use so as to reduce barriers for engagement for those on a low income. For one installation, which included a velodrome marked out in the gallery (see <http://iriscan.org/venues/netwerk-aalst-belgium/exhibition-archive/pieterjan-ginckelsadam-leechartstation/>), the associated activities included a free outdoor bike tour.

#### **Boem vzw**

In contrast to the other partners, Kunst&Zwalm's existing largely rural audience was predominantly older – particularly those who had sufficient time and were fit enough to walk or cycle round the extensive site. In the light of this they were interested to know whether there were barriers to engagement for young people and commissioned a survey to identify what these might be through collecting audience data during the 2011 biennial. The findings from this survey will be analysed to inform future editions and develop a strategy to increase engagement amongst this group.

#### **Fact Finding**

In June 2011 Network organised a mini conference about working with socially disadvantaged people. The objectives for the conference were to develop knowledge and share best practice between partners, build professional relationships and develop a common understanding about the value of working with organisations representing disadvantaged individuals, and the individuals themselves.

### **3. Working with young people aged 6-12**

Here, the project aimed to:

- share current practice and develop new models of practice in inclusive learning activities
- review relevant case studies
- explore the idea of children as an audience for contemporary art (through schools or less formal structures)
- build relationships between peer professionals
- understand value and how to assess it.



*Working with schools, 2012*

As the gallery most experienced in this area, Aspex led on a range of activities initially with La Maltiere in Lille and Netwerk, though subsequently L'H du Siège decided to plan for activities related to this audience group. Aspex led on mentoring with members of its education team giving a presentation on the work they were doing as part of the early fact-finding meeting and acting as mentors for other partners. The opportunity to reflect on their current provision was extremely useful for Aspex in two ways – firstly, in realising what they had already achieved and secondly, in having an opportunity to have their methodologies discussed and challenged by the other partners.

As part of its evaluation (and in line with best practice), Aspex encouraged feedback from the teachers and children involved in the activities. They noted the importance of building relationships between the gallery programmers, the teachers, the pool of artists and the participants. This was also a significant finding in the Enquire projects (see <http://www.en-quire.org/>). The importance of working with the schools and teachers was noted in earlier research (see for example Enquire: Inspiring Learning in Galleries, Engage 2006) to develop trust and understanding and to enhance the children's

experience of both, rather than have the two experiences running on parallel lines.

### **La Maltiere**

La Maltiere used the LCP project to develop new partnerships with primary schools by means of school visits and gallery based workshops. Discussions took place between the schools, the gallery and the médiateurs that reflected on the completed activity and planned for future collaborations.

La Maltiere made a new partnership with a community centre working with marginalised people and imaginatively devised a series of activities around an exhibition that the whole family became engaged in at some level. The children worked on ideas of heritage and photography and learnt some photographic skills. Then when the parents came to collect their children at the end of the session they also became involved in the gallery activities. For the final session the children mounted an exhibition of their work to which they invited their teachers, friends and parents and explained to the visitors what they had been doing. This articulation of their concepts and the programme of practical work was important for the children. At the same time the activity sessions and the exhibition helped to spread the word about La Malterie and its

work to those who may not have come across it before. La Maltiere hope that the centre will want to continue the partnership, and that other partners could be drawn in.

### **Boem vzw**

The Kunst&Zwalm biennial starts on the final three days of the school summer holidays, so they were not able to work formally through the education system but they were able to work with family groups. For the first time they developed an education project, creating a 'pit-stop' where young people and families could experiment with materials to understand how contemporary artists create work in a particular landscape.

### **Netwerk**

Netwerk is a cultural centre grounded in contemporary visual art, which informs the rest of its cultural offerings including performance and film. During the LCP project, Netwerk started to develop a number of activities specifically for children including a three-day, artist-led workshop during the school holidays. On the last day of the workshop the children guided parents around an exhibition of the art that they had made during the project. This has led to an on-going feature in that the last Sunday of each exhibition is now a Family Sunday held to encourage whole families to come to the gallery and a regular programme of workshops for children. In 2012 the educational team developed playbooks (information resources about an exhibition specifically aimed at children) for two of its exhibitions. Artists gave workshops for the Academy of Aalst (BAK Aalst) and other local schools. Netwerk also initiated two successful collaborations with an audio-education organisation, 'vzw Aifoon' and a film-education organisation, 'Lessons in the dark'.

At the beginning of the project, Netwerk hosted discussions between art educators and local teachers to try to establish a common agreement of what makes a good education programme (what the participants could expect and how to satisfy these expectations),

as the basis of a framework for their own programme. This relationship was difficult to maintain due to the schools' tight timetables and the priority of other subjects over art by national curriculums, an experience shared by other project partners (see Fabrica's work with young people). It was in part due to this experience that Netwerk began to trial other approaches to engage with young people and, as well as the Family Sundays, developed KunstKamps; three-day workshops during school holidays. These less formal, more imaginative approaches have proved very successful and will continue to be developed into the future.

### ***Fact Finding***

The peer group decided on the following ways to support each other's work over the life of the project:

- to discuss any problems arising and work together to find solutions
- to pool learning from working with this age group
- to share experience and best practice case studies.

They also produced a video, which is intended to be accessible as training material. Led by Aspex, they devised a set of activities for children coming to the gallery (called Pop the Question) to discover what young audiences bring to a gallery visit – i.e. what their expectations and assumptions might be. After conducting the first piece of research (into the children's responses), the group realised that they also needed to consider their own expectations and assumptions in order to build a gateway to a shared experience. They aimed to come out of the project:

- able to refresh their personal approaches
- examine their motivation for working with children
- better able to empathise with the problems a child might experience on visiting a contemporary art gallery.

#### **4. Working with school and college students (12-20 years)**

This element of LCP enabled all the partners to work together. The partnerships with educational institutions here ranged from secondary schools to art and technical colleges.

##### **Aspex**

Aspex held education activities for groups of up to twenty-five participants in workshops that took their cues from the current exhibition at the time. At the beginning of the project Aspex developed this work with an existing educational partner, though due to the school's subsequent closure and difficulties in finding a suitable new partner, Aspex had to adapt its way of working in order to engage this audience. This emerged through a new partnership with the University of Portsmouth in which students from colleges across the area (Chichester, South Downs, Havant, Portsmouth, Fareham, Highbury and St Vincent's) worked with artists to produce an exhibition at Aspex. This not only engaged with young people who had not visited the gallery before but, similar to La Malterie's experiences, also their families.

##### **La Maltiere**

La Maltiere ran six gallery activity sessions for new and returning participants, including students in secondary schools (aged between 14 and 18) and also the local Lycée de Wingles and Lille 3 University. Sessions comprised meeting the artists who were exhibiting at La Maltiere at the time, learning about their artistic practice, their educational training, personal vision, conceptual approach and the skills they needed to realise the work. The students also gained an understanding of the gallery's cultural, political and professional position within the funding ecology, and their role in working with the artist and showing the artwork. The younger students produced a BD (bande dessinée, graphic novel) and all the young people were invited to participate in workshops to explore different art practices and take part in critiques offered by artists.

##### **Network**

Network invited teachers to a guided tour of an exhibition in order to get to know the organisation. This was followed up with an invitation to form a new partnership via Network's school programme. Groups visiting Network took part in guided exhibition tours, gallery talks, workshops and film screenings. Network also developed a project with a local art secondary school called 'Young Birds' whereby students visited the organisation several times to develop the vocabulary to discuss contemporary art, attend an artist-led workshop and to create an event inspired by the current exhibition (which was on questions of identity see <http://www.netwerk-art.be/en/activities/exhibitions/789>) During this process exhibiting artists helped the young people to develop their concepts both intellectually and practically. There was also a competition to draw the most beautiful bird and win a film screening at Network with their whole class. This aimed to ensure at least one return visit to the gallery.

##### **Boem vzw**

It had been observed that the audience for previous editions was predominantly adults and older people. To try to diversify the audience for Kunst&Zwalm 2011, Boem vzw commissioned artists David Blandy and Karl Philips to create projects that specifically focused on the local young people. David Blandy's piece *The Soul of Zwalm* (2011) comprised a drum kit in an isolated field where the audience could make their own sounds and music, and Karl Philips created a 'drive-in' movie. The audience survey that was conducted during the biennial discovered that 9% of the total audience were young people aged 10-20 and the results of the survey will be used to consider strategies to attract broader audiences in the future.

##### **Fabrica**

Fabrica invited teachers from five city schools to discuss working with them, running pilot projects to consolidate contact between them and Fabrica. From this Fabrica developed a partnership with two Brighton

schools (Longhill High School and Patcham High School) with the aim to work with them to develop a gallery space in each school through workshops at Fabrica led by artist facilitators. It became increasingly difficult for the teachers to leave the classroom and though Fabrica made every effort to accommodate the requirements of the school and the demands made on the teachers' time, finally the partnerships were discontinued. Difficulty in gaining access to students outside the classroom environment is an issue facing arts organisations nation-wide. Staff time spent away from the national curriculum must be covered and educational institutions must focus on exam results and league tables, with new government initiatives advancing pay by results promotions and emphasising the importance of 'academic' subjects, which disincentivises overstretched teaching staff to develop these partnerships.

The experience of working with schools led to Fabrica's decision to focus on informal education and find ways to engage with young people outside of school. Another strand of the LCP project had been Fabrica's development of artist facilitator/Animateur residencies which ran concurrently with each exhibition. Fabrica used this successful model to pilot a residency in Brighton Youth Centre, for an artist to find ways to engage with young people in this alternative environment. To create a link between Fabrica gallery and the young people at BYC the artist in residence devised the Skate Arc project, which resulted in a skate ramp being built inside the gallery (see <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wiq92nUn2pw>). This partnership was confirmed beyond the life of LCP.

### **L'H du Siège**

L'H du Siège was lead partner for this section with its experience of working with a large number of students in this category. The organisation, which houses a gallery and artists' studios in its buildings as well as having space for an artist-in-residence, had existing relationships with a number of schools and colleges. L'H du Siège had worked

with schools in the Nord Pas de Calais region since 2006. This had been driven by funding to schools of €4,000 for 40 hours spent developing arts opportunities for its students (including raising awareness of contemporary art and its making, promotion and exhibition). As part of this cultural partnership, students visited the gallery, met artists and attended workshops at L'H du Siège. This supporting funding, which was part of a national strategy to help build social and cultural capital (see [http://www.creative-campus.org.uk/uploads/1/0/9/7/10973203/lief ooghe\\_hei\\_south\\_2010.pdf](http://www.creative-campus.org.uk/uploads/1/0/9/7/10973203/lief ooghe_hei_south_2010.pdf)), meant that L'H du Siège could work closely with many schools over a substantial period of time. They worked with seven schools per year and therefore their experience was significant for the whole of this aspect of the project.

There was political will behind it, which meant that L'H du Siège was taken seriously within both the education and the arts worlds (as offering learning about art practice and its place within cultural policy). They had direct access to school and college Directors through this policy and were supported financially for this service (though this funding was cut during the project as we shall see below). The sessions took the form of a school visit prior to the gallery visit; an introduction to the role of the gallery and where it figured in the cultural landscape of the region; its funders and funding regime; and how it supported artists to produce work. It also covered the specific qualities of different media available to artists by providing opportunities for students to work directly with artists. Since 2010, this type of funding has no longer been available as cultural policies have changed. In light of the funding cuts, L'H du Siège is exploring new ideas for engaging with schools – for instance contacting students directly through their student association rather than formally through the college. They have offered less intensive and less expensive activities – available to a lot less students.



*La Chasse, John Grade 2011*

### **Fact Finding**

L'H du Siège held a mini conference in April 2012 on gallery education (in the specific sense of working in the cultural industries). Some of the students who had taken part in an LCP funded project with artist John Grade spoke of their experiences. Grade, an American artist who had previously worked at Fabrica, was appointed artist-in-residence where he worked with a number of students to on a new commission – La Chasse (<http://www.johngade.com/projects>). For instance woodworking students were encouraged to think about the potential for using their skills in a wider arena – such as art production. The experience had clearly boosted their confidence in many ways, one student declared it “had changed my life”. As a result two trainees have been appointed to assist in installation work at L'H du Siège. Feedback from the teachers at the conference was equally positive about the link.

The conference was attended by regional and local funders who defended current changes to the funding regime as in the future they would support art that they claimed many more people would see (for example installations and performances in shopping centres) rather than in-depth experiences for

a smaller number of people. This went against their previous support of targeting audiences and giving them a deep personal experience. The change seemed also to register a move from supporting young people into work in the creative industries into supporting art to be (passively) consumed rather than art as a participatory and collaborative activity.

**Note:** *This is a mere sample of the range and number of activities that took place on the LCP project, for more detailed information please go to the LCP website.*

## **Summary**

### **The Vision**

The partners shared a commitment to inclusivity underpinning their work and to exploring creative ways of ensuring that each gallery could listen to and work with the various audiences as recorded here. The lead partner, Fabrica declared in the publication reflecting on its first ten years: “Fabrica’s creativity is inextricably linked to diversity, open exchange and learning within the organisation” (Aldred et al, 2007, pg1), and

“Two interrelated beliefs lie at the centre of Fabrica’s work. The first is that...we [all] have an innate need to communicate with and understand each other and our surroundings. This urge to engage is indicated by our curiosity...; our will to imagine ourselves beyond the prosaic and the material; ...to give shape to our thoughts; ...reminding ourselves that we are social and sensual beings,...to know and understand more about ourselves and the wider world. The second belief is that contemporary visual art provides a unique opportunity for this ... to find expression. It is a flexible arena in which our engagement with ideas, images, objects and their possible meanings evokes our individual and collective identities.” (Aldred et al, 2007, p87)

The LCP project aimed to consider ways in which some potential audiences were excluded from these opportunities by reasons that ranged from physical difficulties (including disabilities, lack of financial means, distance from events) to cultural differences, such as educational differences (including language in its fullest sense) expectations and experiences.

## The Concept

The concept as embedded in the proposal was to improve the quality of arts education services and increase access to them for young people and marginalised individuals and communities. It aimed to do this by working with these communities and non-arts partners in the relevant fields, by reflecting on their own practices, evaluating the projects and, in doing so, sharing expertise and developing the professional competencies of practitioners. It was also interested in the different ways in which regional structures and nation states supported such work. The project allowed its participants to increase their fields of knowledge and find new opportunities for partnership.

## The Methods

- The basis of the project was an exploration of existing knowledge, experience, funding opportunities and activities to build networks across the 2 Seas Interreg IVA region.
- Effective communication was essential to the success of the programme. This is not just a matter of accurate translation of the different national languages but an understanding of the nuances and assumptions of those languages. Before it was possible to communicate effectively, it was necessary to understand cultural and economic differences – this was important both for the partners and also for working with the different groups of potential audiences. Like any group, the shortcuts, acronyms and things taken for granted had to be unpicked and re-assembled with a richer understanding. This is more likely to happen over sustained periods of discussion. The partners built regular meetings into the original proposal in order to ensure that a proper exchange took place.
- Action learning: reflection and critique was employed as the main means to develop the professional competencies of practitioners by sharing expertise and reflecting on experiences. It was strengthened by the principles that underpin any community or education arts work – that its language should be accessible to all those involved (often through negotiation), that it is owned by all the participants equally and is fair to all members. Action learning is where a group of people meet to talk through issues that have come up in their occupation and to work together to find solutions. This method required regular face-to-face meetings which could be supplemented, but not replaced, by electronic communication.
- Mentoring provided an opportunity to discuss each step of the journey, problems encountered and solutions found across the partnership. Sharing best practice

cases provided an opportunity for partners to refresh their personal approaches to the work and to learn from each other.

- With good communication, action learning and mentoring comes good peer group support. The open processes and honest accounts of where each organisation stood at the start of the project ensured that there was strong support and trust. The outcomes were personal 'learning journeys' that record the starting and finishing point of those involved.
- Potential new audiences also need to be valued and understood, involved in the design of workshops and have a sense of ownership of the project as we have seen on page 4 of this report where people in care settings made the point that they welcomed the opportunities for discussion rather than being talked to or, in the case of the blind guides, taking an active role in gallery education. The target audiences here were some of the least powerful in our current version of society, giving them a voice and respecting their points of view was essential to the success of the project. The acknowledgment that their voices count and their ideas valued produce an increased confidence in using that voice and expressing those ideas.
- Documentation and dissemination is essential for 'corporate' memory to enrich the organisation, for funders and other professionals working in the field. This project has full documentation available however, this report comes from outside the funding regime or any particular organisation and attempts to avoid jargon to make the findings available to all those who may be interested in the work.

## Conclusion

The energy of this inter-regional collaboration is undeniable and the project demonstrates that there is an ecology of art organisations offering access to contemporary art practices that is neither patronising or simplified. Artists are used to being creative in their problem solving and in many ways ideally

placed to work with non-mainstream groups. There are talented and experienced artists/educators who have the experience to devise and develop educational programmes but also an undercurrent of financial anxiety that the resources to exploit fully this expertise will be hard won. The processes of evaluation and review enable practitioners to reflect on what was of value in the project and decide what can be of use in further developments.

Adopting a flexible approach meant that galleries, artists and art educators were able to interpret the aims of the project as appropriate for each individual situation whilst sharing the overall vision. The length of the project encouraged the galleries to design workshops with an input from the constituent audience groups to underpin their overall planning and to work with their exhibition programmes. So, the project explored a great diversity of work both conceptually and practically. Individual projects were carried out in a variety of ways from gallery-based workshops to class visits and even, as we have seen, a bicycle ride, a skate ramp and a lone drum kit in the middle of a field in the Zwalm valley.

## Legacy

***"The artist's work is like a pebble, thrown into a vast river; the ripples touch me, touch hundreds of other individuals and move out to infinity" Gerri Moriarty (1997) Taliruni's Travellers: an art worker's view of evaluation, Comedia.***

This project has ensured that organisations have been able to work together - to benefit from each other's experiences, and to develop their work beyond that which each could have done independently. Individual art workers have become more confident and imaginative in their approaches.

Not all aspects of the project worked, sometimes it was difficult to get access to some potential audiences, and there have



been widespread cuts to arts funding during the three years of the project, so that some of the activities might need fundamental shifts in the organisations in the future. For instance, Netwerk's involvement with regional funding and Fabrica's model of working with a Youth Centre rather than schools has been taken up by the Arts Council of England: South East in its funding stream called 'The Bridge'.

We hope that its immediate legacy is the individual and collective experience of all those who took part in the project in any capacity. We have seen from the L'H du Siège conference what it can mean to a particular group of young people and, from feedback generally, what individuals and groups have taken from it.

We have evidence that the project can extend further than direct impact, through families (for instance in La Malterie's work with the community centre networks) and through organisations becoming involved in a shared purpose and philosophy, which has been developed and maintained across the 2 Seas Interreg IVA region and can be extended further still.

In the application for this project, it stated that its aim was to "create sustainable Audience Development strategies" whilst acknowledging that "the practice of Audience Development is less readily understood in France and Belgium" (LCP bid page 1). One sign of success here is the creation and commitment to maintain a specific post for Audience Development at Netwerk, despite other cuts to the organisation. Audience Development and education is now fundamental to their activities.

Each gallery or organisation that took part has critically evaluated its accessibility, not just in terms of physical access but intellectually and culturally too. The findings of this project have been used to underpin bids for further funding so that this work can develop exponentially. The LCP project offered time to experiment and build up experience, but public funding

needs to demonstrate that it can reach further than individuals, important though that is, and this project addressed ideas of how to achieve equal access to public cultural spaces. The lessons learnt from this project will be re-invested by the partners to form the foundations for building the next stage. We would welcome any feedback.

### **Nannette Aldred**

December 2012

Nannette Aldred has been involved with Fabrica since its inception. She was a member of the Board for a number of years, editing *Fabrica: the First Ten Years* (Fabrica 2007) and contributing to *Enquire: Inspiring Learning in Galleries* (Engage 2006).

She has published work on British visual culture including film, design, art and its institutions and education. They include:

*Teaching Culture: the long revolution in cultural studies*, co-edited with Martin Ryle and interview with Eddie Chambers, Niace, 1999

and contributed to

*Summer of Love: Psychedelic Art, Social Crisis and Counterculture in the 1960s*, edited Grunenberg and Harris, Tate Liverpool, 2005

*The Cinema of Michael Powell: International Perspectives on an English Film-Maker*, edited by Christie and Moor, British Film Institute, 2005

*Rereading Read: New Views on Herbert Read*, edited by Michael Paraskos, Freedom Press, 2007.

After many years teaching at the University of Sussex, she is currently working as a freelance researcher and writer.



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