

# RETHINKING RELATIONSHIPS



CALOUSTE GULBENKIAN  
FOUNDATION

UK BRANCH

INQUIRY INTO THE CIVIC ROLE OF ARTS ORGANISATIONS  
**PHASE 1 REPORT**



## ABOUT THE FOUNDATION

**The Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation is a charitable foundation set up in 1956 as a private institution of public utility under a special act of the Portuguese Government. Its Headquarters are in Lisbon and include the Administration, which deals with grant-giving throughout the world, the Calouste Gulbenkian Museum, housing the Founder's art collections and recognised as one of the best small museums in Europe and the Modern Art Collection, whose holdings include an extensive collection of contemporary British art. There is also an Art Library, a book shop, conference halls and a concert hall with its own resident orchestra. The Foundation also maintains a Science Institute near Lisbon, a Portuguese delegation in Paris and the UK Branch.**

### The UK Branch

Since its establishment by Trustees in 1956, the UK Branch has made interventions in the arts and culture, in social welfare and in education that have had profound and long-lasting effects in Britain and beyond (see a list of relevant publications over the last 50 years on the inside back cover). The UK Branch of the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation aspires to bring about long-term improvements in wellbeing, particularly for the most vulnerable, by creating connections across boundaries (national borders, communities, disciplines and sectors) which deliver social, cultural and environmental value.

The UK Branch is currently implementing its 2014–19 strategy, which builds on previous work. Three strands – Transitions in Later Life, Valuing the Ocean, and Participatory Performing Arts – are underway.

### PARTIS and Sharing the Stage

**PARTIS (Práticas ARTísticas para Inclusão Social)** is a programme run by Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation in Lisbon. It has been designed to support projects that use artistic practices (music, photography, video, theatre, dance and circus arts) as tools to create bridges between communities that normally do not cross paths. Groups involved with PARTIS include young people at risk, prisoners and former prisoners, immigrants, the lonely, people with disabilities and the long-term unemployed.

**Sharing the Stage** is a programme run by the UK Branch. It is supporting 10 projects which are each being delivered by a consortia of organisations. The projects are innovative and explore new ways of thinking and working that will benefit the arts sector and society. From a writing festival of playwright prisoners, to older people in care homes acting alongside professional actors, these projects are diverse and push boundaries. Representatives of the consortia also come together as a learning community to share practice and discuss creative solutions to the pressing questions facing arts organisations developing participatory work.

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THE CALOUSTE GULBENKIAN FOUNDATION  
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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

A great many people have contributed to this report and we offer thanks to everyone involved. Simeon Yates, Sue Potts, Peter Campbell and Stephen Crone from the ICC built on research undertaken by James Doeser from King's College London. Lizzie Crump, Hannah Bird, Hannah Lambert and Clare Thurman from What Next? led on consultation discussions across the country, the artist commissions and the local area studies. Sincere thanks to the artists Deborah Mason, Rebecca Manson Jones, Sally Tonge and Kyle Walker and the lead researchers for the local area studies Kathy McArdle, Mary Swan, Richard Callaghan, Marie Nixon and Liam Murphy. Mark Londesborough from the RSA ran a large consultation conference and two smaller workshops. Sam Cairns skilfully co-ordinated all this activity.

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# FOREWORD

At the heart of our Inquiry lies a question: how can arts organisations better fulfil their civic role? The question is not born from mere curiosity but from ambition; one consistent with the work of the Foundation over decades (see a list of previous UK Branch work at the back of this report). This ambition comes from a belief in the benefit that participation in the arts confers on all of us – validating our stories and creating new ones – and in the potential of the arts in a changing world to bridge diverse communities and renew the bonds between us.

François Matarasso describes this powerfully in his book *Mirror Images*:

*Art's ability to ferry us between different shores of understanding is vital in a public space dominated by communications that are reductively simple, at best, or simply deceptive. When political divisions are daily widened by words of fear and hatred, the complexity of artistic statements are necessary – vital – firebreaks.*

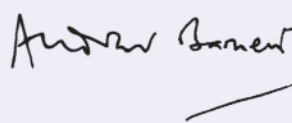
These firebreaks feel yet more relevant in 2017. But beyond current politics, there are some longer-term cultural trends:

- Uneven educational achievement – this will leave many ill-equipped for employment transformed by technology, automation and global competition and force each of us to be more creative, flexible and productive.
- People feeling denied a voice in how change impacts upon them while at the same time expecting more from those who govern them.
- A more diverse population with divisions stoked by negative discourse and social segregation.
- Communities sometimes unable or unwilling to replace the earlier sense of togetherness derived, in the past, from associative activity including religion.

These are just some of the trends, and arts organisations are no more immune to these than others. But the Inquiry, and what people have said to us, suggests they have a role to play. As we progressed the work, we found metaphor a useful way of describing their potential role: arts organisations as ‘colleges’, as ‘town halls’, ‘parks’, ‘temples’ and ‘home’. And we have been struck by the value of seeing arts organisations at different stages of development: version 1.0, 2.0 and 3.0. (see page 28)

Throughout, we have sought to avoid being prescriptive. That is why we chose a consultative, research-driven Inquiry rather than a programme that might feel more rigid. Our ambition has been to find out what would enable the arts sector to move beyond addressing issues of diversity and education, often narrowly and separately framed, to something which feels more holistic and democratic.

Launched in our sixtieth year, I hope this Inquiry will demonstrate how things can be, and ask questions about how we work together to make that real. And, in that spirit, we are sharing what we have found to date and asking for your input into the next phase.



Andrew Barnett  
Director, Calouste Gulbenkian  
Foundation (UK Branch)

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**If you work in an arts organisation, we hope you will read this report, consider what it means for your practice and tell us what you think.**

**The Inquiry into the Civic Role of Arts Organisations seeks to increase awareness of the civic role that arts organisations play – and could play – nationally and locally. We want to create a strong and growing movement of organisations committed to demonstrating ‘next practice’. We will work with others to craft recommendations on how policy change and practical support can strengthen this role. We will build on research and consultation working in partnership with arts and social sector organisations and the public and private sector.**

From the start, our intention has been to reflect your experience and views. This report summarises what you told us during Phase 1 and sets out our plans for Phase 2. Part 2 of the report contains 20 examples of organisations already undertaking inspiring work. Additional case studies are available on our website.

We want to know what you think.

- Do our findings reflect or contradict your experience?
- Do our proposed next steps for Phase 2 respond to the right issues in the right way?

See Chapter 6 for more details and specific questions. Visit [bit.ly/civicrolearts](http://bit.ly/civicrolearts) to give your feedback.

During Autumn 2017, we will be present at sector events nationally. Look out for dates and venues on our website: [civicroleartsinquiry.gulbenkian.org.uk](http://civicroleartsinquiry.gulbenkian.org.uk)

We look forward to hearing from you and working with you to develop a second phase programme of work that will make a real difference.

## OUR FINDINGS IN BRIEF

- The civic role has a long history, gradually shifting from widening access, to education and community projects, to engaging communities in *creating* content that reflects social, environmental and economic issues. Alistair Hudson eloquently describes this progression in terms of the different phases of museum development:
  - *[Version] 1.0 is where people come along and see the luxury artefacts and become better human beings for the experience.*
  - *[Version] 2.0 is one of participation, people participating in art and participating in the museum, in education and community projects and cafes and shops, but all these things work in support of that primary high-art agenda.*
  - *[Version] 3.0 is the user-generated version ... so it's not about people trying to join in the art in the museum, it's more about the museum trying to join in with what's going on out there [locally]... and what's happening in the world, and demonstrating how art can contribute to some of the main significant social problems that we have.*

Alistair Hudson, Director, mima
- Activity is too diverse for the role to be strictly defined. Instead, we have drafted a set of principles for consultation (see Chapter 2). We have also developed descriptive metaphors of arts organisations acting as *colleges, town halls, parks, temples* and *home*. We want to test these further in Phase 2.
- Case studies show that arts organisations with a civic role share common features. They are dedicated to artistic excellence and fostering individual creativity. They have inspiring leaders, committed to a civic role. People and local communities are central to their practice. Place matters. Developing relationships and strong connections are central to their approach. They seek to integrate their work with communities into their artistic programmes.
- But there are challenges. We lack a common language and classification system for the civic role. Leaders appear overstretched and under-supported. Co-production with communities requires particular skills: producers, curators and artists may require additional training and support. Approaches to funding and evaluation can make sustaining civic work difficult. Participants and staff groups both need to reflect the communities in which they work.
- Opportunities for expanding the civic role include aspirations to work in deeper partnership with both public and private sector organisations to address the issues of most importance to communities.



## NEXT STEPS

Over Summer 2017, we are consulting on the following possible next steps (see Chapter 6 for more details).

**Supporting the development of practice** We want to examine how arts organisations could play a ‘connector’ role, in partnerships with social and commercial sector partners and public authorities. We are seeking funding partners to help us develop models. We want to share proven approaches, whether from the UK or internationally, that arts organisations might follow to develop their civic role.

**Capacity building** Working with other funders, we want to explore: options for networking, international exchange and a leadership programme; training, support and networks for artists, producers and curators co-producing projects with communities. We are also proposing to produce guidance and tools for the boards of arts organisations to support them in considering what a civic role might mean for their organisations.

**Funding** We want to examine the ‘funding ecology’ and the potential for greater collaboration between funders; the need for funding for ‘light touch’ infrastructure and capacity building; the feasibility of providing incentives for large and small arts organisations to work together and appropriate processes for application, evaluation and accountability.

**Public policy** We are interested in helping create a public policy environment conducive to arts organisations fulfilling their civic role. We already have plans for work to identify potential levers for making a difference.

## ABOUT THE INQUIRY

The Inquiry was launched in 2016. Its remit is arts organisations in receipt of public funds working in England. The research and consultation for Phase 1 was delivered in partnership with the Institute of Cultural Capital (ICC), What Next? and the RSA. It was supported by two expert groups, an Advisory Panel and an International Reference Group (IRG).

We gathered evidence from: literature reviews; interviews and a survey examining arts practitioners’ understanding and conceptions of the ‘civic role’; wide consultation and engagement with arts practitioners across England; four local area studies; and three artist commissions. We are building an extensive bank of case studies, providing a rich seam of information about how arts organisations are re-imagining their civic role.



**The Dance Leeds**  
**Made, 6 June 2015.**  
**Photo: Yorkshire Dance**

# **PART 1**

## ANALYSIS AND PROPOSALS

# 1

## WHAT, HOW, WHY AND SO WHAT?

“This is a time of such uncertainty – economically, politically, socially, culturally – that the need to be creative together as citizens feels urgent. But if that is true, only the fullest possible cultural participation – everyone – will do.”

Mark Robinson, *Faster but Slower, Slower but Faster, the Arts Council England’s Creative People and Places Learning 2016*<sup>1</sup>

The impetus for the launch of the Inquiry into the Civic Role of Arts Organisations in May 2016 was a view that the relationship between arts organisations and the public is changing – and is likely to change even more dramatically because of social, political, economic, environmental and cultural trends. Political events since its launch have made the Inquiry even more salient, as we seek to respond to concern that the country is divided along lines of geography, income and opportunity, ethnicity and age. As Mark Robinson says, the need to mobilise to seek solutions feels urgent.<sup>2</sup> The Inquiry aims to help arts organisations review and probably renew their relationship with the public to support such mobilisation.

This report is a call to action. Through the case studies, which are its core, it highlights the ways in which many arts organisations are re-invigorating their civic role in imaginative and inspiring ways and asks others to consider emulating their practice. It invites you to help us to develop a collaborative programme of work to encourage, support and promote the civic role of arts organisations in order to secure a better future.

This report marks the end of Phase 1 of an ambitious programme of work which will have three phases. This means it is the first staging post on a journey. Best described as a stocktaking exercise, this report surveys the issues and questions raised in Phase 1 of the Inquiry. These will be explored and tested in greater depth in Phase 2.

“We want to make the world better not just by making beautiful things, but by changing ... people’s lives and public services in a considered, measurable, rigorous way.”

Eloise Malone, Effervescent

## WHAT IS THE INQUIRY ABOUT AND WHAT IS IT DESIGNED TO ACHIEVE?

Our starting point is that arts production by itself, divorced from any civic intent, is a public good deserving of public support and investment. We believe in the inherent value of art and the richness it uniquely brings. Not all arts organisations will want to engage with agendas that extend beyond the arts, nor should they be forced to do so. But we have been so impressed by the civic practice of a number of arts organisations that we want to examine and celebrate it and facilitate its development.

The focus for the Inquiry is publicly funded arts organisations, including museums operating in England. This does not mean that we have no interest in the broader arts and cultural ecology including libraries, heritage buildings and micro or solely volunteer run arts organisations or the wider ecology of support for, and connections within, local communities. Rather the purpose of this report is to influence the practice of publicly funded arts organisations, encouraging them to understand the influential role that they play or could play in their localities through being aware of and responding to opportunities to work with other community partners, including those from other sectors, to meet local needs. We also recognise the invaluable contribution of individual artists and arts practitioners, but our focus is arts *organisations* and how they conceive of, and demonstrate, their civic role.

While our remit is arts organisations operating in England, we have sought to learn from inspiring practice across the UK and internationally. This report includes a few international case studies, including one from Portugal where we have close ties. Our case study bank on our website will provide more examples.

A significant difficulty with this project has been language or terminology. ‘Civic role’, like an elephant, is recognisable but difficult to define precisely and even more difficult to corral. In this report, we have sought to describe it as opposed to defining it. However, at its root ‘civic role’ relates to how organisations engage with the public, whether that be local people (neighbours), a ‘community of interest’ (poetry-slam enthusiasts) or a combination of both. We are interested in the positive difference these organisations make in the public sphere through and aside from the production and presentation of artistic work.

Taking the lead from the experts, including artists, producers and curators, we asked for suggestions for those arts organisations already re-imagining their civic role in highly creative and impactful ways so that we could describe ‘next practice’ (distinguished from best practice in being orientated towards the future and based on ‘disciplined imagination’<sup>3</sup>). We found that the organisations recommended are seeking both to engage more deeply with and involve their different publics. We also found that they are playing a number of different civic roles and are delivering outcomes (more or less tangible) in a number of different domains. Based on discussion with the Advisory Panel we developed metaphors describing these domains to give the project an anchor. As our research progressed we added to the original list. It now encompasses arts organisations as:

- colleges (places of learning);
- town halls (places of debate);
- parks (public space open to everyone);
- temples (places which give meaning and provide solace); and
- home (a place of safety and belonging).

So, what do we want to achieve with the Inquiry? We want to:

- capture and give a platform to the inspiring practice we have exposed in our case study research, increasing its profile;
- explore how learning can be shared and the most promising approaches replicated;
- build the capacity of arts organisations to engage civically;
- engage with policy makers and funders to create a more conducive policy and funding environment.

By doing all of this, we aspire to facilitate the development of a growing movement of arts organisations committed to their civic role. This is in order to create an environment that:

- enriches everyone’s artistic and cultural life, and improves wellbeing;
- is a means to collectively understand our place in a changing world; and
- enables individuals and communities to be active citizens.

We believe that arts organisations have a power that other organisations with missions to achieve social change do not. Arts organisations have a particular capacity to draw out the best in us, to engender hope, to prompt empathy, to encourage kindness, to create safe, neutral places for the discussion of tricky issues and to inspire us to mobilise to create positive change.



## WHY IS THE INQUIRY NEEDED?

One of our aspirations for the Inquiry is to help arts organisations ‘future proof’ by enabling them to consider and respond to significant social, economic and environmental trends:

### Changing patterns of arts production and consumption

The ways in which we produce and consume the arts have changed dramatically over the last 30 or so years, as a result of new technology, shifts in public attitudes and expectations, and changing demographics. New technology has transformed how the arts are presented, consumed and created by both professional artists and amateurs. Arts organisations have also had to respond to an expectation that they should be more engaged with and engaging of their audiences and communities, and that the diversity of these communities should be reflected in the work produced.

These trends are only likely to become more marked. The pace of technological change is accelerating, the public appears to have an increasing appetite for participatory or immersive experiences and, regardless of Brexit and future levels of immigration, our country will become progressively more diverse. Britain in 2030 is expected to be almost as diverse as the USA is today.<sup>4</sup>

Global migration is shaping our population in new ways and we are increasingly aware of the complexities of people’s identities; for example, ‘mixed parentage’ is now the fastest-growing ethnic minority in Britain and by 2050 it is projected that a third of the population will not be white.<sup>5, 6</sup> As a sector, we are more aware that some sections of society have been traditionally under-represented in arts production and consumption. There is an imperative for the arts to include and represent everyone, and to be more relevant to society.

### Fiscal restraint and funding cuts

In the 70 years since the establishment of the Arts Council, there has been significant debate about both the rationale for and the extent and focus of public funding for the arts. Comment has regularly surfaced that more should be spent on black and minority ethnic (BAME) arts, amateur arts and on smaller and emerging arts organisations and less should be spent

on high profile London-based arts organisations. Within the context of harsh public spending cuts, fiscal restraint and a crisis in local authority funding, the debate becomes ever more intense.

Cuts in public spending, particularly at the local authority level, are having a serious impact on services. In some areas, this is leading to cuts, sometimes dramatic, in funding for arts organisations. Nationally, this is stimulating interest in, and debate about, the responsibilities of organisations that receive public funding. Some arts organisations are deploying their creativity to help local authorities achieve better outcomes (for example, in health and social care) with stagnant or reduced budgets.

### Growing disillusionment with conventional politics

Politicians are now less trusted than estate agents.<sup>7</sup> At the same time, politicians and the media are asserting that the public no longer trusts experts.<sup>8</sup> And, we live in an age of ‘fake news’.

Until recently there had been a trend of elections having dismal turnouts, particularly local elections. For example in 2016, just 33 per cent of those entitled to vote in local elections did so. And, while the recent referendum on EU membership saw turnout at a near record 72 per cent, it is considered that a proportion of those voting did so to register a protest. In the recent snap election of 2017 the turnout was also high, however it resulted in a hung parliament which suggests a lack of national consensus.

One striking aspect of our first consultation discussion was the level of scepticism about the ability of conventional politics to make a positive difference and a strong belief in ‘people-powered’ local action.

**“I have seen arts and cultural activities deliver better outcomes than some medically focused therapies.”**

Sue Gallagher, NHS Lambeth



The suggestion was that the emphasis should be on inspiring and supporting local people to recognise and build on their assets, including skills and capabilities. Arts organisations have the creative processes and staff with the skills and attributes to enable and facilitate this.

Some of the data reinforces the opportunity here. Volunteering in the UK is stable, with around 40 per cent of the population offering their services for charitable and community causes at least once a year, and evidence suggests that young people are keen to do more.<sup>9, 10</sup>

**What would ‘people-powered’ local action look like on the ground? How might it best be supported? On the downside might it be open to manipulation, corruption or populism?**

**Email us:**  
**civicrolearts@gulbenkian.org.uk**

## Global competition and a changing labour market

The OECD provides educational attainment rankings based on tests taken by 15-year-olds in over 70 countries. In the research published in 2016, the UK is ranked 27th in maths and 22nd in reading.<sup>11</sup> Generally, over recent years the UK’s performance has remained more or less stagnant.

The quality of our education system in part determines our capacity to be productive and to compete in global markets. Children’s participation in the arts is believed to increase educational attainment. Although the Educational Endowment Foundation asserts that more research is required to support this claim, major studies in the US suggest that children learn more and achieve better qualifications when the arts are an integral part of education.<sup>12, 13, 14</sup> Yet the Warwick Commission concluded that the arts and creativity are being squeezed out of schools.<sup>15</sup>

One role of arts education – either delivered formally through schools or informally through children’s participation in the activities of arts organisations – is to foster creativity. Looking ahead, technological developments are likely to mean that only the most creative will be able to gain and keep employment. Some suggest that developments in artificial intelligence (AI) could mechanise up to 30 per cent of jobs.<sup>16</sup> The 2015 NESTA report, *Creativity vs. Robots*, found that 87 per cent of highly creative workers are at low or no risk of automation, compared with 40 per cent of all workers.<sup>17</sup>

## Increasing inequality

In a report published in 2016, the Social Mobility Commission concludes that in Great Britain ‘for this generation of young people in particular, it [social mobility] is getting worse not better’.<sup>18</sup> It also says that it is not just the poorest in society who face barriers to progress.

Other research demonstrates that children’s life chances are significantly affected by the quality of cultural education they receive: ‘After-school music and drama lessons, and trips to the theatre or concerts, provide access to cultural capital that can matter as much as academic achievement in “getting on” later in life.’<sup>19</sup> Middle-class families deploy this cultural capital to give their children an advantage and to increase their employability as adults.<sup>20</sup>

## Shrinking public space

There has been a notable trend towards the privatisation of public spaces as strapped-for-cash local authorities sell up. A 2014 report by the Heritage Lottery Fund found that 45 per cent of local authorities are considering either selling parks and green spaces, or transferring their management to others.<sup>21</sup>

Many public spaces are being replaced by privately owned 'public' spaces (POPS), which are blurring the lines between public and private. As these are not public spaces, their owners have the right to refuse entry to members of the public at any time. Exercising this authority, Broadgate Estates, which owns the 32-acre zone between Bishopsgate and Liverpool Street in London, ritually closes the gates to the Estate once a year.<sup>22</sup> POPS are managed by private security companies. They can prohibit protests, photography, or bringing food into the space, or require visitor spending. This has triggered several demonstrations, including a 'mass trespass' in London in 2016.

At the same time, this is coupled with an increased emphasis on crime and safety in public spaces, in light of both increasing concerns over terrorism, but also reflecting attitudes towards young people and people on lower incomes. The Joseph Rowntree Foundation (2007) argues that strategies adopted to 'design out crime', including for example security cameras, anti-loitering devices and lack of or uncomfortable seating, 'can end up "designing out" people'.<sup>23</sup>

**"We allow people to buy their sandwiches in Tesco and sit in our garden ... as a counterweight to huge swathes of the city where it's no longer possible to just be yourself, because they're owned or controlled by commercial interests."**

Mary Cloake, Bluecoat

## Developing a sense of community and belonging

More and more of us live alone. The population is ageing and there is a chronic problem of loneliness amongst older people. Research shows that 63 per cent of adults aged 52 or over who have been widowed, and 51 per cent of the same group who are separated or divorced, report feeling lonely some of the time or often.<sup>24</sup> Work supported by the Jo Cox Commission on Loneliness shows that feelings of loneliness are not limited to older age groups.<sup>25</sup>

In previous centuries, organised religion helped to build a sense of community, providing social and practical support for their congregations. In the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, there has been a massive decline in engagement with organised religion. In 2010, 50 per cent of British people had no religious affiliation, compared to 31 per cent in 1983.<sup>26</sup>

However, community remains important. In 2015-16, 68 per cent of people agreed that their neighbourhood 'pulls together to improve the area', up from 63 per cent in 2014-15 and 60 per cent in 2013-14.<sup>27</sup> In 2015-16, most people (89 per cent) agreed that their local area is 'a place where people from different backgrounds get on well together', the highest level recorded since 2003.<sup>28</sup>

Some of this data paints a very positive picture of community and community cohesion. However, the Brexit vote has generated concern about fault lines in British society between those who consider they have benefited from living in a relatively prosperous country and those who feel excluded from those benefits. Many arts and social sector practitioners see this as a burning issue to which civil society in general, and arts organisations in particular, should seek to respond.

Consideration of these trends led us to develop our metaphors (see Chapter 2) which we then tested through the consultation and in our case study research.

In preparing this report we have also considered the policy context. Annex 3 summarises some recent relevant policy papers.

## HOW HAVE WE DELIVERED THE INQUIRY?

When we launched the Inquiry, we wanted it to be highly consultative. We wanted to hear a wide range of opinions, including opposing views. As a result, there have been many lively and some heated debates in the last year.

The main focus for Phase 1 has been foundational research and engagement with arts organisations. Phase 1 has comprised:

- the launch and maintenance of a dedicated website and e-newsletter, and a social media presence;
- promotion through sector umbrella bodies and networks and the specialist press;
- two literature reviews;
- 13 local area or specialist consultation meetings;
- a national consultation conference;
- Delphi analysis and survey work with arts organisations to establish a baseline and collect their views on the concepts associated with a civic role;
- three artist commissions exploring how the public, particularly those who are typically underserved, view the civic role of the arts;
- four local area studies;
- the development of 40 UK and international case studies highlighting 'next practice'.

(Annex 1 provides more detail about the research and consultation undertaken to support the Inquiry.)

The Inquiry has been supported by an Advisory Panel of 32 expert practitioners from the arts, civil society, and the public and private sectors. We have also benefited from the wise advice of an International Reference Group (IRG) of 11 international experts. (See Annex 2 for the membership of both the Panel and the IRG.)

When we launched the Inquiry, we set out a number of operating principles. These have guided our approach:

- focused on creating positive change;
- delivered in partnership;

- evidence-based, robust but accessible;
- open, inclusive and engaging;
- making connections across different sectors;
- giving those who are vulnerable or underserved a voice;
- international;
- innovative.

Partnership is one of our core delivery principles. Phase 1 of the Inquiry has been delivered by a partnership of organisations and individuals working with the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation UK team. King's College London undertook the original literature review for us. Subsequently, the Institute of Cultural Capital (ICC) became our Inquiry research partner. What Next? was our consultation and engagement partner. It ran consultation meetings across the country. It also led on the artist commissions, which sought to engage underserved individuals and communities, and the local area studies. The Royal Society for the encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce (RSA) organised our national conference. Arts writer Maddy Costa and colleagues undertook the case study research.

### Thank you

A large number of individuals kindly gave up time to contribute their views and expertise to the Inquiry. 437 people participated in our Advisory Panel and International Reference Group, took part in workshops, filled in our online survey and attended our conference. In addition, a significant number contributed online. We would like to thank everyone who got involved. The experience has been inspiring for us. We hope to continue working with you during Phase 2 of the Inquiry.

## A note on diversity

Over the last 15 years, there has been much work to increase the diversity of the arts sector with a focus both on workforce and audiences and on the content of exhibitions and productions. However, according to the statistics collated by the Arts Council England's Creative Case for Diversity, the problem remains stubborn.

We have struggled at times to fully integrate diversity into the Inquiry. We found it difficult initially to form a Panel that included voices from all communities, with a diversity of ethnicity, gender, age, sexuality and disability.

In a meeting about this report, some members of the Panel told us it needed to reflect the diversity of our society more accurately. We have done our best to achieve this within a context in which many of the leaders of arts organisations are male, white and middle class.

**“The lack of indigenous leadership in the sector is not just a consideration from the point of view of representation. It also means that the content and ‘acceptable’ narratives for indigenous creative expression on Australian main stages ... are shaped by other, more dominant narratives.”**

Jacob Boehme, artist and collaborator of the Narangga and Kurna nations of South Australia

How can Phase 2 of the Inquiry do a better job of incorporating a broader range of voices? What work should we seek to do in Phase 2 to support and encourage diversity?

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## WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS REPORT?

This report marks the end of Phase 1 of the Inquiry. The brief for Phase 1 was:

- To map the territory.

Our intention was to explore what is meant by the civic role of arts organisations, and to examine the history of such activity in the UK.

- To put the civic role of arts organisations ‘under a microscope’.

We set out to find examples of inspiring or ‘next’ practice and to explore the barriers to, and opportunities for, its development.

The report summarises the findings and conclusions from Phase 1 and sets out for consultation our proposals for Phase 2 of the Inquiry. Our intention is that Phase 2 will provide both funding and capacity building support for arts organisations re-imagining their civic role. See Chapter 6 for how you can get involved in helping us design this programme.

Our primary audience for this report is arts organisations. A secondary audience is funders and policy makers. During Phase 2 of the Inquiry we intend to cast the net wider and engage with a broader range of stakeholders, including other community and voluntary organisations, public sector bodies and the private sector.

## FINDING YOUR WAY ROUND THIS REPORT

This report is split into two parts. Part 1 contains seven chapters, including this introduction and the Conclusion (Chapter 7):

Chapter 2, ‘Defining the territory’, discusses how the term ‘civic role’ is understood and proposes principles for consultation. It explores in more detail the metaphors we use to illustrate the different ways in which arts organisations can play a civic role.

Chapter 3, ‘Back to the future’, looks at how embedded a civic role is in arts organisations from the first publicly funded museums and libraries in the Victorian era, to participatory arts and community based projects, to a new emphasis on user-generated content.

Chapter 4, ‘Describing the civic role of arts organisations’, is largely based on an analysis of our case studies. It discusses commonalities, applies our metaphors and starts to create a taxonomy of practice.

Chapter 5, ‘Challenges and opportunities’, considers topics such as leadership, partnership, funding and diversity.

Chapter 6, ‘Summary of findings and proposals’, suggests next steps and, importantly, requests your feedback on these.

Part 2 contains 20 case studies of arts organisations identified by experts as demonstrating inspiring practice. These are the core of this report and you may want to start by reading them. They are part of a bank of 40 case studies which will be published on our website to coincide with the publication of this report. We will be adding to these over the course of the Inquiry.





Photo courtesy  
Battersea Arts Centre



# 2

## DEFINING THE TERRITORY

### ‘CIVIC ROLE’: A CONTESTED TERM

The terminology ‘the civic role of arts organisations’ is little used or understood. Only 31 per cent of arts organisations responding to the ICC survey said that the term was part of their organisation’s vocabulary. Similarly, our work found the public also did not understand the term (see the box ‘A terminological soup’, page 20).

The term is also contested. It provoked a wide range of responses from the arts organisations who participated in the research and consultation. Some arts practitioners approved, describing it as ‘muscular’, for example. Others considered that it had unhelpful connotations of state power and control and the dominance of cities. Some kicked against its implication that arts organisations might have civic duties and responsibilities. Many considered it an old-fashioned term; this was a positive for some, a negative for others.

When discussion at our consultations turned to whether there was preferable terminology, a few suggestions were made for alternatives. These included, for example, the ‘community role of arts organisations’, ‘civic value’ or ‘civic intent’. Our final assessment was that ‘civil role’ with all its difficulties was better than the alternatives. However, we agree that the onus is on us to better describe what we mean by the term.

We prefer ‘civic role’ because:

- it suggests the importance of place and place-making, to which the arts and culture are vitally important;
- it is associated with ‘civic virtues’ (discussion of which dates back to ancient Greece and Rome) and their vital link to education;
- it is associated with great Victorian philanthropists and pioneers who sought to make the arts available to all;

- it suggests the importance of active engagement in the public sphere, perhaps most particularly, active engagement in democratic processes.

When we use the term ‘civic’, we’re not seeking to privilege the urban over the rural, or state over independent action, or established forms over new. We are seeking simply to emphasise the importance of arts organisations acting as *public* as opposed to *private* organisations, ones with responsibilities for their communities and to society more generally. In using the term ‘civic role’, we will stress the positives from its past and re-invent it as appropriate to arts organisations in the twenty-first century.

The ICC survey of arts organisations finds only 32 per cent have discussed their ‘civic role’ at board level, while only 31 per cent say that the term ‘civic role’ is part of their organisation’s vocabulary. Despite the term not being part of the lexicon of most arts organisations, 62 per cent of those responding to the ICC survey see fulfilling a civic role, as either a very important or an important part of their mission, and 75 per cent plan to play a bigger civic role in the future. This indicates that, although arts organisations may want to debate appropriate terminology, generally there is support for the notion that arts organisations should engage with the civic.

For a discussion of terminology, and the views of arts organisations and the public, see the box, ‘A terminological soup’ (page 20). Chapter 5 discusses further the issue of language and communication.

## GEOGRAPHY MAKES A DIFFERENCE

Our review of the literature suggests that geography makes a marked difference in concepts of the civic role of arts organisations.

The US literature is more substantial than the European literature. It sometimes uses the term ‘civic role’ which is not used in other countries. On occasion it refers to ‘the work of art in the world’,<sup>35</sup> making a link between it and education in civics. Over recent years, some US arts practitioners have also placed an emphasis on ‘communities not audiences’.<sup>36</sup> This boils down to strategy and mission. The implication is that an arts organisation might reconsider its mission, build partnerships with other local organisations, and focus on the needs of its community and how it can

meet them, while at the same time pursuing its artistic ambitions. Obviously, this is a governance issue and a matter for boards. It requires community-aware and engaged trustees and board members.

Recent continental European literature tends to emphasise the role of arts and cultural organisations as political activists or supporters of activism, leading campaigns on social, economic and environmental issues. Its roots are perhaps in Central and Eastern Europe where, once the Soviet regime fell apart, there was a flowering of politically engaged artistic activity. Many organisations with a bias towards the civic in continental Europe are deemed to have common features. These include a hybrid nature with commercial, subsidised and community activities rubbing shoulders within the same organisation.

### A terminological soup

In political theory, the ‘civic’ is the public sphere. It is distinct from the private domain of the individual and the family. For some, it is associated specifically with cities and their governance. For others, it is concerned with the state and the paraphernalia of government. Some academics refer to ‘civic political culture’, associating it with bureaucracy and an unwillingness to challenge the status quo.<sup>29</sup>

Others write about ‘civic engagement’, for example, describing it as: ‘comprised of actions and attitudes associated with democratic governance and social participation’.<sup>30</sup>

Another related term is ‘active citizenship’, where individual citizens fully engage with society, accepting responsibilities, supporting others and contributing talents and skills.<sup>31</sup> In recent years the concept of citizenship has been extended to organisations and the term ‘good corporate citizen’ has been applied to private companies.<sup>32</sup>

During the consultation, some asked why we had decided to use ‘civic’ and not ‘civil’ (in the sense of ‘civil society’). Definitions of ‘civil society’ are as, if not more, contested. However, it tends to be regarded as synonymous with associational life, divorced from the profit motive and independent from government.<sup>33</sup> We preferred ‘civic’ because it can encompass partnership working which blurs the boundaries between the voluntary, private and public sectors.

### How arts organisations conceive ‘civic’

Participants in the consultation workshops organised by What Next? were asked what words or phrases they most associated with ‘civic’. They said:

- Service to community; charitable; benefits the wider public
- Socially engaged practice
- Social responsibility, inclusivity, engagement, empowerment
- Active citizenship, dialogue; listening
- Citizens helping people be citizens
- How we make sense of the world
- Opting into personal responsibility
- Co-production; mutual; equality and accessibility
- Integrated approach: state intervention and grassroots up
- Public and private
- Inspiration and aspirational
- Accountability

### Public understanding

What Next? looked at what different communities think the civic role of arts organisations is or should be through three artist commissions. Generally, the response echoed that of the arts organisations. The public did not understand or necessarily relate to the terms ‘civic’ or ‘civic role’. For them the work was about making positive change in their local area. Neither did they relate to the term ‘arts’. Their characterisation of the work they participated in creating was that the experience was ‘enjoyable’. This echoes Grayson Perry’s advice to artists in his 2013 Reith Lectures to remember that the arts is something that ordinary people engage with in their time off.<sup>34</sup>

Such organisations are also characterised as ‘alternative’, not necessarily concerned with national culture or the artistic canon, and as adopting new organisational structures and ways of working.<sup>37</sup>

In the UK, relevant literature is scant. What there is emphasises neither political activism nor the power of the arts to mobilise campaigns and achieve political change (the common feature of both the continental European and the US literature). Rather, the civic is framed as concerned with individual self-realisation and the relationship between the individual and their community and wider society. In fact, our research and consultation suggests that there is some resistance amongst arts organisations to the notion that a civic role might mean engaging with politics and political processes. This may be because of a deeply felt concern that art plus politics equals propaganda, which in turn equals inferior art. But François Matarasso argues that:

*Art is an antidote to political slogans and dangerous simplicities. It makes things more complex, not less. It helps us see things from other points of view.*

François Matarasso, *Making Nothing Happen: Art and Civil Society in Troubled Times*<sup>38</sup>

He suggests, in other words, that art does not give us pat answers. If it did, it would not be art. Instead, it helps us to consider things in all their complexity from different angles. It allows us to come to our own view. In this way, it is the opposite of propaganda.

While the literature is nuanced in how it conceives the civic role, one common feature spans the different geographies: the belief that in such turbulent times, there is an urgency about arts organisations being supported and encouraged to think and act civically.

## A DISTINCT FOCUS

The particular lens through which we see the civic role of arts organisations is that of organisational mission and strategy. For us, it is a matter of organisational values, governance and leadership. It is about the ethos of the organisation, how it sees its role in the world and whether it thinks and acts in ways that demonstrate concern for its community and society more generally.

Much of the feedback from the consultation challenged our framing of the project. Notably, many respondents stressed the importance of individual artists and arts practitioners and their vital role in enabling arts organisations to re-imagine and exemplify a civic role (see the box, ‘The importance of individual artists and practitioners’, page 22). While acknowledging the legitimacy of these contributions, our concern has been to keep the project manageable and focused enough to be meaningful. On this basis, we have decided that our focus should continue to be publicly funded arts organisations.

In the consultation, some suggested that the project should encompass ‘culture’ more broadly (covering, for example, work concerned with food and horticulture). While our focus continues to be arts organisations, we are interested in how the communities they engage with choose to frame this engagement – and this may well be through aspects of broader culture. This seems crucially important, given that one of our themes is listening to people and putting them first:

*The strength and diversity of local culture often seems invisible to our eyes, because we fail to recognise it as culture.... Going into somewhere like Tottenham, the idea that there’s no culture there is just absurd: it’s full of culture, it’s just not culture like our culture. It’s culture around food, it’s culture around music, it’s culture around block parties, it’s culture around carnival. All of those things are really exciting; they allow us to think about working there in different ways, rather than just making another theatre show.*

Mark Ball, LIFT

One challenge that has emerged is the difficulty of getting people to think beyond individual projects to the ‘civic stance’ of an organisation. To illustrate, when we initially canvassed for inspiring examples of arts organisations re-imagining their civic role and at the cutting edge of practice, most suggestions were of individual projects, the majority participatory performing arts projects. Relatively few were examples of arts organisations taking a strategic approach.

## ELUDING DEFINITION

The literature review King's College London completed for us before the launch of the Inquiry, says:

*A real challenge at the heart of this work is defining precisely what is meant by 'civic role'. It brings to mind politics, community, rights and responsibilities.<sup>39</sup>*

After reviewing the relevant literature, the researchers hazarded the following definition, that the civic role encompasses:

*The ways in which arts organisations animate, enhance and enable processes by which people exercise their rights and responsibilities as members of communities.*

The Delphi work, undertaken by the ICC, built on the King's College London research by establishing a list of conceptions of a civic role. These were tested in a follow-up survey completed by arts organisations. They associated the term with 'community', 'power, politics and public discourse', 'social responsibility, duty and virtue', 'individual engagement and pride' and 'identity and image of a place'.

But the following consultation discussions indicate some unease with these associations. As mentioned, some are uncomfortable with politics being part of the mix. On the other hand, a few suggest that art is always 'political' by its very nature, i.e. arts organisations do not need a civic frame to make it so. Others are uncomfortable with the notion that arts organisations might have 'duties and responsibilities'. This may perhaps be because of concern that these might be imposed by external agencies and, further, that arts organisations might be corralled to deliver government priorities.

There is significant resistance to the attempt to establish a definition of the civic role of arts organisations. Some describe such an attempt as 'reductive' given the numerous ways in which arts organisations might enact and consistently re-invent their civic role. At the same time, there is a consensus that any description or characterisation of the civic role of arts organisations should highlight the unique contribution that the arts make to civic life and underline that their life blood is creativity and imagination. It should also scrupulously avoid encouraging instrumentalism.

## The importance of individual artists and practitioners

Inspiring individual artists and arts administrators are key in enabling arts organisations to engage with the civic. High-profile examples include:

**Sir Matthew Bourne OBE** is a choreographer of contemporary dance and dance theatre. He has received numerous honours and awards including Laurence Olivier Awards, Tony Awards and the Drama Desk Award. Notable productions include his *Swan Lake* with an all-male corp-de-ballet of menacing swans, *The Car Man* and *Edward Scissorhands*. Every year, Re:Bourne, the charitable arm of his company, engages thousands of people of all ages and ability, as well as emerging artists across the UK. In 2014, the national tour of *Lord of the Flies* visited 13 cities, engaging over 8,000 young people in dance activity, many for the first time. It had 80 performances.

Re:Bourne also delivers a range of projects to support health and wellbeing. In partnership with Dementia Pathfinders, it works in care homes to lead dance workshops for people living with dementia.

**Jeremy Deller** is a conceptual, video and installation artist. Much of his work is developed and delivered in collaboration and has a strong political aspect. He is perhaps best known for his *Battle of Orgreave*, a 2011 re-enactment of the battle between miners and the police during the 1984 miners' strike. This involved almost 1,000 people and was filmed by Mike Figgis for Artangel Media and Channel 4.

In 2016, *We're Here Because We're Here*, commemorated the 100th anniversary of the Battle of the Somme; this was a collaboration between Deller and Rufus Norris, artistic director of the National Theatre. It involved 1,600 volunteers, all men, dressed in replica World War One uniforms, who appeared in groups at railway stations, shopping centres and other public places. Each volunteer represented an individual, named, soldier who died on the first day of the battle.

The event was produced by Birmingham Repertory Theatre and the National Theatre, with volunteers trained and supported by regional theatres. The public reaction was overwhelmingly positive.

## Principles for consultation

Based on our research, we have identified the characteristics and operating principles that tend to be shared by arts organisations who have a strong civic role. They:

**Demonstrate strong and effective leadership and governance.** The civic is part of the DNA of their directors. It is not an 'add on'. It is *how* they deliver great art. Their boards of trustees are fully committed to the civic and engaged in creating links with other local civic organisations.

**Are rooted in local needs.** These organisations understand their role in their localities. They are aware of and respond to opportunities to work with other community partners, including those from other sectors to meet local needs.

**Develop community agency.** The local community plays a significant role in determining the artistic programme.

**Build capability.** These organisations are effective in developing community skills, capabilities and creativity.

**Build social capital.** Often significant volunteering opportunities are provided. Sometimes these organisations focus on encouraging kindness, empathy and understanding of others.

**Champion artistic quality.** This is quality in both process and in artistic output. These organisations tend to believe that, to have a positive social impact, the art produced must be of the highest possible quality.

**Champion diversity.** They aspire to fully represent their communities, to tell untold stories and to give a platform to people and issues which may often be ignored or insufficiently recognised.

**Provide challenge.** They encourage discussion and debate, often on difficult issues. They challenge prevailing orthodoxies and ways of working.

**Are open and reflective.** They engage in ongoing reflection and dialogue, and are open to challenge.

(These principles are based in part on material produced for the Paul Hamlyn Foundation's Our Museum programme.)

In the absence of a definition, we have decided to focus instead on the characteristics or operating principles which distinguish arts organisations for whom a civic role is fundamental. We are presenting these for consultation (see the box, 'Principles for consultation', above). We also developed metaphors to illustrate the civic role of the arts (see the following section) and collected a bank of inspiring case studies (see Part 2). This shifts the emphasis from definition to description.

Do you agree with our suggestions for the key characteristics and operating principles of arts organisations with a strong civic role?

What would you add – or take away – from these suggested principles?

It may be unrealistic to expect arts organisations to adhere to all these operating principles, if this is the case, are some more important than others?

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## DEVELOPING THE METAPHORS

In the absence of a definition, and in response to push back on the 'associations' identified by the ICC, we developed metaphors to describe the civic role of arts organisations. These emerged from Advisory Panel discussions about the potential of arts organisations to help communities cope with fast and unpredictable social, economic and environmental change. They are an attempt to convey the creativity integral to arts organisations and their ability to help us imagine and create more positive futures.

In Chapter 4, we have applied these metaphors to our case study organisations.

### COLLEGES

#### – arts organisations as places of learning

Learning is about skills and creativity and also about knowledge and experiences; it is in part based on experience of the world and its complexities, knowledge that acquaints us with our history and culture and that of others. Emphasis has rightly been placed on creative learning and what

happens in schools. However, we also learn outside formal educational settings, and throughout our lives. The arts are integral to this. Arts organisations have a role as places of lifelong learning, enabling everyone to reach their potential.

### TOWN HALLS

#### – arts organisations as places of debate

Art has always stimulated and reflected current debates about issues as diverse as human rights and strife between different generations based on wealth inequalities. Pressing issues today include climate change, increasing inequality and the implications of our withdrawal from the European Union. Trust in organisations is waning and there is

scepticism about experts. There is a risk that some issues are regarded as too big, and therefore insoluble. Arts organisations provide safe places for considering and debating difficult issues. They can present issues in their full complexity and give them a human texture. They can go further and mobilise campaigns.

### PARKS

#### – arts organisations as shared space open to all

Having shared public space is important. In some cities, there is a sense that there is very little non-commercial public space left. People feel crowded out. Public parks are perhaps the best example of an open community resource in which all can gather. They help to maintain and

develop a sense of community. Parks offer people choice: to read quietly, to play football, to have a picnic, to mix or to remain solitary. Similarly, arts organisations can help to create a sense of community by providing open and non-judgemental public space.



## TEMPLES

### – arts organisations as places of enlightenment and solace

Roger Scruton suggests that, during the Enlightenment, as religion started to lose its central place in our society, art and literature replaced it.<sup>40</sup> For some, arts organisations are ‘temples of culture, regularly visited on days of rest’.<sup>41</sup> In a secular society, arts organisations provide

us with an opportunity to contemplate moral questions about how we live and how we relate to others. They provide us with an opportunity to reflect on what is important, for example, kindness and love. They generate empathy. They provide solace in difficult times and encourage hope.

## HOME

### – arts organisations as places of belonging

In the Victorian era, the new city museums and galleries were regarded as a new kind of ‘domesticated public space’ (alongside parks).<sup>42</sup> The idea was that they provided a sphere separate from industrial capitalism and offered refuge, beauty and morality. Early supporters of the Sunday opening of these museums and galleries

contrasted the ‘public house’ with the ‘public home’.<sup>43</sup> Today, museums and galleries provide diverse groups of people with the opportunity to create work based on their experiences and aspirations. They provide a place in which people’s experiences are legitimised and valued. They provide them with ‘a home’.

### What do you think?

We’d like to know what you think about our metaphors. They are our initial attempt to describe the distinctive contribution that the arts make in the civic sphere. They suggest the social outcomes that arts organisations deliver, for example, increased political engagement and active citizenship, greater community cohesion and improved emotional health and wellbeing.

During the consultation, it was suggested that we might include the metaphor ‘hospital’ to reflect the contribution that arts organisations make to health and social care. However, we considered that the distinctive contribution that the arts make in this arena is related to emotional and spiritual health, for which temple was a better metaphor.

Some Advisory Panel members questioned whether these metaphors still make sense in the digital age. However, we believe that they can be applied to the digital space. Further we believe that physical meeting space, analogous to our town halls, parks and temples is crucially important in an age in which so many people feel isolated and lonely.

What do you think about these metaphors?

Do they fully reflect the distinctive contribution that arts organisations make to the civic?

Can you relate the metaphors to your practice?

Can the metaphors work for digital spaces as well as physical ones?

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**For Me, For You,  
People United.  
Photo: Jason Pay**

# 3

## BACK TO THE FUTURE

A consistent theme emerging in our research is the importance of history. This is in two senses. First, social or artistic developments, such as the workers' education movement, or particular individuals, such as Ruskin (see the box below)

provide a model and an inspiration. Second, some arts organisations refer back to a time when they believe that their organisation was more civically minded. This chapter reveals how deeply and for how long a 'civic role' – albeit in evolving expressions – has been embedded in artistic practice.

### John Ruskin (1819–1900)

As we were writing this report, it became clear to us that the philosophy of John Ruskin was reflected in the ethos and work of many of our case study organisations. Two specifically mention Ruskin as an inspiration; more have doubtless been influenced by his thinking or that of his followers, others by the movements his thinking seeded.

Ruskin is commonly referred to as an art critic but he was much more. He was a philosopher profoundly unhappy with Victorian capitalism and the effect it was having on the environment and on people.<sup>44</sup>

Ruskin saw immense value – even morality – in art. He loved the countryside and believed it offered spiritual enrichment. He was a passionate advocate of 'everyday' craftsmanship, such as stonemasonry and furniture making. He especially admired Gothic architecture because of the high status of craftsmen

in medieval society, as opposed to the products made by the factories and unskilled labourers of Victorian Britain. However, he did not see art as exclusively the domain of the professional; rather, he thought pursuits such as painting and reading should be everyday activities for people of all classes.<sup>45</sup>

Ruskin inspired many. The Victorians who founded the first free museums and libraries were his followers, believing it was important that everyone had access to spaces of beauty and tranquilly. Ruskin himself did not agree – he felt these spaces were not enough to counteract the ugliness that the slums and pollution of the Industrial Revolution were creating.<sup>46</sup>

Ruskin's ideas inspired the founding of the Arts and Crafts Movements and the National Trust. He also influenced leading thinkers such as Tolstoy and Gandhi.

What have been the historical influences for your work?

Have Ruskin's ideas influenced your work? If so, how?

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## The first civic arts institutions

Legislation in 1845 and in 1850 allowed for the creation of the first free public libraries and museums in some of our major cities.

### Manchester Free Library

The Manchester Free Library was the first public library established under the Public Libraries Act of 1850. Under the Act's provisions, at least two-thirds of ratepayers had to vote in favour: only 40 of the more than 4,000 eligible voters opposed it. A year after its opening, the librarian Edward Edwards reported that it was used by a cross-section of society: 'But the majority of evening readers – and it is in the evening that the Library is most largely frequented – have always belonged to what are popularly termed *the working classes*. Many, of course, read merely for amusement, but not a few consecutively, and with an obvious purpose of self-improvement'.<sup>49</sup>

### Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery

A passionate feeling among Birmingham's politicians, philanthropists and thinkers that local government should create a beautiful and moral society lay behind the creation of its Museum and Art Gallery.<sup>50</sup> Much of the funding was raised by wealthy philanthropists. Its operational costs were subsidised by it occupying part of the new offices of the municipal Gas Department. Once built, the Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery combined fine and applied arts with an educational programme and lectures.

It is still in the same building and free to enter today. It is home to one of the world's largest public Pre-Raphaelite collections and (since 2014) the Staffordshire Hoard, the largest cache of Anglo-Saxon gold ever found.

Alastair Spalding, of Sadler's Wells Theatre, said at our first consultation event:

*Our memorandum and articles of association make clear that Lilian Baylis's motivation in establishing Sadler's Wells was civic. Over the years we've departed somewhat from this founding ethos and we need to return to it.*

Tony Butler made the same point when, interviewed for a case study, he referred to the civic principles that informed the founding of Derby Museums 170 years ago. He expressed his desire to be true to these, while re-interpreting them in a way appropriate to the twenty-first century:

*The challenge that we've set ourselves is to take that first principle of being somewhere that everybody can access culture to somewhere that's open and democratic and participatory.*

David Jubb, from Battersea Arts Centre, refers to more recent history and quotes the community arts movement of the 1980s as an inspiration. One of his ambitions is that Battersea Arts Centre should truly reflect the local community, as it did in the 1980s.

## FROM ACCESS TO CO-PRODUCTION

It is possible to chart some significant ebbs and flows in the civic role of arts organisations in the UK. One characterisation is that the emphasis has gradually shifted from providing access to the arts, to enabling people to participate in education and community projects, to one now in which the community is more actively engaged in *creating* content which reflects current social, environmental and economic issues.

Alistair Hudson, of mima, eloquently describes this progression in terms of the different historical phases of museum development:

*[Version] 1.0 is where people come along and see the luxury artefacts and become better human beings for the experience. [Version] 2.0 is one of participation, people participating in art and participating in the museum, in education and community projects and cafés and shops, but all these things work in support of that primary high-art agenda. [Version] 3.0 is the user-generated version ... so it's not about people trying to join in the art in the museum, it's more about the museum trying to join in with what's going on out there [locally] ... and what's happening in the world, and demonstrating how art can contribute to some of the main significant social problems that we have.*

This chapter explores this gradual, though uneven, progression from access to user-generated content or co-production.



## THE ARTS AS A MEANS OF EDUCATION AND CONTROL (VERSION 1.0)

Public museums, arts galleries, libraries and parks, ‘new forms of public space’, were established in the Victorian era (see the box on ‘The first civic arts institutions’, page 28).<sup>47</sup> One motivation was concern about drunkenness amongst the large numbers of workers who had flocked to the towns because of industrialisation. Museums and galleries were regarded as a means of education and control of the working classes (see the box on ‘Workers’ education’, below). More positively, they were viewed as an idealised ‘domestic sphere: separate from industrial capitalism and offering refuge, beauty, and morality ... [While] the beauty of nature expressed through art was a necessary counterpoint to cities, particularly industrial cities’.<sup>48</sup>

## A NEW EMPHASIS ON ACCESS AND PARTICIPATION (VERSION 2.0)

Throughout the twentieth century, the major preoccupation was access and participation but largely in support of a ‘high art agenda’. The Second World War created a sense of solidarity and a desire to raise public morale which led to the creation of the Council for the Encouragement of Music and the Arts.<sup>55</sup> This gave money to ballet, opera and drama companies to perform in military camps and to civilians. Performances in the UK often took place in community or church halls and overseas in makeshift theatres in camps – sometimes very close to the front line. Approximately 2.6 million shows were staged; for some audience members this was the first time they ever saw ballet or opera. This success led to the creation of the Arts Council of Great Britain by Royal Charter in 1946.

### Workers’ education

In the 1800s, Mechanics Institutes provided lectures in the arts, sciences and technical subjects and acted as libraries for working people.<sup>51</sup> In 1903, the Workers’ Educational Association (WEA) was founded. It was committed to widening participation in learning and education with a social purpose. It is still one of the largest voluntary sector providers of adult education in the country. Examples of initiatives established to educate the working classes which drew wider interest and public acclaim include:

#### The Ashington Group of Pitmen Painters

The Ashington Group of Pitmen Painters began as the Ashington branch of the Workers’ Educational Association (WEA) in 1927.<sup>52</sup> After running evening classes in various subjects for seven years, the WEA and Durham University organised for the painter and teacher Robert Lyon to act as tutor in art appreciation.

Lyon quickly had the idea of getting class members to learn by trying the techniques themselves. The scenes the men painted of local beauty spots and their daily lives caught public attention and they held their first exhibition a few years later. During the Second World War, they painted scenes of shelters and evacuations and ‘Dig for Victory’ signs.

In the 1970s, there was a revival of interest in the Ashington Group. The paintings were shown in London and later Germany, the Netherlands and China. A play by Lee Hall, *The Pitmen Painters*, was staged first by Newcastle’s Live Theatre then at the National Theatre before a musical version played on Broadway and the West End.

#### Whitechapel Art Gallery

The East End of London in the Victorian era was desperately poor. Samuel Barnett, the vicar of St Jude’s, Whitechapel, and his wife Henrietta, saw beyond food, shelter and Christianity as a way of caring for the poor.<sup>53</sup> They believed art would enrich poor people’s minds – and keep them out of pubs.

The first exhibition they put on brought in over 200,000 local people. They got their first chance to see works by artists such as Constable, Hogarth, Rubens and the Pre-Raphaelites. The exhibition became an annual event and led to the building of the Whitechapel Art Gallery in 1901.

For decades, the gallery has shown work by artists such as Jackson Pollock, David Hockney and Picasso.<sup>54</sup> It still runs an assortment of community programmes. General entry is free.

The next major landmark is the White Paper for the Arts produced in 1964 by the first Minister for the Arts, Jennie Lee. She argued that the arts should be part of everyday life for children and adults. Her vision remains a rallying cry for many artists and arts organisations today.<sup>56</sup>

The 1960s were a progressive decade, in which authority was questioned and there was a demand for rights for women and minority groups. In the arts, this manifested itself in 'community arts'. This marked a departure from traditional practice because it was rooted in community collaboration and a concern with social justice. The movement grew gradually during the 1960s and 70s. By 1974, the Association of Community Artists counted 149 different groups; some still exist today, for example, Red Ladder, a radical theatre company in Leeds.

François Matarasso, an expert on the community arts movement, says:

*There was radicalism in the 1970s. Many community artists were involved in local campaigns around bread and butter issues like housing, often working with the community development sector. It's no accident that the community artists spoke of a 'movement'.*

*A high water mark of this period occurred in the early 1980s in work with communities protesting against de-industrialisation, as Corby Community Arts did in the campaign to save the town's steel works. Elsewhere, many community arts groups worked to support mining communities during the 1984 strike.<sup>57</sup>*

Matarasso also describes the later shift from 'community art', with its connotations of radicalism, to the more 'palatable' 'participatory art':

*The key difference ... was its attention to individuals rather than communities and its depoliticised response to their situation.... People enjoyed and benefited from taking part in these arts projects but change, such as it was, was mainly personal.<sup>58</sup>*

Alongside this shift in emphasis from the community to individuals, the 1980s also saw a growing emphasis on the economic value of the arts and attempts were made to fold art and culture into urban regeneration agendas:

*Cities, in particular, sought solutions to economic restructuring and the decline of traditional manufacturing industry. Taking their inspiration from the experiences of American and European cities, major cities such as Glasgow, Manchester and Liverpool embarked on ambitious cultural development strategies, often based on flagship capital projects.*

Michelle Reeves, *Measuring the Economic and Social Impact of the Arts: A Review*<sup>59</sup>

## CO-PRODUCTION AND EVERYDAY CREATIVITY (VERSION 3.0)

In recent years arts organisations big and small have shown a renewed interest in facilitating and enabling creativity in their community and in the individual 'non professional' as artist or curator. As Alistair Hudson from mima says the focus has shifted to 'user-generated' content.

The case studies that we have compiled of arts organisations re-imagining their civic role (discussed in detail in the next chapter, with 20 featured in Part 2), provide many inspiring examples of co-production with particular local communities or communities of interest. For these organisations, creative practice is part of their DNA; they demonstrate it by exploring the issues and concerns of the people they work with and for. These issues and concerns are broad ranging and include: housing, immigration, loneliness and isolation, health and social care. Our case study organisations demonstrate how creative processes and techniques can generate imaginative solutions to such issues and concerns.

Now, arguably, as opposed to 'place-making' being synonymous with economic regeneration, there is greater interest in how the arts can make particular areas better places to live, for example, by building social capital and contributing to community cohesion. Arts Council England's Creative People and Places programme is one example (see the box on 'Place-based initiatives in arts and culture', page 62).



There is also a more general trend towards recognising and encouraging the artist in all of us, or ‘everyday creativity’. This is perhaps best exemplified in two relatively recent initiatives: Fun Palaces and the BBC’s Get Creative Campaign.

In 2013, to celebrate Joan Littlewood’s upcoming centenary, a reimagining of her never-realised idea of the ‘Fun Palace’ was launched.<sup>60</sup> Departing from the original idea for a single building, the twenty-first century movement supports local people, whether culture professionals or not, to create and curate Fun Palaces of hands-on, active participation in arts, science, crafts, digital and tech, using existing public spaces. Since 2014, there have been 572 Fun Palaces across 13 countries, with thousands of people joining in.

Following recommendations in the 2015 Warwick Commission on the Future of Cultural Value report, and subsequent conversations between the BBC and What Next?, 64 Million Artists, Fun Palaces and Voluntary Arts, the Get Creative campaign was launched by a group of cultural organisations in February 2015.<sup>61</sup> The campaign aims to celebrate and support everyday creativity such as crafts, taking photographs and cooking. On its website there is a series of how-to videos demonstrating tips for crafts such as nail art and woodwork.<sup>62</sup> In April 2017, it ran a weekend of creativity with arts organisations across the country aimed at encouraging people to try activities such as origami, pottery and quilting.

The box, ‘An illustration’, (pages 32 and 33) describes these historical currents through the lens of one art form, theatre.

## CONCLUSION

For many of us, our image of the arts is embodied in the grand Victorian buildings – libraries, theatres, galleries and museums – that we might walk past every day. They are part of the fabric of our streets, our towns and cities. We have moved on, perhaps, from Victorian notions of the arts as a form of moral control. But this brief history shows that the principle that the arts should not only be available to everyone, but should actively improve their lives, has been deeply embedded in artistic practice since the nineteenth century. In the broadest sense, the ‘civic role’ ranges from those first public museums and libraries, through participatory practice and community projects, to a new emphasis on user-generated content.

## An illustration – a potted history of UK theatre through a civic lens

In 1843, propelled by the Victorian urge to control and educate the new urban masses, parliament finally changed the licensing laws and permitted all theatres to stage straight plays (non-musical plays), hoping both to educate audiences and to encourage high quality modern playwriting. The unexpected consequence was not more Shakespeare and the emergence of new writing talent, but the burgeoning of commercial theatre, including the music hall.

Strict censorship meant theatres could only stage plays approved by the government. The response was the creation of ‘club theatres’. Audiences paid yearly membership fees, instead of buying tickets, technically making these theatres private clubs. Club theatre meant controversial topics could be staged. One example is George Bernard Shaw’s *Mrs Warren’s Profession*, which portrays prostitution not as a moral failing but as a way for poor women to earn a living. Club theatre also gave life to specialist and experimental theatre, as well as producing plays by foreign writers.

During the first three decades of the twentieth century, key social and political movements expressed themselves through theatre. The Workers’ Theatre Movement, which was aligned with the communists, performed on the streets but also made a home at Unity Theatre in London.<sup>63</sup> It staged plays such as *Waiting for Lefty*, about New York cabbies striking for a fair wage. The Actresses’ Franchise League, founded in 1908, toured the country putting on plays about universal suffrage at club theatres, as well as holding evening education classes and giving away feminist literature.<sup>64</sup> At its height, it had groups in all major UK cities.

The emerging Labour Party sought to raise the educational level and opportunities of the working class through cultural activities. This led to the

creation of theatres such as Newcastle’s People’s Theatre in 1911, which aimed to stage plays of quality that the audience might not otherwise see.

Repertory theatre (‘rep’) was born from the idea that everyone, including the working class and people in the provinces, should have access to the arts. Two philanthropists spearheaded this development. Annie Horniman funded the Gaiety Theatre in Manchester to give the working class access to Shakespeare.<sup>65</sup> Barry Jackson created the Birmingham Repertory Theatre, the first theatre to put on Shakespearian plays in modern dress. It staged debut performances of George Bernard Shaw’s plays. Repertory theatre in the provinces grew substantially in the early twentieth century. By the outbreak of the Second World War, it is estimated that there were more than 400 such theatres throughout the UK.<sup>66</sup>

In 1968, the Lord Chamberlain Act was lifted: plays were no longer censored. The next day, the first Broadway production of the American musical *Hair* opened in London.<sup>67</sup> Portraying drug use, containing songs about the sexual revolution and featuring nudity, it marked a sea change. It was finally possible to present uncompromisingly radical content on British stages.

The community arts movement of the 1960s and 70s spawned a number of radical theatre companies. Some, like Red Ladder in Leeds, remain today. Others, such as Scotland’s 7:84, which once toured internationally, have folded. Some of these companies adopted the techniques developed by Augusto Boal in the 1960s. In his Theatre of the Oppressed, the audience enacted, explored and analysed their predicaments in an attempt to effect social and political change. Forum Theatre was a manifestation of these techniques.

Theatre in Education (TIE) started in the UK in 1965. It encouraged participation by school children in role play and debate, and became very popular.

International practice started to have more influence from the 1960s, but the real breakthrough came with what became the biennial London International Festival of Theatre (LIFT), founded in 1981. One of its greatest achievements was giving voice to foreign theatre-makers whose work was prohibited in their own countries. It highlighted the unique capacity for live theatre to play a role in exposing injustice and proposing solutions.<sup>68</sup>

The 2000s saw the establishment of the National Theatre of Scotland and National Theatre Wales. Neither work from a building but undertake research with their many separate communities to create performances which address local interests and often involve participation. They also engage the best professional practitioners from Britain and internationally.

Although experiments in immersive theatre can be traced further back in time, for example to Joan Littlewood's work in the 1950s, a development in the current decade is the great interest in and success of theatre companies based on the premise that the audience should be part of, or immersed in and interact with the experience. These include Punchdrunk Theatre, and You Me Bum Bum Train.





**Elena and Grannies  
from Dryanovo Village,  
Residence Baba Project,  
Ideas Factory 2015**

# 4

## DESCRIBING THE CIVIC ROLE OF ARTS ORGANISATIONS

**W**e decided not to attempt to define the civic role of arts organisations in this phase of work but rather to describe it based on ‘next practice’ (see Chapter 2). To do this, we commissioned case study research from experienced arts writer, Maddy Costa. Our list was developed on the basis of consultation with our Advisory Panel, the Inquiry’s IRG and other experts. We asked them to alert us to arts organisations who were re-imagining their civic role in innovative and inspiring ways. We eventually whittled the list down to 40 organisations. Part 2 of this report contains 20 case studies, but we will be publishing all 40 on our website to coincide with its launch, as well as commissioning more.

**“Constant, tireless, personal relationship building and listening ... needs to be in place in order to create conditions where people believe the arts, and the organisations and civic spaces on their doorsteps or in their neighbouring towns are there for them.”**

Lizzie Crump, What Next?

This chapter is largely based on an analysis of the 30 case study organisations working in England. However, because we were keen to gather and reflect on the most imaginative practice across the UK and internationally, it contains a box which reflects on some of our international case studies.

### COMMONALITIES

The case study organisations have different starting points for their commitment to the civic. For some, the route in has been education or participation or other community projects. Others, usually the smaller organisations, have always had strong roots in their communities. However, despite this, all our case study organisations have a number of features in common. First and foremost, they are dedicated to excellence in artistic practice and the fostering of individual creativity. They have inspiring leadership committed to the civic role of their organisation. People are central to their practice, meaning that their aesthetic is based on working with and in their local communities, facilitating and enabling them to pursue their interests and needs. Place is important to them, with ‘place-making’ a core concern for some. Fostering relationships and developing strong human connections are key aspects of their approach. Finally, they strive against the notion that work in the community and their artistic programmes are two different categories of endeavour.

### Inspiring leadership

One of the most striking things about the case studies is the extent to which they demonstrate the importance of the quality of the leadership of arts organisations. It is clear in the case study interviews that it is generally the executive leaders of the larger organisations in our cohort who are responsible for their civic stance. It is their passion and commitment that provides the impetus. A clutch of our cohort mentioned their board’s commitment to ensuring that the organisation represented the communities it was seeking to serve. However, in only a few case study



## What do you think?

What do you think about the role of boards? Are they key to identifying and fostering connections with other organisations in their communities? Do they see their organisations as concerned with ‘communities not audiences’?

One of our Panel members, who was also interviewed for a case study, pointed to the importance of distributed leadership in his organisation.

Distributed leadership recognises that leadership skills and capabilities need to be distributed across an organisation.

Others, including Dawn Austwick, CEO of the Big Lottery Fund, talk about generous leadership. This is the sort of leadership that builds networks, relationships and communities across cultural boundaries.

What sort of leadership and governance do arts organisations need to take on a civic role?

What needs to be done to foster such leadership and governance?

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interviews with the larger organisations were boards specifically mentioned as being champions for the civic. This contrasts perhaps with what we know about the US, where it may be better recognised that trustees or management committee members have a crucial role in ensuring that the organisation connects with and has strong links to other organisations in the community.

## A focus on people

A number of our case study interviewees referred to the fact that arts organisations are accustomed to listening to professional artists and helping them to bring their ideas to fruition. They explained that their aspiration was to work in the same way with non-professionals, enabling them to realise their creative ambitions. Generally, our case study organisations are version 3.0 organisations, to use Alistair Hudson’s analogy (see page 28). They have moved beyond providing opportunities for people to view art, and beyond participation (delivering education projects and work in the community) to ‘user-generated’ content.

## A commitment to place

All our case study organisations have a strong commitment to the place in which they are based or in which they work (some of them are nomadic). This manifests itself in a variety of ways. Engaging local people with art, and bringing art to a particular audience is a common motivation. This is often conceived as bringing art to communities outside London and improving access for audiences traditionally less able or likely to engage, particularly people on lower incomes, people with disabilities and minority ethnic communities.

This ambition has a notable effect on the physical spaces of the communities where art organisations operate. It invites people to use new or lost spaces, and encourages people to use spaces differently. This could be seen as re-democratising public space. Whether a direct aim or not, working with local people can often foster a sense of pride in that community. The work and spaces of arts organisations are transformative, physically changing the environment for these communities in a very positive way. (See the boxes on ‘A commitment to place’ and ‘Building-based versus non-building-based’, page 37, and ‘Place-based initiatives in arts and culture’, page 62).



## Fostering positive relationships

It is striking that a number of the case study interviewees refer to what might be termed an ‘aesthetic of care’. Some specifically say that they have a mission to promote kindness. Others refer to the quality and depth of human connection achieved through their work. Generally, the case studies convey the generosity of spirit of our interviewees and their organisations. Respect for all regardless of their circumstances, hospitality and a warm welcome are recurrent motifs. Many were explicitly focused on fostering positive relationships with those in their communities who were less likely to feel comfortable in an arts organisation.

## An integrated approach

The common feature of the leading organisations is that they strive against the notion that work in the community and their artistic programme are two different categories of work. They seek to bring them together and to embed expectations around civic contribution in every aspect of their work. This defines organisational ethos and values. It is supported in a range of different ways, including through job specifications, the briefing prospective staff are given at applications stage, and staff training.

## A commitment to place

All arts organisations have some commitment to the place or location they work in. Some are formed in response to a specific local issue; for instance, the **Ministry of Stories** was set up in Hoxton to reach three of London’s most disadvantaged boroughs: Hackney, Tower Hamlets and Islington. Many are connected to a place by the people that create or work in the organisation. For instance, a group of local volunteers spent 10 years trying to establish a local gallery space, creating **The Lightbox** in Woking. The gallery continues to focus on its local audience. This includes ensuring that its board of trustees is formed of local community members, helping to deepen its roots in the local area.

At **mima**, in Middlesbrough, director Alistair Hudson has an active philosophy of localism, as ‘the antidote to the international blockbuster’, endeavouring to ‘shake off’ the historical idea of a museum as detached, not relevant or inaccessible to local communities. Taking this theme literally, mima curated an exhibition entitled *Localism*, telling the story of Middlesbrough through contributions made by the local community.

While, the **Hull Freedom Festival**, which transforms the city centre into a living stage for three days in September each year, has been identified as a key factor that has helped re-energise the city centre all year round. Says Mikey Martins: ‘it’s really pulling the city back together in a way ... you’re seeing a lot more people hanging out in the centre of Hull and very proud of their city centre now’.

## Building-based versus non-building-based

A few organisations commented on the advantages and disadvantages of having a building. Some of the non-building-based organisations spoke of the ability to be nimble and flexible. **LIFT Tottenham**’s Mark Ball says it enables his organisation to reach out further into the community and engage with places and spaces that are more representative of London. However ‘every space in the community is politicised, so whichever space you work in you’re perceived to be buying into the politics of that space and you must be aware of that’.

Tony Butler, from **Derby Museums Trust**, says there needs to be more fluidity ‘between what happens out there and what happens in here’. However, he is happy to be building-based: ‘I don’t have a problem with being a contact point or being an anchor institution, because if we don’t have any anchors in the community everything is postmodern and nothing has a meaning’.

## TOWARDS A TAXONOMY OF PRACTICE

While our case study organisations have much in common, there are also some dimensions in which they differ.

### Art and creativity for social change

Each is an arts organisation at its core. However, all of the organisations interviewed also said that having a civic role is part of their mission. This was not just in the sense that they regard delivering arts activities as civic; it was that their organisation has social objectives too. And, as one eloquently said, it goes further than this: for his organisation the emphasis is on social ‘progress’. Where organisations differed was in the extent to which social concern was central to their mission.

### Arts or culture?

Some of our case study organisations are engaging non-professionals with traditional art forms, such as dance, and supporting non-professionals, including children and young people, to curate. Others are less concerned with ‘art’ in the sense of the traditional art forms and are more concerned to promote ‘culture’. This includes food, crafts and gardening, and everyday creativity, such as helping non-professional artists to develop photography or pottery skills.

### Creativity applied to culture or creativity applied to life?

As indicated above, all of the case study organisations are primarily concerned with developing artistic practice and fostering individual creativity. However, some interviewees described their concern as being less about applying creativity in a cultural context and more about the application of creativity to life. For example, Battersea Arts Centre is using creative processes and techniques to help young people develop new social as well as creative enterprises.

## International inspiration

Many of the arts organisations we interviewed cited international inspiration for their work.

**Ministry of Stories** is modelled on a not-for-profit organisation in the USA set up by the author Dave Eggers. **Situations** has been part of a network of 10–15 international organisations for the past 15 years. **Entelechy Arts**, **Streetwise Opera** and **Battersea Arts Centre** were all influenced in their programmes and approach by the inspiring projects they visited on a study trip to Brazil. **Star and Shadow** cite as an inspiration ‘similar radical cinema models throughout Europe’.

**Bluecoat** namechecks artist Suzanne Lacy, and in particular her Ohio Project, as an inspiration for how they think about art, culture, history and place. **Hull Freedom Festival** is connected to European networks in order ‘to open up progression routes for local artists’ and to share resources. It particularly admires the French system’s focus on residency. **mima’s** Alistair Hudson co-directs **Arte Útil** (Art as a Tool) with Cuban-American artist Tania Bruguera. It is building a bank of case studies on its website ([www.arte-util.org](http://www.arte-util.org)); these are examples from around the world of art working as a tool for social change.

## Local or national or international?

Another dimension of difference in the case studies is the extent to which the organisations operate at the local or ‘hyperlocal’ level (see the box on ‘Artist commissions and the hyperlocal’ on page 39, which illustrates the value and importance of ‘hyperlocal’ work), or have a national or even international remit. One feature, though, is that some of the organisations most rooted in a particular place tend to have quite strong international connections. Notably, they often appear to have more contact with organisations with similar concerns or ways of working based outside the UK than they have with organisations within it.

## Individuals or community or community development?

Some of our case study organisations have a focus on the transformation of individuals, for example, supporting and nurturing young people or supporting older people through the transitions that middle and later life can bring. Others spoke about their work in terms of building a sense of community and community cohesion. Yet others took this one stage further; while they do not describe it as such, they are engaged in community development. By this we mean that they are facilitating and developing community organisations and businesses. The objective is to leave a legacy in the community beyond the life of any one project or event.

## Short-term or long-term engagement with communities

Many of our case study organisations are dependent on project funding. In some instances this means that they work with different groups over time or that projects may vary in their emphasis. For example, while the focus of the organisation may be older people, it might sometimes concentrate on work in care homes while, at others, it might work with people with dementia. Other organisations are committed to working over the long term with particular people. One case study interviewee for example, referred to working with the same individuals over the course of a 20- or 30-year period.

### Artist commissions and the hyperlocal

We were interested in exploring the views of the public, particularly sections of the public who may be underserved. We therefore worked with What Next? to commission artists to deliver work looking at what different groups think the civic role of arts organisations is or should be. These commissions (described in more detail in Annex 1) were all hyperlocal.

‘Hyperlocal’ means relating to, or focusing on, matters concerning a small community or geographical area. We came across this term several times in talking to arts organisations about their work. Usually it was used to describe working within one small geographic area, for instance on a particular housing estate.

The three artist commissions were:

*Sticking Together* by Deborah Mason and Rebecca Manson Jones, Southwark

*Cake and creative conversations* by Sally Tonge, Shropshire

*What Next?* by Kyle Walker (Creative Experts and Contact), Manchester

Each artist had a different motivation. For Sally, it was to find new ways to tackle the isolation and loneliness experienced by people living with dementia in her local area. Deborah and Rebecca wanted to address the view that civic processes on the Aylesbury Estate have been discredited and invite people back into those processes. Kyle wanted to work with young, unengaged people to understand

what they need to help them enjoy and engage with the arts. For all the artists, the work was about the quality of engagement with the participants.

Key findings from the artist commissions are that:

- People do not recognise or respond to the term ‘civic’ or even the arts, their interest is in making positive change in their local area and doing something enjoyable.
- Freelance artists and producers have significant skills and experience to contribute but also need support (discussed in more detail in Chapter 5 under Skills).
- Artists can broker links including with arts organisations, they can and should work within and across the civic fabric, making links with community leaders and becoming ‘part of the team’.
- There is a need to reach out across civic society to raise awareness and understanding of the contribution that skilled arts practitioners can make.
- In order to reach people who typically do not engage, projects need to be hyperlocal, effectively ‘going to them’, to venues in which they feel comfortable.

The What Next? report elaborates this last point: *‘There are nuanced local community boundaries, which highlights the importance of local infrastructure and arts organisations building relationships with local communities.’*

## Moving from the individual to community

Abigail Pogson from **Sage Gateshead** has recently changed its mission:

*... from enriching life through music to making change through community, culture and place. So from something that we felt ... [was concerned with the] individual to more of a focus on a) the collective and b) the wider sense of culture.*

Claire Doherty of **Situations** has also recently been considering its approach:

*... one of the things she [American curator and thinker Nina Simon] talks about is that in the past we've thought about targeting or reaching particular communities ... [so you]... tailor the work to that targeted community. And increasingly what's far more interesting ... [given the post-Brexit landscape] ... is how you create connections between people who have different interests, and you create a community around a project that creates those connections.*

## A focus on vulnerable or underserved groups or the general public

Working with one or two particular vulnerable or underserved groups is the focus for some of our case study organisations. Examples include young people living on estates on which drugs and gangs are a prominent feature, migrants living in refugee camps, or working-class people living in particular areas. Other organisations are committed to working with the general public and providing them with opportunities to engage with particular art forms or otherwise develop their creativity. Notably, two interviewees referred to the fact that they would really like to use processes that they reserve for groups traditionally regarded as underserved with the wider public.

## What do you think?

An issue that emerged with regard to organisations working with vulnerable or underserved groups was that of language.

Some of our case study cohort considered that terms and phrases that often go along with this, such as 'giving voice to the voiceless', set people apart and are stigmatising; it is obviously fundamental to their practice to relate to each of the people with whom they come into contact with the same respect and sensitivity.

What do you think about this issue of stigmatising language?

Is there sometimes pressure to 'label' participants in order to access funding? If there is, are there ways around it?

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## APPLYING THE METAPHORS TO OUR CASE STUDY ORGANISATIONS

Colleges, town halls, parks, temples and home: the five metaphors we use to describe the civic role of arts organisations are not prescriptive, rather they are frames which enable us to see the effect of the work. You can read these in detail on pages 24 and 25. These metaphors indicate the sort of outcomes – and the profound social impact – our cohort are achieving. As we analysed the case studies, it became clear that the work of many arts organisations fits into two or more of these metaphors. Some also expressed a desire to extend or deepen their civic role, by adding more opportunities for learning or debate into their programme in the coming years.

### COLLEGES

The case studies underline the crucially important role that arts organisations play in education. For people of all ages, they provide education and skills development (Derby Museums Trust, mima, Poet in the City). For younger people, they build confidence and skills and have the ability to re-engage some of the most disengaged children and young people in learning and skills development (Effervescent, Battersea Arts Centre, Ministry of Stories).

Our case studies show education is sometimes formally provided, through instructive programmes and classes, or apprenticeships and structured internships (Grizedale, Poet in the City, Hull Freedom Festival). A few arts organisations have also partnered with higher education institutions to deliver qualifications (Effervescent). Other times, the learning is more informal and provided through mentorship or by creating opportunities for sharing:

*We try to open them up to the possibilities of writing... to [get them to] understand that writing is a fundamental part of life, about expressing yourself, finding your own story, as well as opening up job opportunities. A lot of the children that come to us and work with our volunteer writing mentors don't necessarily know that writing is something you can do for a living .... [So they] understand that this is a real job, and they don't have to be passive receivers; they can actually step into the role of being an active creator.*

Ben Payne, Ministry of Stories

### TOWN HALLS

The case studies show arts organisations fostering conversations around migration, discrimination and feelings of insecurity and anxiety in ways which reveal and explore their complexity and which generate empathy (Good Chance, Hull Freedom Festival). They have the ability to do this in the way that the media and conventional hustings such as the school gates or pubs do not:

*At a time of social disharmony, being able to entertain people, challenge them in a theatre ... is a way of just getting them to think differently. Not necessarily to change their mind, but to get people to think slightly differently about things. I think we feel quite strongly that ... theatre is a place of national debate.*

Lisa Burger, National Theatre

## PARKS

Arts organisations as ‘parks’ stems from a context where funding cuts have closed or curtailed opening hours for libraries, youth centres and day centres, and private developers have bought up areas which used to be public space. This concept is very much in mind for some of our case study organisations, which are actively trying to create places where members of the public can ‘be’, without pressure to buy something or do something specific (Bluecoat). Many others are involved in trying to turn public spaces into more vibrant areas with art, from creating murals to pop-up performances (Hull Freedom Festival, LIFT). Often the stated goal is not necessarily to deeply involve every member of the public with art, but to energise areas and foster a sense of civic pride.

*We feel that we're acting as a counterweight to huge swathes of the city where it's no longer possible to just hang out ... because they're owned or controlled by commercial interests ... Bluecoat offers [an alternative] ... in the middle of a very commercialised city. And we feel that the civic responsibility we have is to show people that there is an alternative ... to going shopping, and that there are other ways in which you might consider spending your time. And we hope as an extension of that ... people might at some point consider using our gallery, consider coming to the music we have in the garden, and pursue interests which might open up possibilities for them.*

Mary Cloake, Bluecoat

## TEMPLES

Inherently, some arts organisations such as galleries are similar to temples, in that they offer a quiet space for contemplation. Others provide commentary on moral issues through art tackling themes of inclusion, empathy and kindness (Good Chance, National Theatre, People United).

Whether they explicitly mention him or not, some organisations expressed a Ruskinian philosophy (see the box on ‘John Ruskin’, page 27). They see the process of creating art as something which feeds the soul. It is something that is communal, which binds people together, recognising their common humanity:

*The church at the end of the street, a hundred years ago, everyone who lived in the street would go to that church, and they don't anymore. They all go to different places, so what I think we need to do is create the alternative to that church in whatever communities that we're in, because we need that way of coming together and theatre should be providing that. Theatre isn't just something that we consume, like, yeah, it's something that we participate in, in order to understand what it is to be a human being, and what it is to be together with other humans in the room.*

Simon Casson, Duckie

## HOME

Arts organisations as ‘home’ suggests that they can be places of safety and belonging, where people can feel relaxed and be themselves. Our case study organisations are inclusive:

*You go inside and everyone's welcoming, everyone's accepted.*

Joe Murphy and Joe Robertson, Good Chance



## Looking abroad: our international case studies

Although the Inquiry focuses on England, it was important to us to gather international case studies. Seven of these case studies are included in Part 2 of this report and we reflect on some of them here.

### Work with underserved groups

Like the English case study organisations, the international organisations feel passionately about working with people who are generally underserved by the arts. They work with prisoners, young people, minority ethnic communities and older people. In Austin Texas, **Forklift Danceworks** works with working-class people who provide ‘invisible labour’ such as sanitation workers.

As in England, collaboration with such groups generates inspiring practice. While working with elders in depopulated villages across Bulgaria, **Ideas Factory** uncovered dozens of traditional folk songs and a style of singing on the verge of dying out. Crowdfunding enabled the women to visit Sofia to record the songs:

*Now all the money from the CD [is] going back to them, so they are able to travel to festivals, and to show what they have as a cultural heritage because, otherwise, it will just stay on the recording here, and then we will lose it as we lost already, many things.*

Many also articulate a desire not to parachute in and then leave but to stay in touch. Hugo Cruz, from **PELE** in Portugal, points to the benefits: working with other parts of a community and not just one core group means a performance will be better attended, supported and participated in.

### Different battles in the same war

What is striking about the international case studies is that, although the operating environment is obviously different in other countries, the same themes surface but in different ways.

In Spain, which hasn’t had the same levels of anti-immigration racism as other European countries, the focus is on preventing it from developing as opposed to mediating its effects. Human rights arts organisation **RUIDO Photo** has a travelling photography exhibition about the path Syrian refugees are taking to get to Europe. Whenever they install the exhibition, they go to schools and colleges and put on a workshop about it. Edu Ponces says:

*We are working with young people from 15 to 21 years because we want to fight the hate speech that is becoming common on some media in Europe.*

### High stakes

For some of our international case study organisations, the stakes are high. For example, **Ideas Factory** was created in 2007 as an artistic intervention against organised crime’s attempt to build on a protected site on the Black Sea coast. A mission fraught with danger.

Maddy Costa will be interviewing more international arts organisations over the summer of 2017. Those case studies will be available on our website in the second half of 2017.  
[civicroleartsinquiry.gulbenkian.org.uk](http://civicroleartsinquiry.gulbenkian.org.uk)

Do you know of organisations outside the UK who would make inspiring case studies?

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Barolosolo's ILE O in  
Griffin Square, Deptford  
as part of Circulate 2016.  
Photo: Camilla Greenwell

# 5

## CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

**T**his chapter focuses on what our case study group say about the challenges they are experiencing in re-imagining their civic role, the opportunities they identify to develop this role and their aspirations for the future. It also covers the What Next? consultations and contains a box on the What Next? local area studies, focusing on the most in-depth of these which covers Nottingham.

### LEADERSHIP

The case study interviews illustrate that the executive leaders in these organisations have strong leadership skills. They demonstrate vision, passion, commitment, generosity, humility and a strong enthusiasm for and belief in their civic role. A commitment to creating positive social change emerges from personal experience for a small number. For a few others, it can be traced back to previous work experience, for example as a teacher or support worker, or through experience of working in another arts organisation with a developed civic role. For a number, it is fundamental to their conception of the arts and creativity and its power and value.

The interviews suggest that many of these leaders are overstretched. One says specifically, 'I'm really in danger of burn out'. A few refer to how exhausting it is constantly having to justify or explain an approach that melds the arts and creativity and social concern. One refers to the frustration of reduced funding, regardless of impact, and indicates that most of his time is now spent on fundraising. Another says that what she and others in the arts most need is the 'time and space to think' about and develop their civic role:

*The arts sector is really imaginative, but ... people in the arts never have time to actually think about this together and talk.*

One of her ambitions is to establish 'little pools of time and space and resources' for herself and others working in the arts.

The dominant impression is that our case study organisations are very dependent on visionary leaders, some of whom could be better supported in their roles. This support might come from their boards or their peers. One interviewee refers to having a very supportive board and to their vital contribution. A couple say specifically that they would like to build a national network of arts organisations with similar values, so they can increase knowledge and understanding collaboratively.

Some of our consultation discussions have also identified that younger leaders would welcome the opportunity to link with those who are more experienced. One says:

*I do a lot of networking related to the projects that I'm working on, but not about how we develop our civic role and, since that's so important to us, it's something that I'd really welcome.*

### PEOPLE AND SKILLS

Having the right skills in the organisation is a challenge. One interviewee says:

*The other major challenge that I should mention is skills. We find that most of our producers fall into two categories, either people are really good at engagement or they come from the gallery environment.*

Another echoes this: he says that now his organisation only employs producers who are equally comfortable programming performance spaces and running creativity workshops with children.

Some of our cohort were seeking to make engagement and participation an aspect of every job role, so as to embed the required attributes and skills in the organisation and make them a fundamental component of its ethos and operations.



## Volunteers

A clutch of our case study organisations rely totally on volunteer labour or volunteering is a significant feature of their model.

**Ministry of Stories** has trained 8,000 volunteers but works with 350 at one time. A teacher in a participating school commented on seeing a student stopping one of the volunteers in the street for a chat – something she had never seen in 10 years of working there. The volunteer team creates social cohesion, connecting people working in the creative industries with poorer children from working-class and immigrant families.

**Poet in the City** has about 200 volunteers, with about 70 who engage regularly – director Isobel Colchester started in the organisation as a volunteer. Its approach is to put the organisation at the service of people who want to be part of it. It does not recruit for particular volunteer vacancies or have defined volunteer roles; instead, it asks prospective volunteers what they would like to do with or for the organisation. A volunteer who came to it as a way of getting back to work chose to experiment with podcasting and is now on a traineeship with the BBC. Poet in the City put the organisation at the service of people who are interested in being part of it.

**The Lightbox** exists because of local volunteer campaigning, and the volunteer voice remains strong in the organisation at board level, but also within the gallery. It has 160 volunteers who work in the gallery. For example, they are at the door welcoming people as they come in, so that no one feels intimidated. The Lightbox has also been working with homeless

centres nearby. Some of that legacy is visible in the fact that service-users feel so comfortable in the gallery that they start to volunteer there.

**Star and Shadow** talk about the volunteer team as a microcosm of a totally different, self-organising and self-sufficient society. They see volunteering as a rehearsal of different civic patterns to the ones currently holding sway.

An important aspect of the **Hull Freedom Festival** is that it provides the opportunity for everyone involved to eat together, and that includes volunteers. Again, this creates a microcosm of a different sort of society, one in which all are welcome and all are equal.

All artist stays at **Grizedale** begin with a week of intensive volunteering doing chores on the farm. This is designed to disrupt the artist's thinking and introduce a more civic approach to making art.

**Good Chance** starts from scratch in each new area and is able to do so only because people volunteer. Volunteers provide skills and experience to support the team. For example, in the 'Jungle' refugee camp in Calais, an engineer from Syria was able to help erect their temporary building (a dome) much more quickly than they would have otherwise been able.

These examples demonstrate that the more accessible or porous the organisation the stronger the relationship it has with its volunteers and the wider local community. Clearly, volunteering is not a one-way street but an exchange, bringing expertise that may be missing from within the organisation.

What are your experiences with volunteering and arts organisations?

Is there a clear difference between 'volunteer' and 'participant' or 'beneficiary'?

How can volunteers be treated fairly and not exploited?

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One interviewee stresses his organisation's emphasis on training artists:

*We don't put our dancers into community settings or settings with young people unless they've been effectively trained ... it takes a very unique set of skills to work in a variety of unique circumstances and settings.*

Another says his organisation is focused on training artists to work in and for communities. Yet another has an aspiration to develop training and mentoring on the theme of 'art and community cohesion'.

This reflects a theme from our analysis of the case studies – the need for training and support to enable artists, curators and producers to work effectively with communities to co-produce projects and programmes. One of our interviewees stressed the need to support artists, who are often freelancers and 'feel quite lonely'. Reinforcing this, another says, 'we are a safe haven for artists who don't necessarily fit in elsewhere, who are interested in, I hate the term, socially engaged practice'. A third says that one of her aspirations is to: 'support a new generation of producers who are really resilient and ... [have] a range of organisational skills, but also engagement skills too'.

The What Next? report on the artist commissions argues for the need to 'build an informal network to identify the complex skills required for practitioners delivering this work and through a series of interventions support the development of these skills in artists'. It describes these skills as including: brokering between formal and informal structures, working with vulnerable participants, and managing a complexity of needs (for example, from carers, volunteers and participants). It points out that there are excellent examples of 'next practice' across the sector but these are often not publicised due to the sensitive nature of the work.

A couple of our interviewees suggested that a major barrier is often a lack of confidence or belief in what we can achieve collectively:

*One of our barriers was our own confidence about doing it, we were taking a risk to set something like this up but it was an informed risk.*

*Really we should not be able to do this ... and everyone has said it [but we did it] ... We need people to be fearless and do this in their own communities or other communities ... to be fearless in bringing people together.*

The box on 'Volunteers' (see page 46) discusses volunteering in our case study organisations.

## Working with others to secure resources

Some connect because they do not have their own building and need to partner with various civic spaces. Claire Doherty from **Situations**, a nomadic organisation, says that 'a big part of the way we work is always ... with local partners'. Mark Ball from **LIFT**, an organisation with a London remit but a focus on Tottenham and without a building, echoes this: 'we've had to form lots of partnerships with organisations that have their own spaces'.

For some, partnerships bring funding. Notably, however, David Slater from **Entelechy Arts**, which receives funding from health and social care budgets, stresses that his motivation is to bring people art not to provide health and social care. He's simply responding to the issues that matter to the older people that engage with his organisation. This is an important distinction. Wieke Eringa from **Yorkshire Dance** echoes this. She refers to her mission to enable everyone to participate in dance and her organisation's history of engaging older people. As a

result, the organisation has developed projects in care homes and for older people with dementia.

For most, partnership is a means of reaching out to people in the community. Marilyn Scott from **The Lightbox** refers to connecting with expert social sector organisations in order to work confidently with a range of different groups, including people from a hostel who have drug and alcohol problems. She says this is important because the only way to be sure that you're 'not actually doing harm' is to be led by the experts who understand the medical and social backdrop.

For **Poet in the City**, partnership is integral to its existence; it collaborates on everything from individual events, to strategy and sharing resources. Critically, partnership is what has enabled it to build new audiences for live poetry – particularly outside London.



## Partnerships between universities and arts organisations

A number of our case study organisations have partnerships with universities. **Effervescent** worked with Plymouth University to develop a qualification in art. In 2014, **mima** became part of Teesside University. **People United** is based in the Canterbury Innovation Centre, on the campus of the University of Kent. They have worked in depth with the School of Psychology for over 10 years to explore the impact of the arts on attitudes and pro-social behaviour, developing a bank of evidence on the role the arts can play in helping to create a more kind and caring society. **Belarus Free Theatre** as part of a three-year agreement with Falmouth University took up a five-week residency, where they devised and rehearsed a new theatrical production on the stories of persecuted artists. The play, *Burning Doors*, has since toured internationally, including to other universities. **Bluecoat** has worked with the University of Liverpool to employ a philosopher in residence. She ran classes at the gallery as part of the University's Learning for Life programme. For 2017, Bluecoat also has a University sociologist in residence to investigate its public role. Scientists from the University of Hull run a popular series of small experiments and workshops with an emphasis on fun at the **Hull Freedom Festival** each year. On a smaller scale, a PhD student is studying **Duckie's** community practice.

What are your experiences of partnership working?

Who holds the power?  
Are these power differentials acknowledged?

Are those with the power willing to establish fairer, more balanced partnerships?

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## PARTNERSHIP WORKING

Our cohort make clear that partnerships are vital to their civic role. This plays out in different ways for different organisations but generally it helps to secure access to the resources that they need for their work: venues, participants, volunteers and funding (see the box on 'Working with others to secure resources', page 47).

Relationships with local authorities and other public sector bodies are very important to some of our cohort and some receive funding from health and social care budgets. However, these organisations tend to be keen to stress that they have not chased this funding for its own sake, rather proposals for it have emerged from the artistic work they were already pursuing. (For more information about relationships with local authorities see the box 'Local area studies', page 49).

A number of our interviewees, explicitly seek to have an impact on quality of life in their local areas. They might for example, work on access to employment or housing because these issues matter to the people they work with and for. They develop partnerships as the best means of achieving this, including partnerships with public authorities. These organisations might be described as having a 'liveability' agenda. For others, deep partnership of this kind is still an aspiration. One interviewee has 'a dream' to join up local services, to act as a 'nodal point'. His organisation has already been funded to support older people through advocacy. Another interviewee refers to seeking a more embedded and influential role for the arts in decision-making about the locality and the services provided including in planning; she is looking at partnering with developers. The impression given is that there is untapped potential for arts organisations to work with local communities to improve the areas in which they live and the services they receive.

A number of the organisations in our case study cohort have developed fruitful partnerships with universities (see the box on 'Partnerships between universities and arts organisations', above). These range from large scale partnerships to small interventions. They reflect a move on the part of universities, like arts organisations, to respond to changing times by re-invigorating their civic role. The relationships between universities and arts organisations are examples of a larger organisation taking a smaller one under its wing.

## Local area studies

In 2016, What Next? co-ordinated four local area studies, in Basingstoke, Great Yarmouth & Lowestoft, Sunderland and Nottingham. These were intended to be detailed location-specific investigations into the role of arts organisations within their local community. In all four areas either an arts or cultural strategy had recently been developed or was under development and there was a link between the local area studies and the development or planning for implementation of these strategies.

The Nottingham study was especially timely, coinciding with the development of a Strategic Cultural Partnership. This project, co-ordinated by a range of partners including the city council, set out to develop a local framework for the cultural and creative industries for the next decade.

The What Next? study included case studies of local arts organisations, three public discussions, interviews with key thought-leaders in the city and a literature review. Importantly, it connected key actors, and will continue to inform the cultural framework as it is developed.

The relationship with local authorities is clearly important for arts organisations in the area. However, there was a universal call from participants that arts organisations should not be expected to take up 'space currently occupied by [other] ... third and voluntary sector organisations'.

In Nottingham, the study began many important conversations, helping to establish networks between arts organisations, artists, the local authority, as well as the local community and audiences.

On the basis of the four local area studies What Next? concludes that a key factor in the success of arts organisations playing a role in communities is the commitment of key individuals who give a great deal of time and energy to driving the agenda forward (although these people are often not leading arts organisations, collaboration with arts organisations is critical); university relationships are important and play a role in supporting the civic offer, in places where there are Creative People and Places projects (see the box 'Place-based initiatives' on page 62) and Local Cultural Education Projects, a civic remit is felt strongly.

What Next? recommends, amongst other things: a greater level of investment for arts organisations and strategic partnerships to continue to develop their civic role and meet the needs of communities: that opportunities should be created for arts organisations, practitioners and communities to try out new ways of working without having to go through bureaucratic processes and support should be provided for a public facing campaign, co-produced with communities, that raises the profile of the civic role of the arts.

For a brief summary of the work undertaken for all four local area studies see Annex 1.

A couple of interviewees from small organisations made a general plea for larger arts organisations to partner with and support them. For example:

*The smaller organisations ... [are] often the innovative, flexible, adaptable organisations ... Now if they can feed in ... those are the sort of skills that bigger organisations would really value. Our organisation would really value the clout of a bigger organisation, the reach, the communications, the amplification of what we do, so I think there must be a way of forging links.*

**Is your organisation engaged in delivering services under contract to the public sector?**

**Are you competing with other types of voluntary organisation? Are you working in partnership with them?**

**Do you believe that as an arts organisation you are offering something distinctive?**

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## FUNDING

Within our case study cohort a few small-scale community initiatives rely solely on volunteer input. One of these refers to having received a £600 grant a couple of years ago which has still not been spent because participants are so generous in donating what is needed.

Other interviewees describe a difficult funding environment, but are nonetheless optimistic. One says, 'I think money follows good ideas'. This is not to argue that money, or access to other resources, is not an issue for these organisations: it is. The point is that these organisations tend to work on a broad canvas which enables them to access a wider range of resources and which also perhaps means they have a different relationship to money. One refers to reframing the question 'how can we find the money to pay for that?' into 'how can we develop people's potential to contribute to their local area; what is their potential as human beings, as members of the community, what can they contribute?'

Although it was not a major subject of conversation, a number of issues about funding practice were raised in the interviews. An emerging theme is a basic incompatibility between genuinely innovative or developmental work and current funding practice. One of our interviewees says: 'Funding is one of the greatest suppressors of innovation in civic work, because it requires your output before you know what somebody wants'. Funders don't understand 'that you can only develop something through testing it and through hearing what people are saying and then through going back and redeveloping it'. Another says: 'You can't write to a funder and say, we don't know what we're doing, please give us some money. But we've begun to have those conversations'. One interviewee made the more general point that reduced money in the system creates an atmosphere of conservatism, which makes funders less likely to fund innovative work.

Another issue, highlighted by an interviewee, is that of project funding:

*Why does all this stuff have to be project by project? ... You have to hold that responsibility because if you're saying that the art has meaning and value in somebody's life, you can't say here it is and then, oops, sorry, it's gone.*

Someone else points to a basic incompatibility between funder evaluation requirements and his organisation's approach:

*I don't know how you would evaluate the feeling ... It's an interesting challenge. We can't give out a survey ... at the end of the day because it would fundamentally change the whole idea ... when you enter a theatre you are at the beginning of a play and when you leave the theatre you are at the end of a play.*

A second says: 'It is really, really difficult ... sometimes to express what the outcomes are when they're quite intangible'. And a third says: 'they want to see metrics on everything ... you can tell stories about people sometimes ... they're not always a number'.

Another interviewee says that it's difficult to get funding for projects which combine arts and social change:

*Often if you try to apply for social change under arts, they'll say, oh no you're arts, you should go and apply [elsewhere] and equally if you apply under arts [and the project is about social change] you're knocked back. So that's a barrier.*

## COMMERCIALISM

Our case study organisations had different stances on the link between the civic and the commercial. For some, the arts should be distinct from commerce and provide a space that is neutral, i.e. with no pressure to consume or move on. Others successfully run a commercial operation which generates significant amounts of money which they then plough back into their civic work.

One interviewee referred to being aware of the link between artistic activity and a gentrification of the area that is perceived as pricing local people out. Nonetheless, he says there remains a concentration of social housing and families on low income, and it is the children in these families with whom the organisation works. Another is trying to persuade the local authority to resist the siren call of developers and commit to providing low-rent space to artists over an extended period.

An interviewee from a rural organisation describes its ambition:

*What we're proposing is ... rebuilding local culture ... [which has been] destroyed by tourism ... A local culture that is authentic, rather than the version of it that is ... [generally] sold, which largely isn't [authentic].*

He describes how his organisation opened a tiny shop selling arts and crafts produced by local people. Other local shop owners in the village were up in arms. They claimed unfair competition. However, now local residents see that this work encourages more tourism. It is part of the organisation's agenda to develop social and cultural enterprises because these will make the village a better place to live in.

For some of our case study organisations, having a civic role means that they can 'reach different kinds of audiences' to other arts organisations. Because of this, they believe they tend to have:

*... [more] dynamic business models, because we think across sector, because we think of different partnerships and because we fundraise in different ways.*

For some this has required innovation:

*... but that old model of receiving work doesn't work for us, and didn't work for our audiences – so we had to come up with a different process to develop the programme, and find other ways to make that work financially, which ultimately works in your favour but takes time.*

Another interviewee refers to setting up a social enterprise at the last museum that he ran, which did a range of participatory work with local mental health charities:

*There was that sense of being part of this broader network of social organisations ... and to me it was [about] building social capital [because] that was the thing that would make the organisation more sustainable.*

For a dance company which often presents its work in commercial as opposed to subsidised venues, its civic work emerged as a result of a 'business decision' which was based on 'sustainability and risk management and being in receipt of regular funding'. In order to make the best case for this funding, it needed to 'develop and evolve the business'.

Another interviewee would like the work that she does to be seen in commercial terms. Only then, she believes, will it be valued and paid at a rate that will enable her to achieve her ambition to grow the organisation.

## GROWTH AND REPLICATION

Some of our case study organisations are determinedly local. They have an aspiration to work more deeply and with more impact in the local areas in which they are based. Others are considering whether they should have a national profile:

*I think the difficulty then is that you move away from your local community and you move into ... not really caring whether you're delivering for local people or not ... We were probably selected for [name of particular prize] because we did have community roots and the dilemma for us was how do you retain those while actually being a successful and sustainable gallery.*

One case study organisation supports others across the country to adopt its techniques and approaches. It aspires to develop a training and mentoring strand to its work. Another is helping to set up new services across the country modelled closely on its own:

*Since we opened we've had about 100 ... enquiries saying, can you come and do it in rural Suffolk? Can you come to do it in Wales? So we know there's a real appetite there, it's actually just us finding the means to enable them to do that.*

The case study research indicates one obvious challenge with replication: the reliance of many of our case study organisations on their leaders.

Another interviewee described two challenges with growth: maintaining artistic quality and providing the same rich experience for audience members and volunteers:

*We must make sure at all times that our artistic delivery is at least equal to our approach to delivering art and including people ... We're setting up so many schemes at the moment we need to make sure that we're able to continue ... that ... as we develop and grow ... There's a limit to [the ability] ... to provide really rich experiences to people.*

A couple say that, because their organisations work intensively with people who are dealing with significant challenges, the numbers who benefit are very small. However, the intensiveness of the work pays dividends as regards the impact on the individuals engaged.

## DIVERSITY

One issue that some of our case study organisations regard as both a challenge and an opportunity is the increasingly diverse communities with which they are seeking to engage:

*We're continually thinking, who are we not reaching, and how can we engage with them in different ways? It's an area that is changing fast ... so it's how we address that: not by saying please come in and see what we're doing, but going out ... and asking what are you interested in, how can we help you? It's a very deliberate co-creation process with different communities.*

This issue of 'going out' to engage with diverse communities is an important one. One organisation, realising that there was a substantial Vietnamese community in its area who didn't engage with it, spent a lot of time with that community discovering how it might want to use its space. Now tai chi is practiced outside one of its buildings. Another organisation programmes in collaboration with different social groups.

**“When non-white stories are told, they are always flagged as such – an exhibition of Islamist scientific inventions or women pioneers or African-American artists... The message, when museums produce targeted campaigns or events or exhibitions for non-white audiences is: we acknowledge you as others in our midst. Not as humans, or artists, or scientists, or dancers. As others.”**

Nina Simon, *On White Privilege and Museums*<sup>69</sup>



## Two specific examples of work on diversity

**Voluntary Arts** has worked to establish a stronger connection with ethnically diverse cultural activity. It established a BAME advisory panel, almost all of whom have now become trustees on the main board. It has an expert adviser for each of its staff teams on different aspects of BAME cultural activity. It also undertook interviews with about 40 groups from different BAME communities to develop its understanding of their cultural engagement. Robin Simpson says:

*We asked them what they did and had a very open conversation and what people said to us was, this is refreshing because you've come and taken a genuine interest in us and value what we do.*

For the **Paraorchestra**, its whole reason for being is to promote diversity. It has two aims says Charles Hazlewood 'to create a platform for outstanding musicians who happen to be disabled, and ... therefore to change the perspectives of the world so that they no longer think it's surprising to witness world-class music-making where either all the people on stage or a healthy number of them have disabilities'.

That fundamentally affects the offer inside the building. For example, an exhibition about migration and asylum partly put together with refugees has resulted in the development of a full programme for that group. Another programme works because it meets people on their own turf first. One of the museums brings exhibits out to people where they live.

Not every initiative is successful. A museum in an area with a large Muslim community has worked with the local mosque and run lots of projects relevant to the community. But this is not translating into visits to the museum. Others are having much the same issue. One responds pragmatically: we shouldn't believe that we can bring everyone in, 'not everyone would go to a football match'.

A small clutch of interviewees say that one of their main aspirations is that their staff groups should properly reflect the composition of their community. A number are working hard to achieve this.

## LANGUAGE AND COMMUNICATION

One striking feature of the interviews is the extent to which discussion of language and communication is a common theme. Interviewees dislike current terminology like 'socially engaged arts' or 'arts with a social purpose'.

A number of interviewees said that there was an issue about clear communication of what they do: 'for us a challenge is to be able to communicate clearly about what we do', 'I think there's something about our messaging being clearer', and 'it's very hard to explain in a couple of sentences the range of things that you do and the different approaches that you take'.

The cohort give the impression that they believe that the profile of their civic work should be higher:

*We're a little bit guilty sometimes of just quietly getting on with it, and feeling the work will speak for itself, whereas actually we need to keep shouting about it, and we need to be really clear about what we're doing and why it's important.*

*I don't think we're very good at amplifying our voice.*

But others pointed to how difficult it is to raise the profile of work of this kind:

*Visibility within the arts is limited because the media is about reviewing shows, it's not about talking about the kind of work that we do.*

For some the challenge does not simply relate to communication of their civic work but also to communication about the arts more generally. One says 'the barrier is about the arts being regarded as valuable and as a human right'. Another suggests that the government still thinks that the arts are 'fluffy'.

## ISSUES FROM THE WHAT NEXT? CONSULTATIONS

Many of the challenges and opportunities highlighted by our case study cohort echo points made in the consultation discussions organised by What Next? These identified the following main issues in relation to arts organisations re-imagining their civic role:

**Fragmentation** – great practice is not being shared, and much of the work isn't at a scale to make it meaningful and visible at the national level.

**Inequality** – sometimes offering the same opportunity to people isn't enough, you have to offer more.

**Space** – lack or poor use of civic space needs to be addressed.

**Championing** – there is a need for more high-level champions.

**Fatigue** – there are many competing demands on the capacity of arts organisations.

**Short-term funding** – short-term funding makes long-term engagement difficult to achieve.

**Complex language and systems** – small local organisations can find funding requirements complex and difficult to navigate, especially now that local authorities no longer have the resources to act as brokers.

## The main themes

What Next? summarises the themes that emerged in the discussions as follows:

**Place and celebrating collective identity** – there is a desire not to create 'clone towns' but to use the arts to celebrate unique qualities and difference.

**Addressing inequality and improving lives** – the question was asked, should every arts organisation have social justice in their mission? And, the point was stressed that while the arts can play a civic role, they can't prop up or be a viable substitute for diminished local services because of funding cuts.

**Civic in the context of learning and supporting active citizenship** – arts organisations can question things about society (such as discrimination) and that creates change, but they need to feel that they have the freedom to engage in this way.

**Collaborative leadership** – those in governance roles need to understand their role in relation to the civic.

**Funding** – the recent cuts are really significant, and the Inquiry should not ignore them. Nonetheless, civic role has to be a choice and not a mandate.

**Civil disobedience, opposition and the role of the artists** – artists often see their role as 'provocateur', articulating the value of difference and enabling voices to be heard which might not be ordinarily.

**The unique contribution of the arts** – needs to be emphasised. It might be described as drawing people together to dream and develop solutions, the last bastion for making relationships based on ideas and imagination, fostering creativity and confidence, 'a communicative currency', 'it's what makes us human'.

## Digital

One of the aspects of this report which our Panel challenged was the sparse references to digital media, either in the case studies or the main text. However, one of our case study organisations, Fun Palaces, provides an excellent example of use of digital media to support its civic role:

*“The crossover between arts and science, crafts and tech, has enabled locally led Fun Palaces across the UK to offer hands-on participation in digital activity. Because Fun Palaces are led by local people, they often offer less formal access to*

*digital, and as 34 per cent of Fun Palace Maker teams include people under 18, this means there is great scope for young people to lead on digital activity, as part of an intentionally intergenerational event. ... Older people might turn up for the crafts and stay because they discover the code club for adults (taught by children), as at Brixton Library’s Fun Palace in 2015, or the Minecraft session led by a 10-year-old for all ages at Luton’s Fun Palace in 2014.”*

Stella Duffy, Fun Palaces

Can you suggest arts organisations which have a strong focus on using digital media to deliver their civic role?

Email [civicrolearts@gulbenkian.org.uk](mailto:civicrolearts@gulbenkian.org.uk)



Yorkshire Dance presents  
Dancing in Time.  
Photo: Sara Teresa

# 6

## SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND PROPOSALS

**W**e have gathered evidence from a wide variety of sources and consulted with a range of practitioners, members of the public, experts and other stakeholders. From these multiple sources, we can clearly draw out some important common themes. This chapter puts forward our findings and invites you to comment on our proposed next steps.

### WHY IS A 'CIVIC ROLE' IMPORTANT?

#### Relevance in changing times

Arts organisations funded from the public purse accept that they have a 'civic role'. There is common recognition of a 'burning platform' because of changes in public expectations about the arts, in patterns of consumption and participation. Such changes point to an urgent need for arts organisations, particularly those receiving public funds, to re-imagine or re-invigorate their civic role. This means deep reflection about how they engage with the public, their local community, community of interest or both, and how they work with and for them, actively responding to their concerns, interests and needs.

Many of those to whom we spoke understand the imperative to be relevant. For many, recent political events provide a spur. For most, they underline the importance and value of arts organisations and their particular and unique capacities: to promote empathy; to provide safe space to discuss contentious issues; to stress our common humanity ('everyone matters'); to offer hope and to foster the notion that, collectively and through applying our imagination, we can create better futures.

#### Cultural democracy

Experts say that the drive to improve access and increase participation, well-intentioned though this is, may now be insufficient. Rather, communities should be engaged at a deeper level in determining what the arts and creativity mean for them. Many of our case study organisations described processes and approaches based on co-production. The notion of 'everyday creativity' also emerges as a strong theme. Some characterise this as moving beyond the 'democratising of culture' to 'cultural democracy'. There is also a recognition that austerity means that organisations in receipt of public funding have a particular responsibility to demonstrate that they are 'giving something back':

*I passionately believe in cultural democracy: we know that the people who support LIFT, through a combination of lottery money and Treasury money that we get, are coming from parts of society that we're not engaging with. So, personally, it's an article of faith: if you receive public funding you are obliged to give something back to the public. It's an ethical question, but also it's an obvious opportunity for us to find new sources of creative inspiration.*

Mark Ball, LIFT



## WHAT'S IT ALL ABOUT?

### Principles over definitions

Research and consultation responses suggest that attempts to provide a watertight definition of the civic role of arts organisations are futile. The variety of activity and approaches it encompasses (demonstrated in the case studies) are too diverse. Our efforts to hazard a definition were regarded as limiting. As a result we changed tack, believing that a set of principles might be preferable. This report sets out for consultation a draft set of principles derived from the practice of our case study organisations and informed by our other research (see Chapter 2).

### The strength of metaphor

Our metaphors, arts organisations as 'colleges', 'town halls' and 'parks', have proved popular as a means of describing how arts organisations manifest a civic role. They resonate with practitioners and provide an anchor to the Inquiry. We have adopted two additional metaphors, 'temple' and 'home'. This report starts to unpack how these metaphors apply to our case study organisations. This is, in part, an effort to describe the special contribution that arts organisations can make to the civic, as distinct from organisations not rooted in the arts and creativity. In Phase 2, we propose to continue to explore and test these metaphors and their relevance.

### Arts leaders as connectors

*... if local politics is failing or if there are economic pressures on formal care systems and structures and things, then it feels like the art space becomes the listening point. It becomes where people ... disclose stuff ... I have a dream that ... the falls clinic team say, you go to your arts centre because they do movement work and that will help you with ... emotional and physical resilience ... and you just join it all up .... I think it's those nodal points, those link points with the other bits of the system that are where you really need to be.*

David Slater, Entelechy Arts

## Arts organisations as opposed to artists or individual practitioners

Our focus for the Inquiry is arts organisations in receipt of public funding: there is a particular onus on these organisations to engage with the public. From early in the consultation, we were under pressure to extend the remit to encompass freelance artists, producers and curators. However, while we recognise the important role such individuals play, our core concern is with the governance, leadership and operation of organisations and their civic poise or stance.

### Mission and governance

The ICC survey of arts organisations finds that 62 per cent say that fulfilling a civic role is an important or very important part of their mission. Our case study organisations provide instances of a civic role being embedded in organisational missions, for example:

- To inspire people to take creative risks to shape the future (Battersea Arts Centre)
- To make the world kinder and happier using arts, creativity, innovation and design thinking (Effervescent)

However, for only 32 per cent of respondents to the ICC survey has the organisation's civic role been discussed at board level. This perhaps suggests that the boards of arts organisations are not as engaged as they might be with the civic.

### Leadership

Our research indicates that executive leaders provide the impetus for their organisation's civic work. Some are founding directors. Others have taken on the mantle of leading an existing organisation, often transforming it. All demonstrate a strong commitment to 'communities not audiences' and are passionate about the value of enabling and facilitating their communities, rather than regarding them as passive recipients of their work. All the leaders of our case study organisations model strong leadership skills, including generosity and humility. A few demonstrate an ability, or aspiration, to be a 'connector'. However, it is clear that some are overstretched. It is clear too that some could be better supported and networked.

## HOW IS IT DEMONSTRATED?

### Different starting points

The starting points for our case study organisations have been different. For some of the larger organisations, their route has been through the development of education and other community projects. Initially this work was an 'add on', but gradually the experience of, and learning from, community-focused work has influenced how and what they programme. Others have a strong civic role because they have always had deep roots in their local community. For yet others, the organisation's civic stance is a direct result of the personal experience of its executive leader.

### Common features

The organisations in our case study group work across art forms and deliver a variety of different activities. They engage people using a range of different techniques and processes. However, all have a number of features in common: strong leadership with vision and a belief in co-production; a commitment to excellence in artistic practice or the fostering of individual creativity; a concern to create strong and positive relationships, respect and equal treatment are key aspects of their practice; the majority have a concern with place and many are striving to integrate their work with communities and their artistic programming.

### The individual to the collective

Some of our case study organisations have a focus on the transformation of individuals. Others speak about their work as seeking to achieve community cohesion. Others take this one stage further and, while they do not necessarily describe it as such, they engage in community development. By this we mean that they facilitate and develop community organisations and businesses. The objective is to leave a legacy in the community beyond the life of any one project or event.

### Place and 'liveability'

In some instances 'place-making' is a core concern and there is a focus on place and how people can shape it to meet their needs and aspirations. In a few instances, this means our case study organisations designing solutions with local people to housing, employment or health issues or problems with education. The emphasis tends not to be on the arts as a means of economic regeneration. Instead, recognising that gentrification can make areas unaffordable for local people, our case study organisations are concerned with 'liveability' and building social capital.

### From global to local

A dimension of difference in the case studies is the extent to which organisations operate at the local or hyperlocal level, or have a national or even international remit. One feature, though, is that some of the organisations that are most rooted in a particular local area have strong international connections. Some of the interviewees who had participated in international study trips and exchanges stressed the inspiration they had provided. However, notably, our case study organisations often appear not to be networked with organisations with the same or similar concerns or ways of working based in the UK.

**“Self-expression is all very well. Art is tougher, more purposeful, dangerous, and ultimately a means of change.”**

**Ann Jellicoe, playwright, director and actor**

## WHAT ARE THE BARRIERS AND LEVERS FOR CHANGE?

We asked our case study organisations about the challenges they are experiencing in re-imagining their civic role, the opportunities they identify to develop this role and their aspirations for the future. A clutch of issues emerged.

### Strains on leaders

While our case study organisations have excellent leadership, our impression is that some leaders are overstretched and under-supported. One also refers to the lack of time and space to think strategically and aspires to create opportunities for both, for herself and for others.

### People and skills

Co-production with communities requires a different skill set. Producers, curators and artists may require training and support to enable them to deliver this work well. A few of our case study organisations aspire to develop this training and support for their colleagues in the future.

### Partnership working

The case studies identify many examples of different sorts of partnership working, with other arts organisations, with universities, with social sector organisations and with local authorities. However, leaving a few notable cases aside, the impression given is that our cohort *aspire* to build deeper partnerships, rather than having them already. They aspire, for example, to deeper partnerships with the public sector for the benefit of their communities. The fact that this is an aspiration not a reality for some reflects the fact that our cohort are ambitious but already overstretched.

### Funding

These organisations acknowledge that the funding environment is difficult. However, those who are strongly rooted in particular communities often see their most precious assets as the engagement, capacity and skills of local people.

However, the organisations we spoke to do point to some difficulties with funding practice, namely: co-production means not knowing where the work

might go at the start, funders tend to want greater certainty; the emphasis on project funding makes it difficult to sustain valuable work in the community; and, conventional evaluation techniques often sit uncomfortably with the nature of the work and its ethos.

### Growth and replication

Some smaller, newer organisations are seeking to grow or replicate their models. A few are doing this relatively successfully despite a harsh funding environment. Of these, some speak of concerns including losing their community roots and a dilution of quality in their engagement activity and artistic product. Rather than being concerned about organisational growth, for some the main emphasis is on building social capital locally.

### Business models

One case study organisation refers to how an emphasis on the civic means working in new ways with different sorts of people. It also demands a different sort of product from the norm. This creates an opportunity to develop a more mixed funding base. It potentially opens up access to a range of different funding sources. An obvious example is local or health authority contracts or commissions.

### Diversity

A few organisations refer to the challenge of ensuring that their participants and staff groups are both sufficiently diverse to reflect the communities in which they are based or work. Key success factors appear to be a willingness to go to communities, as opposed to expecting them to come to you, and working with communities' definitions of what constitutes the arts and culture. Peer support and networking may be valuable here.

### Language and communication

One theme that emerges very strongly from the interviews is problems of language and communication. The view is that we lack a common language and classification system for the civic role, which makes it difficult to adequately describe this work in all its variety. This is important because the implication is that we lack the tools for analysing and understanding the civic role better. Some also refer to the role's lack of profile and the need to promote it and its value more effectively.

## NEXT STEPS

When we established the Inquiry, our goal was to have facilitated a strong and growing movement of arts organisations that fully embrace their civic role by 2025. Our aspiration is for these organisations to improve the lives of large numbers of people across England.

This is a huge ambition. The issues we've identified are too complex and the potential programme of work too large for one organisation. We want to work with others – arts organisations, funders, policy and research organisations – with ideas and resources to help design and deliver what we hope will be a strong collaborative programme for change.

Over the Summer and Autumn of 2017, we are consulting on the following possible next steps.

### Supporting the development of practice

Our interest is arts organisations in receipt of public funding working with local communities to co-produce solutions to problems these communities identify. We are also interested in examining how arts organisations could play a 'connector' role working in partnership with social sector partners, public authorities and the commercial sector to address these problems (see the box on 'mima – deep

partnership', below). This work will enable us to further explore practice with reference to our metaphors of arts organisations as colleges, town halls, parks, temples and home.

We intend to base our work on learning from place-based initiatives for arts and culture here and abroad (see the box 'Place-based initiatives', page 62.) To this end we have already commissioned scoping research examining local area-based approaches to funding and prototyping methodologies.

We can only provide initial, seedcorn funding for the initiatives that emerge from this work. We are therefore looking for funding partners to work with us to develop them beyond the early stages.

We also propose to share practice and raise awareness of proven methodologies and approaches that arts organisations might deploy to develop their civic role; some of these may be inspired by international examples (see the box on 'Approaches', page 63).

### mima – deep partnership with public authorities and the private sector

mima met a group of refugees and asylum seekers who held a cinema club once a week in the basement of a church and invited them to hold it in their building. Just that act of being in a shiny building in the centre of town – making the group feel like they were part of the civic, being listened to and acknowledged – triggered all sorts of conversations and relationships that have now led to a regular programme tailored to them. This includes a free meal every week, a food bank, free internet access, workshops, bespoke English as a foreign language courses, a garden club and a craft-makers club. This has led to conversations about their housing situation, so now mima is working with the council and housing providers and other local voluntary organisations to find solutions to the problems that have been identified.

mima also has a programme of work with older people, principally around dementia. It has been approached by a private housing provider to work with it to find better ways of caring for older members of the community. They are now considering whether new and better models of housing, community centres and other civic structures might be developed in neighbourhoods in which such infrastructure is poor.

*It's really exciting, when you're starting to have traction in the world in a very dynamic way that will have some real effect, rather than just pointing at something. Because the tradition of the art gallery is to point at the bad stuff happening in the world, and then the artist sells that piece for £20,000.*

Alistair Hudson, director, mima

## Place-based initiatives in arts and culture

Specific programmes have been established to support creative place-making in England, the USA and Finland.

### England

Arts Council England's **Creative People and Places** action research programme began in 2013.<sup>70</sup> It seeks to bring the arts to areas where people have had fewer opportunities to engage. The programme involves funding and developing radically different approaches to improve participation at a local level, and includes a significant focus on partnership working, bringing together artists and local people.

Its 2016 learning report, *Faster but Slower, Slower but Faster*, highlights the importance of co-creation in achieving real difference: 'change is possible by working *with* people not *on* them, involving non-arts partners'.<sup>71</sup> The report includes a number of recommendations for collaborative working on a local scale, including 'Do not enter uninvited', 'Talk normal' and 'Ask'.

### USA

Creative place-making done well brings vibrancy and life to unexpected places. In the USA, **ArtPlace**, a 10-year collaboration between a number of foundations, federal agencies, and financial institutions, works to strengthen communities through art.<sup>72</sup> It is funding initiatives such as the Kounkuey Design Initiative (KDI). North Shore, CA (population 3,500) is a rural community with a significant immigrant population in Riverside County's Eastern Coachella Valley. North Shore residents and activists have worked with KDI to create the community's first public space. It was designed to unite North Shore's four residential neighbourhoods, which are currently physically

isolated from one another. An ArtPlace grant will enable the community and KDI to map cultural assets so as to support a series of site-specific art interventions. These will be designed to make connections among the residents, their existing cultural assets and the new public amenity, both during its construction and after it has opened. Potential site-specific interventions include an *abuela* (grandmother) storytelling series to encourage intergenerational uses of a new family pavilion or a *fútbol* jersey design party to encourage use of the new sports facilities.

### Finland

Mapping geographic areas for art and culture can be a salutary experience. Within one city, some places can be rich with offerings and others a cultural desert – privileging certain neighbourhoods over others. Helsinki is in the middle of a three-year pilot project to enhance cultural participation in its suburbs, after finding most arts organisations and institutes are in the city's centre.<sup>73</sup> Twelve participatory projects will be delivered in four different districts with low cultural infrastructure and participation rates. The four districts selected also have other, separate needs; for example, one has a much higher number of foreign-born Finns, others are perceived as places where violence and disorder occur. These participatory programmes, run by local arts organisations and in partnership with groups like youth clubs, hope to change perceptions of these communities and engage those who feel excluded from civic life. Much more than just boosting cultural participation in these neighbourhoods, the aspirational long-term goal of Helsinki's pilot programme is to increase the social cohesion and the social capital of all its citizens.

Do these ambitions feel right in the context of arts organisations seeking to re-imagine their 'civic role' in innovative and impactful ways?

Are there funders interested and able to work with us to take initiatives developed with our initial funding forward?

Do you have examples of particularly strong practice – and could you work with us to disseminate this?

Visit [bit.ly/civicrolearts](https://bit.ly/civicrolearts) to share your view



## Approaches that arts organisations might deploy

*A contribution from Matt Peacock MBE, director, With One Voice. With One Voice is a global arts and homelessness movement being incubated by Streetwise Opera.*

\* \* \*

Wherever you travel in the world, there are cultural spaces in the centre of cities, in very similar areas where homeless people congregate. Because many cultural spaces (venues, libraries, museums and galleries) have open access, they act as an important interface for homeless people who come into foyers to get warm, use toilet facilities and free internet access.

With One Voice, the international arts and homelessness movement, is commissioning a global review of Cultural Spaces and Homelessness Strategies, to be published in 2018. We have found a range of outstanding practice and strategies around the world. These include: London's **Southbank Centre**, which has staff guidelines about homelessness and a training programme for Front of House staff; **mima** in Middlesbrough, **Theatre Royal Nottingham** and **Sage Gateshead** host arts groups for homeless people; **English National Opera** host work experience placements and creative programmes. Following the launch of Manchester's Homelessness Charter, all Manchester City Council-funded arts organisations have pledged to work with homeless people in their strategies, with specific good practice from **Royal Exchange**, **Whitworth**, **Centre Library**, **Home**, **Bridgewater Hall** and **Manchester Museum**.

Further afield, a collection of organisations in Rio is leading the way on homelessness, these include **Museum of Tomorrow**, **MAR**, **Theatro Municipale** and **Biblioteca Parque**. Although temporarily closed, Biblioteca Parque recently had 200 homeless people accessing the building each day. They were able to receive identity cards, join reading groups and engage with a range of cultural activities. In the USA, a number of libraries including in San Francisco and Los Angeles welcome homeless people to use the facilities and some have designated support workers. Porto's **Casa da Musica** has long had a commitment to homeless people through the band they host, **Som da Rua**. In Paris, the Mayoral social inclusion strategy, *Pact Parisienne*, is linking homeless centres with cultural spaces in every *arrondissement*; **Tokyo Metropolitan Art Museum** has pledged to add homelessness into their community strategy; and **Exeko** in Montreal is engaging cultural spaces to increase access and opportunities for homeless people around the city.

### Exeko

In Montreal, a consortium of 11 cultural institutions is working to rethink their approach to inclusion. Exeko's 'Laboratoire Culture Inclusive' (2016-18) will review existing policies, experience and complaints, identify best practices and lead to the adoption of a new Charter covering Access to Culture. People 'at risk of exclusion' are co-researchers, recognising their knowledge of exclusion. The approach, which will use Augusto Boal's 'Invisible Theatre' as a research method, holds the prospect of genuinely new insights into challenges with which cultural institutions have struggled for decades.

## Recent initiatives in museums

**Our Museum: Communities and Museums as Active Partners** was a Paul Hamlyn Foundation programme to support development and organisational change within museums and galleries committed to active partnership with their communities. It has an ambition to impact on the museum sector more widely.

The Our Museum programme sought to help museums: be rooted in local needs; give the community agency, as relates to the museum and its work; play an effective role in developing community skills, capabilities and creativity; and reflect, ensure dialogue and openness to challenge.

The programme was run intensively over four years, initially with seven organisations and then with nine.

It provided organisational development including peer reviews. The initiative also published several reports documenting some of the thinking, learning and outcomes (see [ourmuseum.org.uk/what-is-participation](http://ourmuseum.org.uk/what-is-participation)).

The **Happy Museum** project aims to create a leadership framework for museums to support community wellbeing and sustainability. It seeks to re-imagine the museum's role as steward of people, place and planet. It has worked with 22 museums through four rounds of funding. These museums are at the core of a growing Happy Museum Community of Practice, which creates, tests and shares practice, fosters peer learning and makes space for innovative thinking. This work is supported by research and advocacy.

## Capacity building

We are considering producing guidance and tools for the boards of arts organisations to help them review what a civic role might mean for them. These might include 'enabling questions' for board meetings, signposting to foresight tools, and specific case studies illustrating how some boards have already adjusted their mission and values to make their civic role more explicit.

The need for better support for arts leaders as civic leaders is a strong theme of the research. One finding is that arts leaders committed to this role might be better networked in the UK. The research also demonstrates that international exchanges can provide both inspiration and impetus.

We are interested in exploring options for networking, international exchange and for the design of an appropriate leadership programme with existing or aspiring providers of leadership development support to arts organisations.

We are also interested in exploring, again with other funders, what might be done to train, support and network the artists, producers and curators co-producing artworks and other projects with communities.

Our intention is that this work should build on previous and current initiatives in the field, including work with museums (see the box on 'Recent initiatives in museums', above) and the Art Works programme (a Paul Hamlyn Foundation workforce development programme for artists delivering participatory projects).

**Do you believe these initiatives would be useful to those working in the sector?**

**Do you have comments on what sort of training or development, guidance, tools or support would be likely to be most useful?**

**Visit [bit.ly/civicrolearts](http://bit.ly/civicrolearts) to have your say**

## Funding

The research suggests that issues with current funding practice need to be addressed. We are proposing a specific strand of work examining the funding ecology,<sup>74</sup> arts and the civic. This examination might seek to:

- understand funding eco-systems better, locally and nationally;
- understand arts funding or business models better, and how a concern with the civic impacts on organisational resilience;
- explore the feasibility of greater funder collaboration including between the major funders, such as the Arts Council and Big Lottery;
- examine the need for funding for 'light touch' infrastructure and capacity building for arts organisations engaged with the civic;
- examine the appetite amongst funders for a collaboration to support arts organisations to develop their civic role at a larger scale and over a longer time period;
- explore the desirability and feasibility of embedding the civic in funding criteria;
- examine the desirability and feasibility of providing incentives for arts organisations to provide a 'connector' role locally;
- examine the desirability and feasibility of providing incentives for large and small arts organisations to work together sharing respective expertise;
- consider appropriate application processes and evaluation methods or approaches to accountability.

**Do you think that these are the right funding issues to focus on?**

**What appetite exists for collaborations between funders?**

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## Public policy

We are interested in helping to create a public policy environment conducive to arts organisations fulfilling their civic role. We already have plans for work to identify potential levers for making a difference.

**What partnerships might we seek to build nationally or locally to improve the policy environment?**

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**“Through art we  
reframe experience,  
offset prejudice, and  
refresh our experience  
of what exists so that it  
seems worthy of  
attention.”**

**Doris Sommer, *The Work of Art in the World: Civic Agency and Public Humanities*<sup>75</sup>**



Photo courtesy Effervescent



# 7

## CONCLUSION

When we launched the Inquiry in May 2016, it was because we believed that the civic role of arts organisations was important. Working through all the examples, case studies and thought pieces sent to us directly and via our research partners What Next?, ICC and the RSA has shown us the depth of commitment in the arts sector to supporting civic engagement.

This commitment is reflected in the policy and governance world. Then Minister for Culture, Media and Sport, Matt Hancock, was keynote speaker at a large-scale discussion event, which brought together 160 arts practitioners, policy makers and funders to discuss the first findings from the research at the end of 2016. Although our political ecology is currently in flux (after a surprising general election result), we are already planning work with the government to identify policy levers to support the civic role of arts organisations.

This report has set out our first response to the challenges and opportunities identified in our research and consultation. It has taken far longer than we planned to sift through everything we've been sent so as to draw out the learning and insights. But we believe this has been time well spent: it has been important to do justice to the insightful information we have received and the expertise displayed. And we want to hear still more from those at the forefront of practice, those in arts organisations themselves. So what we are presenting here are not so much 'recommendations' – that's a strong word. At this stage, we are rather putting forward, perhaps, suggestions for change.

We have concluded that trying to define the civic role is not helpful. It quickly becomes contested and acts as a barrier to people and organisations becoming involved. Instead, we have drawn out principles from the material sent to us. We are now putting these forward for consultation and hope to refine them during Phase 2 of the Inquiry. We have also commissioned some scoping research in preparation for Phase 2.

Our intention has never been to redirect arts organisations from their primary purpose of producing work of artistic excellence. But we do want to help them to maintain their relevance, meet their potential as actors in the public sphere and increase their impact. When we first established the Inquiry, we described our goal as, by 2025, to have facilitated a strong and growing movement of arts organisations that fully embrace their civic role. Our aspiration is that these organisations should touch and make a significant positive difference to the lives of large numbers of people living across England.

Phase 1 has shown us that achieving this needs change. Phase 2 will be about identifying the most positive and effective changes of approach in: organisational governance and support for leaders; partnership working and the extent to which arts leaders act as local 'connectors'; networking and support; how we understand and communicate about the civic role of the arts; and the policy and funding environment, to make it more supportive.

This ambition is too big, the issues identified are too complex and the potential programme of work too large for one organisation by itself, not least one with a relatively small UK budget. We therefore invite other organisations – funders, organisations with a policy and research remit, and arts organisations – with ideas and resources to contribute, to help us to design and deliver what we hope will be a strong collaborative programme for change.

**We look forward to continuing the conversation with you.**

**Visit [bit.ly/civicrolearts](https://bit.ly/civicrolearts)**





This map shows the locations of our case study organisations based in England and Wales. We have also gathered examples of inspiring practice from across the UK and internationally. Some international case studies are included in Part 2 of this report. More are available on our website: [civicroleartsinquiry.gulbenkian.org.uk](http://civicroleartsinquiry.gulbenkian.org.uk)

## **PART 2**

# CASE STUDIES OF INSPIRING PRACTICE



## BATTERSEA ARTS CENTRE

**Set in a former town hall building in central south London, Battersea Arts Centre's mission is to 'inspire creative risks'.**

A former town hall building in the London borough of Wandsworth, Battersea Arts Centre was established in 1974, and since the 1990s has focused most consistently on presenting theatre, although in 2016 it also became a Moving Museum, and home to the Wandsworth Collection. Artistic director David Jubb has led the organisation since 2004. Of the 49 staff, 42 are full-time; it also benefits from a loyal team of volunteers, particularly as front of house. Its finances have been disrupted by the fire that destroyed its largest room, the Grand Hall, in 2015; in a more usual year, it has a turnover of approximately £2.4m, of which roughly a third is earned income (both ticket sales and commercial hires), another third private income generated through trusts, donations and sponsorships, and the final third public subsidy via Arts Council England and the local authority.

### **MISSION: to inspire people to take creative risks to shape the future**

Until 2015, BAC described its mission as 'inventing the future of theatre', and David Jubb is frank when explaining the change: *'When I said to a local councillor or GP or teacher, and sometimes even an artist, inventing the future of theatre, people would glaze over and I would feel like an idiot. Whereas I can hand on heart say that the mission is to inspire creative risks, and very quickly people understand in shared language what a creative risk might mean for me or for them or for us.'*

His words echo the motto of the former Battersea Town Hall, inscribed in the fabric of the building itself: 'not for me, not for you, but for us'. This is one of BAC's key values, along with two sets of pairs designed so that one word resonates with the other: ethical and entrepreneurial, kind and collaborative. A final point to note about the mission is its presentation as a visual diagram: arrows point in a circle from one element to the

next, so it's clear that shaping the future renews the cycle of inspiring people.

### **Empowering communities**

Some of BAC's work looks fairly conventional: although weighted towards beatbox and hip-hop, its Homegrown strand is a classic youth theatre programme; its Bee's Knees room, offering daily provision to under-fives and their carers, is a standard childcare setting. But that nursery provision points to the influence on BAC's approach to participation of a set of international visits Jubb undertook in the period 2005-2008, particularly to Brazil, where he encountered 'SESCs: amazing centres of social change where you've got an art space, a library, a games room, a gym, a football space, a dentist, a doctor. These are places of wellbeing.'

The desire to be a 'centre for social change' has shaped three key activity strands now embedded at BAC:

#### **1: The Agency**

Inspired by the Agência Redes Para a Juventude in Brazil, The Agency is a collaboration between BAC, Contact Theatre in Manchester, and People's Palace Projects, and works with local young people, particularly those living in social housing, to enable, support and produce their creative ideas. BAC producers do not take ideas to these young people, but ask potential participants what idea they have for positive change in their community. BAC then support participants in developing their entrepreneurial skills to bring those ideas to fruition. Successful projects to date include a board game allowing players to test out potential life paths through their housing estate, a theatre company for care leavers, and a production company for local artists.

#### **2: Agents of Creative Change**

This professional development programme partners artists of all disciplines (from musicians to theatre-makers to photographers) with people or organisations in the

charity or public sector, to encourage creative thinking and propose different solutions to challenges in the latter's sphere of community influence. For instance, the team manager for Integrated Offender Management in Wandsworth worked with the artistic director for the interactive company Coney to develop an idea to reduce re-offender rates through co-designing a creative app that uses cognitive behavioural therapy.

### 3: The Create Course

Based on the Alpha Course, but replacing the word 'religion' with 'creativity', this course is targeted at adults in the local area, particularly those who are unemployed or single parents and living in social housing, and aims to reignite the 'innate creativity that you had rubbed out of you at school'. Jubb emphasises that the goal is inspiring people, not building audiences: *'It connects us with incredible people that we would never have a connection with, who probably aren't that interested in coming to see the shows that are on here – and the course is not trying to get them to come, it's about their creativity, and what role your innate creativity can have. So what does creative parenting look like, creative home care, creative employment-seeking?'*

Jubb is so resistant to 'the hierarchy of the main theatre programme' that in 2006 he redeveloped the organisation internally, merging the education and programming staff: *'So many engagement programmes are ultimately servicing the machine of what happens on stage. I'm not saying those hierarchies are gone for us, but they started to go when everyone on the team was expected to be able to programme a festival and run a workshop for four-year-olds. With all of these programmes we've moved from a model of delivery to one of enabling. It's what arts organisations do all the time with artists, so why aren't we doing that for young people living on local housing estates? Why aren't we developing their creative ideas?'*

This merged team operates a project-working structure, to emphasise organisational fluidity: *'Project working helps us react more quickly, to respond to things that are happening to people in our community.'*

### Barriers

This merging of education and programming teams is one of two fundamental changes within BAC that have shifted its outlook and approach to encouraging participation. The second is its adoption of 'scratch' – a trial and error process, with in-built feedback mechanisms – for every aspect of its work, including its collaboration with architects on the redevelopment of the building. It isn't unique in these approaches, but the barriers it encounters – primarily in relation to funding bodies – do stem from how unusual both are in the wider world.

In the first case: *'Funders have an art strand and then they have a social change strand: they're two different teams, the teams don't talk to each other, and the assessment processes are different.'* A programme like The Agency – which is both social enterprise and arts development – risks falling in the gap between the two.

In the second case, the scratch model doesn't fit with expectations around proposals and outcomes. When applying for funding for building redevelopment, Jubb recalls: *'We weren't clear on what we wanted to do, or how we wanted to do it, we were working it out as we went along, and because of that funders think that you don't know what you're doing. And the truth is that you don't know what you're doing in terms of what they want – but you do very clearly know what process you're following, and by following that process, you find out.'*

This is an issue because time that could be given to experiment and creative thinking instead must be focused on 'delivering on funders' objectives', sapping vital energy from the organisation.

### What next?

Jubb is aware that vital organisational changes are still needed, not least to address diversity among staff and particularly board, to make both 'look more like London'. He also knows that until the rebuilding of the upper and lower Grand Hall spaces is completed (in 2018), BAC is unable to support the social enterprises that emerge through the Agency long-term. The Scratch Hub that will open in the Lower Grand Hall will have space for up to 100 start-up creative enterprises focusing on social change, and link BAC more widely with charities and social entrepreneurs across Wandsworth and Lambeth.

He also aspires to more connectedness – both within the organisation, and externally. At present, it's unclear to someone who participates in the Create Course, or the Agency, what other provision BAC offers for social enterprise or creative development. He wants to make the building more porous, by thinking about *'people as active agents, defining their own journey through the building. Often communications teams think of people's journeys as consumers, as buyers of tickets, whereas I'm more interested in the idea that I've taken that creative risk and now I want to take another.'*

And he wants to build a similar map of activity nationally, ensuring that organisations engaged in similar areas of work are communicating, sharing best practice, and working together for social change through 'shared leadership' models, in partnership with the public.



## BLUECOAT

**An arts centre set in the heart of Liverpool, Bluecoat has four galleries, an open access garden and space where artists and creative enterprises work from.**

Bluecoat became an arts centre in 1907, but the building itself dates back to 1717, making it an unusually strong presence in the psychic geography of Liverpool. Initially constructed as a school, its myriad rooms house classes and studios/offices for some 30 artists and creative enterprises; public spaces include four galleries and an open-access garden. Its 30 members of staff have been led since 2012 by chief executive Mary Cloake. The turnover is approximately £2m, of which £750,000 comes from public sources, £750,000 from trading and rent, and the remaining funds raised from foundations and donations.

### **MISSION: a commitment to art's difference**

As Liverpool's Centre for the Contemporary Arts, Bluecoat's mission, as described by Mary Cloake, is simple: 'to bring the best and most challenging art to the most people'. In practice, this requires two things: firstly, encouraging people to pay 'additional and particular attention' to art by developing public understanding that *'the arts are symbol systems: they're ways in which people can make meaning or communicate above and beyond language'*. Secondly, taking responsibility for giving people ways of reading this symbolic language and showing them how to *'make these symbol systems their own'*.

This mission is considered all the more important considering the building's physical position in Liverpool's city centre: surrounded by highly commercial regeneration, there is a need to 'open up possibilities for people through art'. Bluecoat can do that partly by making its public spaces accessible: despite its own commercial needs, whereby cafe sales add to the organisation's general purse, *'we allow people to buy their sandwiches in Tesco and sit in our garden, because we're acting as a counter weight to huge swathes of the city where it's no longer possible to just be yourself, because*

*they're owned or controlled by commercial interests'*. The building sends out a message 'that there is an alternative to going shopping, there are other ways in which you might consider spending your time'.

### **Informal education**

Since attention to art, and a sense of its possibility, are sharpened by understanding, education is central to Bluecoat's conception of its civic role. It is offered in two distinctive ways:

#### **1: An active partnership with University of Liverpool**

Beginning in January 2014 with a two-year philosopher-in-residence programme, and continuing in 2017 with a sociologist-in-residence, Bluecoat has collaborated with University of Liverpool to provide accredited further education that is accessible to all. The philosophy residency focused on the nature of art, its role in society, and questions related to aesthetics; more than 100 people attended the course on a weekly basis, of whom roughly 30% did not already have a degree. The sociology course discusses 'what the city is, who it belongs to, and what the ownership of property in the city centre might mean to the people', and takes the form of a lecture series and a reading group on taste.

#### **2: Blue Room**

Blue Room is only one of a host of education opportunities at Bluecoat; it is particular because it is designed for adults with learning disabilities. Running since 2008, it has expanded to three weekly sessions, in which participants 'get to know the gallery, get to know about the art, and do some practical artwork'. This is not self-contained activity but is beginning to unfold into other programmes: 'some members of Blue Room have become so skilled technically at making art that they now can volunteer as artist's assistants in our after-school clubs', of which there are five across the city, 'in areas facing seemingly intractable social challenges'.



These education strands have become increasingly important to Bluecoat at a time of changes to the national curriculum: *‘With the increasingly difficult access to arts education of all kinds, the access for people on low incomes to make art becomes narrower. Our ambition is to make sure that people have an opportunity to become full-time professional artists through routes alternative to mainstream college education or art school.’*

Asked about barriers to fulfilling a civic role, Cloake refers again to education: *‘The main barrier for me has been a confusion about what access to the arts means. For me it’s about helping people experience the arts as a symbolic language: if we could build a consensus about that, there wouldn’t have to be a competition for resources. Another barrier is around public expectation: if the public expect you to deliver magnificent things, you will do it. I think we need to be a bit more challenged.’* And the ability to challenge again grows from ‘understanding what the arts have to offer as education and inspiration’.

## Scope for development

Although Bluecoat enjoys high footfall – some 650,000 visits per year, in a city with an estimated population of less than 500,000 – repeat gallery visitors account for only 10% of that number. The building’s new arts wing, opened in 2008, requires visitors to make a deliberate decision to engage with the art: Cloake intends to change that, by *‘commissioning work specifically to happen with and around people in the public spaces within the building, so that they can see the art as a natural part of coming in and having a coffee, or as part of being in the courtyard’*.

Noting that *‘the level of connection and the resonance that people have with art, even if it is really challenging, can be intensified if it is created by artists from the same communities that visitors are from’*, Cloake also intends to build up a programme of commissions from a range of local artists. *‘We aim to reflect the diversity of our community, and to complete the circle on our civic role by showing art that is of and relates to the people.’*

Attendees at Bluecoat’s extensive talks and debates programme are already vocal and actively engaged, reflected each year for instance in the Merseyside Civic Day. This is a weekend in which ‘the local Civic Society takes over the building and provide opportunities for people to talk about and discuss their area or particular communities that they’re involved in, and the challenges they face’. What Cloake wants to see is *‘more dialogue between the art establishment and people who are committed to the civic and democracy’*. At a time when ‘local authorities are under siege, there are ways in which arts organisations could help’, but this relies on them having an embedded and influential role. Her hope is that following the sociologist-in-residence programme there will be a series of new partnerships with the public sphere, pushing forward the dynamic between internal arts activity and external civic possibility.



## DERBY MUSEUMS

**Derby Museums encourages people to come through its doors by running programmes and displaying exhibits that traditional museums would not.**

With a history reaching back some 170 years, Derby Museums was managed by the local authority until 2012 when it became an independent trust. The local authority still provides 55% of its funding. It has a turnover of £1.6-£1.8m, with a quarter of its revenue provided by Arts Council England. Footfall is approximately 120,000 people per year, although the organisation extends its reach through off-site visits and communication on social media. There are 65 members of staff, and Tony Butler has been Executive Director of the Derby Museums Trust since 2014.

### **MISSION: a place for people to discover their place in the world**

Prior to joining Derby Museums, Tony Butler ran the Museum of East Anglian Life, where he developed a social enterprise model, working in partnership with the local authority and non-profit sector, for instance mental health charities, to put the museum at the heart of a range of programmes looking at improving skills, employability and independent living. There, Butler recalls: *'I explicitly started talking about the museum as a social enterprise that happened to be a museum: the creation of social capital, or bridging social capital, was the purpose.'*

He also established the Happy Museum Project, which provides a leadership framework for museums to develop a holistic approach to wellbeing and sustainability. The project reimagines the museum's purpose as steward of people, place and planet, supporting institutional and community wellbeing and resilience in the face of global challenges.

Consistent in his thinking is a discomfort with the 'deficit-funded approach' often found in culture, concerned with targeting under-representation. As he says: *'you can't make everyone go to a football match'*; and the same is true of museums. He does, however, believe in the essential role a museum plays in 'anchoring a community'. As such: *'I think we should focus on creating the conditions for habitual, everyday participation.'*

To do this, he is rethinking how Derby Museums explore 'issues around local, national and global citizenship' through mutuality and co-production: that is, not forms of participation that require communities to engage with the museum on its terms, but ones that engage with communities on their terms – and in doing so find creative solutions to community problems. Essentially, all his work leads towards 'being a host and a place for encounters', because that is what a museum should be.

### **Head, heart, hands**

Butler summarises the approach at Derby Museums as 'encouraging people to think, feel and do'. There are two key, interrelated yet opposite activities through which this approach is being developed:

#### **1: The museum 'out there'**

Through the project Your Place in the World, material from the world-cultures collection is being transported across Derby, to diverse community hubs including barber shops, nail bars and boxing clubs, where people are invited to talk about how they feel about the objects. *'The museum holds all this stuff in trust for the public, and we have a duty to expose as many people as possible to these things. It's not about going to places of low participation to teach, but to involve and elicit people's responses to this material culture,'* says Butler. Results of this work will be transferred into a new gallery space, built with many of the people encountered during the object walks.

Visiting communities on their own ground requires ‘building mutual relationships with communities’, which in turn requires *‘understanding that we don’t have the answers to everything, but that research and care of our cultural heritage is better when it’s done with the community, because we draw on all the social capital in the community to increase the cultural capital’*. The result is a ‘fluidity’ between institution and people, which also addresses the imperial past of the museum in a multi-cultural present context.

## 2: ‘The museum in here’ – a ‘human-centred design’ approach

The £16.5m Silk Mill redevelopment project will result, in 2020, in Derby’s Museum of Making, which aims to ‘inspire the next generation of makers’ alongside contemplation of ‘how we use making to face the challenges of climate change, automation, population growth – all the challenges of the 21st century’. To do this meaningfully, Butler argues, ‘we need to involve all aspects of the community in building this museum’.

Volunteer programmes have involved the local public in everything from designing a taxonomy for the new museum by moving objects around the space, to the conservation of objects, to defining how they might be displayed. In addition, a ‘social return investment method’ is being used to evaluate the success of the project: *‘That requires lots of open workshops at the beginning of the process to ask people what matters to them, then judging the success of the programme on what people have told us at the outset, rather than us taking the approach of, this is what we want to build, did the people like it?’*

In both of these strands, Butler emphasises the importance of the museum seeing its role not as management but stewardship, and of ‘building mutual relationships with our community’. In that sense, the work is a direct translation of the museum’s original purpose, to be a place for all sorts to congregate, to the present day. *‘The challenge that we’ve set ourselves is to take that first principle of being somewhere that everybody can access culture to somewhere that’s open and democratic and participatory.’*

## What next?

Butler is already navigating the effects of the Conservative government’s programme of austerity, which has resulted in a 40% cut to local authority funding, which in turn threatens the very existence of civic institutions such as museums. Time and staff capacity that might otherwise be dedicated to the development of museum activity must instead be devoted to fundraising, because ‘no amount of social capital will pay the electricity bills’.

None the less, he has ambitious plans for further development at Derby Museums. This includes discussion with the local authority about the possible use of library buildings to open additional space, and redevelopment of the Museum and Art Gallery to create ‘more of a civic space’: *‘an open meeting space for people to congregate and share ideas, because there aren’t many spaces like that under cover in cities any more’*.

The creation of the Museum of Making at Derby Silk Mill is breaking new ground in the way that it is being co-designed and co-produced with the public, and this sets the tone for the rest of the museums in the city. *‘We are thinking harder about what a civic space means in a society which is more personalised, fluid and where people expect to be able to create their own ‘cultural life’. There is a tension between individual desires and needs and solidarity, personal and communal. The museum still has a role as an anchor in the civic realm, as a nexus for social networks. This is the role the Museum of East Anglian Life played in Stowmarket and there is no reason why that cannot be scaled up to a city.’*



## DUCKIE

**Rapidly growing arts company Duckie lives by its tagline 'Purveyors of Progressive Working Class Entertainment'.**

From its office in the kitchen of a social housing flat, Duckie has grown from a weekly gay club night started in 1995 to an organisation staging social events, performances and workshops across the UK. Its core team of three is led by creative producer Simon Casson, and supplemented by approximately 20 associates and regular collaborators. It is financially expanding, from a turnover in the early 2010s of £350,000 to £940,000 in 2016, of which the bulk is received in the form of public subsidy, including £144,000 from Arts Council England, a grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund, and partnership projects. The Saturday night club remains as its commercial arm, bringing an earned income of approximately £75,000.

### **MISSION: progressive working-class entertainment**

Duckie has used the tag line Purveyors of Progressive Working Class Entertainment for most of its existence. Playful on the surface, it indicates the ways in which the organisation is increasingly 'trying to be useful', by setting Duckie in opposition to 'the structural inequality that happens in the west under capitalism'. Simon Casson argues: *'Inevitably those structural inequalities are reflected in arts and culture: everything's set up for the posh. In the old days the UK was 70% working-class folk, 30% middle-class folk, nowadays it's about 70% middle-class and 30% working-class or people that are more socially and economically marginalised. Are those folk being served by the theatres and art centres and galleries? I'm interested in making meaning for that 30%.'*

To 'speak that language', Duckie's work takes place 'in pubs, clubs, community centres, church halls, and involves a lot of popular forms, music, comedy and dance, catering, and dressing up'. It also reflects the company's LGBTQ+ identity: *'We are queer and you can feel that coming out in the body of the work. It's part of the celebration of it: our work tends to be fun, with lots of socialising and entertainment, in order to find a bond and celebrate an audience or community. There's a sense of playfulness, a sense of outsidership, a sense of not taking yourself too seriously, and a bit of gentle sensitivity.'*

### **The identity politics route**

Duckie's 'goal to make popular performance and arts for ordinary people' initially led them to make theatre work in partnership with significant venues, including the Barbican, but latterly has shifted towards 'serving specific groups in different areas' through distinct and tailored projects, including:

#### **1: The Posh Club**

This cabaret/afternoon tea for working-class elderly people, aged 60 and over, from mixed ethnic communities and lower socio-economic backgrounds runs weekly for the autumn/winter season, and offers an alternative to traditional daycare settings, with the same risqué performers who appear on Duckie's late-night Saturday stage offered as entertainment. Younger volunteers, of similarly diverse backgrounds, act as a silver-service waiting team. Casson developed the idea for The Posh Club when his mother moved from Hackney to Crawley and discovered there were almost no activities for older people; already established in both areas, it is expanding across the south-east, to Elephant and Castle, Brighton, and Hastings.

## 2: The Slaughterhouse Club

A drop-in creative project running two days a week, 40 weeks of the year, The Slaughterhouse Club is ‘an arts school for homeless alcoholics and addicts who live in hostels in Vauxhall and Battersea’. Both are ‘wet hostels, so people there are still drinking and still taking drugs’; three facilitators work with them to ‘develop art works out of conversations, using the myriad of mediums from painting and drawing and sculpture to film making, and song writing and performance-making’. This project has personal roots, too: Casson himself has experienced alcoholism and addiction and knows how, when deeply unhappy, ‘*you might have a couple of hours that are actually OK, even if your life’s really desperate. We’re trying to provide that two or three hours, and we’re using arts to do that, because the making of art is a creative act that takes you outside of yourself, and that’s an enjoyable positive experience for people who are struggling with how to be a human being.*’

## 3: Duckie Family

This project is dedicated to supporting the emerging ‘queer and trans, black and people of colour communities’, and again is framed in terms of service: ‘*I’m trying to use my skills to help them create their own centre and their own platforms, to have fun and be creative in a very accessible way. I’ve always thought big changes need to happen and change happens very slowly. The key is to know when to step out of the limelight, when to hand over the power.*’

Each of these projects is ‘an act of passion. Service is at the heart of it, and we go to the communities we’re passionate about.’ which exists because Duckie, and Casson in particular, ‘*grew up. I don’t want to die an unhappy gay who’s just served himself: I want to serve the people, and I want to slightly change the world. I’m not a doctor or a nurse or a councillor: all I can do is put on shows and events, so that’s what we do – try to make the party for the people that don’t necessarily have the parties. We want to have fun and bring groups of people together and we take our job as social entrepreneurs and social engineers seriously.*’

## What next?

Casson admits that each of these projects is ‘modest’ in its reach, and his ambition is to expand beyond ‘groups with special characteristics’ to reach ‘*whole working-class communities, ordinary folk outside of the university-educated system. I want to get to a position where we can rock up with a horse and cart and the dancing show opens out on the estate and it makes people go, you know what, I don’t need to watch the X-Factor because I’m going to go and take part in that magical thing that’s going to happen.*’

As someone of working-class background himself, he often feels limited by his own lack of university education: ‘*I do try to be articulate and clear about understanding the world and what needs to be done, but I wish I was more able to communicate that, because I think we could make more changes if I could. But how do you get working-class people in positions where they can actually take power? I’m middle class now, because of the process that I’ve been on as an adult, and I’m grateful for that, but I wish I was armed a bit more.*’

Although the art forms that interest him are spectacular, popular entertainment, it’s also important to him that the work is ‘meaningful. The bottom line is that a hundred years ago, everyone who lived in this street would go to that church at the end of it, and they don’t any more, they all go to different places. But we need that way of coming together and theatre should be providing that. Theatre isn’t just some product that we consume: it’s something to participate in, in order to understand what it is to be a human being, and what it is to be together with other humans in a room.’





## EFFERVESCENT

**Effervescent is an arts company based in Plymouth which works primarily with vulnerable children and young people.**

Founded in 2004 by Eloise Malone, Effervescent is based in Plymouth and works primarily with vulnerable children and young people. It has four staff (three full-time), and works with approximately 10 associate artists when creating projects. Funding is received on a project basis and so changes yearly: during the last financial year turnover was £250,000, of which 80% was project funding, and the primary funders were Arts Council England, Children in Need, Big Lottery and Big Potential. It also raises a small amount of earned income through space rentals at its creative hub (a former bank building in the city centre), contracts to deliver services, and philanthropic donations.

### **MISSION:** making the world kinder

Effervescent spent its first decade honing its devising process, working in creative partnerships across the UK to create performances, film and installations in response to a brief. Feeling that her skills lay in 'creating conversations between people in very engineered ways', Eloise Malone altered the business model in 2014: settling in Plymouth, acquiring a building to house a gallery and café, and encouraging clients to 'tell me what their problems were, rather than what they wanted me to do'.

These clients – all local – include Barnardo's South West, Plymouth University, Exeter University and Plymouth City Council, and the problem tends to express a need to communicate more effectively with vulnerable young people who are not accessing their services fully. Effervescent works with identified groups, using 'arts, creativity and innovation thinking' to shape anything from advertising campaigns to public art displays. The work builds on the young people's lived experience and knowledge, and aims to 'give them social connectivity, and help them to articulate and make sense of the world'.

Malone describes the core of this work as kindness, because *'it's based in supportiveness, and believing in people. I'm trying to give young people a platform to do something genuinely new and culturally beautiful, extraordinary work which shows that investing money in children in a wise and creative way can create real positive change that not only improves this young person's life, but improves the entire social environment, saves public money, relieves the health services of burdens, and creates a platform for this young person to maybe go on and be the next Jeremy Dyson, or the next Jeremy Deller.'*

### **The methodology**

Malone is a trained youth worker, with degrees in cultural practice and social pedagogy, a duality reflected in Effervescent's methodology:

#### **1: Humanist education**

Effervescent works with small groups of young people, training them intensively in 'creativity and design thinking'. That begins with looking at messaging and affect: how adverts work, how galleries create experience, 'how you make people feel things, how you engage audiences'. The group are then given creative tasks, and learn to deconstruct each other's work through a critical feedback process. The 'images, words and concepts, pulled from their own subconscious' that emerge through this imaginative stage become the basis for the devised work.

This is created and/or curated in the gallery, both for a general public to attend, and to address the specific problem raised by the client: for instance, the risk of child sexual exploitation in Plymouth, or unhealthy relationships among teenagers. To make the exhibition, the group will collaborate with professionals 'almost as creative directors, so it doesn't look like amateur work', and then will promote it, by designing flyers, doing interviews, or publishing journalism. All of this supports *'the message that children can create work that engages*

*with people, that has a really strong concept and that is without bounds. We're raising the bar in terms of people's expectations of what children can do within the cultural sector as well as within our client sector.'*

## 2: Therapeutic principles

That message is designed not just to communicate out to the public, but in to the young people themselves. Malone accepts she cannot change their environment, but says she can *'help people become more resilient, self-sufficient, and able to cope with what's happening in their lives. Effervescent is giving them the tools to deal with what life's going to throw at them.'*

Each project is self-contained and builds on a 'solution-based brief therapy' model, intervening in a participant's life within an agreed time framework. Malone does offer a final meeting that involves 'helping everyone get to something they want to do next, whether it's go on to university or getting in to a youth theatre'. But the project itself is finite: *'The young people understand what the offer is, and we manage that carefully by reflecting at the beginning what they want to get from it, checking their progress as a group and individually, and making sure that they think they're on track and putting sufficient effort in to getting that.'*

Increasingly Malone is gathering evidence to demonstrate the effectiveness of her approach. A project made with sexual abuse survivors produced not only the gallery's most successful show, with an estimated footfall of up to 20,000 in its 13-week run, but a number of benefits for the participants, who reported: *'they felt better, more confident, happier, more able to talk about what had happened to them. They realised they weren't alone. And they lowered their risk-taking behaviours by something like 70% using Barnardo's measurements.'*

## Challenges

Malone faces three battles in pursuing this path:

### 1: The idea that children are not artists

Accessing funding is more difficult, Malone argues, because children are not accepted as *'cultural practitioners in their own right. There's an assumption that children aren't going to do good work – but a nine-year-old is as capable of astonishing ideas as a 30-year-old, and with the right support, very small children could be creating things that are socially and culturally relevant and engaging.'*

### 2: The idea that artists work for love

Pay is limited further by the expectation that artists receive emotional benefits from their work that need not be remunerated. Malone wants Effervescent to 'move from being seen as an arts organisation, to being seen as a design lab', because as a 'designer with a specialist consultant role' she can double or triple what the company charges out, and put the surplus into funding risk-taking work.

### 3: Competition for core staff

Investment on a project basis has left Malone unable to build a core team that might allow her to 'work in a more long-term, sustainable way'. She needs 'people with the skill-set to develop commercially viable products in a social-realm company', yet cannot afford the salaries commanded in the commercial sector over the period of time needed to make those roles cost-beneficial.

## What next?

All these challenges support Malone's ambition for Effervescent to become 'self-sufficient', by developing a methodology *'that can be marketed, and invested in, and gives us an ability to create demand for more of it. People don't understand what they could have: too often they're asking for things rather than change.'* She plans to begin repeating projects intensively, with multiple groups, not only to hone how they happen but *'to figure out what the cost per child is and what the return on that investment is in terms of diversion from risk, from social care, from suicide, from being picked up by the police, with the hope that we can make that a socially investable product going forwards. We want to make the world better not just by making beautiful things, but by changing young people's lives and public services in a considered, measurable, rigorous way'.*



## ENTELECHY ARTS

**Entelechy Art's aim is to bring people together, with a focus on 'those who ordinarily don't get to share the stage', such as very elderly people and people with multiple disabilities**

Entelechy Arts was founded in 1989 as the company New Moves, on the request of Lewisham and North Southwark Health Authority, to support the reintegration of people with learning disabilities into the community following the closure of mental handicap asylums in South-East London. Based in an office at the Albany in Deptford, it has a core team of four, including founder artistic director David Slater, and works with approximately 35 freelance artists each year. The company has a turnover of approximately £250,000, receiving core funding from the London Borough of Lewisham and from Arts Council England as a National Portfolio Organisation, and generating additional income through trusts and foundations.

### **MISSION: engineering creative collisions**

There is a conceptual language for Entelechy Arts's practice to which David Slater is mostly resistant: words such as co-creation, which he avoids, or relational practice, which he will use only in formal settings. Entelechy Art's aim is to bring people together – artists and 'people who ordinarily don't get to share the stage', including the very elderly, and people with multiple disabilities – to see what sparks from the points of connection. In particular the company is driven by the question: 'What happens if you make visible people who are invisible?'

The company aims to work with the same people for extended periods of time, accompanying them as they experience change in their lives, whether adapting to the ageing body or habituating to absence following a death. Slater argues: *'It's those moments where you most need that parallel process with making an artwork. The creating of work with others, creating opportunities to reimagine who you are – the creativity is instrumental in supporting the possibility for change.'*

### **A body of trust**

Entelechy Arts's work begins with the development of relationships of trust: an investment of time framed as 'deep hanging out' which creates the possibility of working 'across generations, across particular needs, and across different cultural experiences, in exciting and dangerous ways'. Although 'fiercely local' in its provision, it has an international perspective, with Slater quoting three Brazilian concepts when describing the company's work:

#### **1: Imagination at the service of the people**

One of Entelechy Arts's most successful projects to date, Meet Me at the Albany, began with a simple set of questions: 'What are we going to do about isolated older people in Lewisham? What role could culture have in supporting their needs or the Local Authority's needs?' Meet Me takes place 50 weeks of the year in the café at the Albany, with an open invitation to elderly people to work with artists and volunteers to make and do.

The project exposed several structural reasons why elderly people might not have been using the arts centre: the chairs were unsuitable and needed to be changed, the toilets were inaccessible and needed adaptation. Many did not even know it was there. These issues resolved, it has proven so beneficial that Entelechy Arts and the Albany are now working with the local authority to extend its provision across care homes and social housing settings, always with a view to 'exploring connections between people who live in the different units'.

#### **2: A process of uncovering**

Through its long-term, trust-building relationships, its emphasis on listening and 'finding collective meaning', Entelechy Arts discovers the preoccupations of its participants which in turn shape new work. Bed, a touring work for elderly performers, emerged from Meet Me at the Albany, and: 'a group of older people saying, when we're in public it's like we're invisible'. Bed is staged on

public streets, and presented as an encounter with the real: passers-by stumble upon an elderly woman apparently homeless and without carers, and listen to her stories.

Another programme Entelechy Arts runs at the Albany, Ambient Jam, is a fortnightly opportunity for adults and young people with profound and multiple disabilities – people who might not have access to linguistic self-expression – to work with dancers and musicians to communicate their selves. Slater emphasises that the benefits are not one-sided: *‘Working with people who are sensory skilled by necessity has given artist teams huge experience in making work in multi-sensory, cross-artform, improvised landscapes.’*

### 3: Points of culture

In Brazil, the ‘Pontos de Cultura’ are ‘particular points where things happen, where you’re creating energy’. In a UK context, these might be the lounge of a care home, a library, or the café of an arts centre: places where people can gather to discover *‘what are our social relationships to each other and how we grow into who we could become in the company of other people’*.

Entelechy Arts bring people together in these points of culture who might not otherwise meet. Its 21st Century Tea Dances are created by elders, but aimed at cross-generational attendees. It has also built collaborations between local elderly groups and communities of older people in the north of England, in LA, and in Brazil: *‘We’re interested in the way that the local then becomes the national and international, through engineering these different encounters.’*

## The ordinariness of art

When Slater first began working in the 1970s, it was primarily with older people, some born in the Victorian era, who told stories in which dance was integral to gatherings and a piano would be wheeled into the street for parties. This could be dismissed as rosy nostalgia – or read as descriptions of a time in which art and culture were not extraordinary but everyday. Barriers, as Slater sees them, arise when art is not seen as ordinary:

### 1: Project funding

Creativity is innate to humanity: or, as Slater argues, *‘We’ve been dancing since the beginning of time, and if that’s not a longitudinal case study then what is?’* Project funding is anathema to Entelechy Arts’ way of working, putting a time-limit on the benefits of participation and breaking trust with participants, as they see programmes they rely on disappear. It also creates unrealistic expectations among funders, of quick and quantifiable outcomes: *‘What art is doing is conjuring stuff out of thin air and exploring the shape and form of how we can*

*collectively be together. If it is really going to make a change then by definition you can’t predict that – but if you don’t know what the outputs are going to be, how can you ask for money for it?’*

### 2: Problems of connection

Entelechy Arts’ work relies on a foundational set of ‘creative collisions’: partnerships between the company, health services, housing providers, charities, arts organisations and local authorities, whose collaboration ‘creates a space for imagination’. But all of these are vulnerable to political shifts, economic pressures on formal care structures, and changing language in relation to wellbeing. On the one hand, Slater recognises a responsibility when working with the vulnerable, of ‘dealing with issues that are to do with dignity or inappropriate care’. On the other, he sees *‘a danger with the language of art and health, that the creative community are invited to collude in propping up quite damaging systems, like the way that we warehouse our oldest citizens in care homes’*. Collaboration offers solutions to both problems, but relies on time and money to be effective.

## What next?

Ultimately Slater’s ambition is a wholesale return to the ordinariness of art, ‘so that people can grow up with an artist at the end of the street, the same as you grow up with a GP at the end of your street’. This provision is already present for the affluent: he points to the South Bank, where there are audiences who access ‘a very great number of cultural activities each month: it’s just what they do, it’s part of their landscape’. What Slater wants to see is a society in which this is everyone’s landscape, because ‘we all need culture: it’s a human need’.



## GRIZEDALE

**Rural arts organisation Grizedale sees its core mission as making a stronger more cohesive community.**

Based at Lawson Park Farm in the Lake District, Grizedale Arts curates and commissions contemporary art both within its local rural and international contexts, but with an emphasis on process, rather than product. Founded by the Forestry Commission in 1968, it has been led since 1999 by director Adam Sutherland, and has only one other core staff member, shared with the nearby Coniston Institute and the Ruskin Museum. All other staff are employed on a freelance basis; artists who attend its residencies as volunteers will often stay on with the organisation, at a standard pay rate of £100 per day. Its turnover is approximately £400,000, of which roughly 50% constitutes earned income, roughly £130-140,000 is funded by Arts Council England, and approximately £10,000 comes from the district council.

### MISSION: make art useful

Under the leadership of Adam Sutherland, Grizedale has developed a mission that is essentially civic in ambition: *'We're not trying to make art, we're trying to create a stronger, more cohesive community.'* The community in question is Coniston, a village of roughly 1,500 people with whom Grizedale engages in an ongoing process of exchange. *'Creating a functional community isn't dependent on artists: you can do it without artists – but I don't think you can do it without creativity, which isn't exclusive to artists. There are lots of very creative people in the village, who artists learn from a lot. The process of learning is one of the real strengths, and that's going on on all sides.'*

Art isn't the teacher in this reciprocal relationship, but a tool that can be used to enhance the creativity of everyday life.

### Complicated ways of not making art

There are three elements to how Grizedale operates:

#### 1: The local, everyday programme

A turning point for Sutherland was the realisation that: *'if we work to invitation and respond to things that are already happening, that people want to do, and have asked us to help them with, we have a much better chance of making things and integrating creativity into the everyday'*. Grizedale has worked to invitation since 2009, collaborating with its local community to 'make the village interesting for everybody to live in'.

This has included working with the village to create The Honest Shop, 'a shop that sells things that people in the village have made, from cake to vegetables to crafts', and The Village Table, an amateur catering company; and on two large-scale redevelopment projects, rebuilding the Coniston cricket pavilion and restoring the Mechanics Institute as an adult education centre covering everything from health to arts. *'The programme is very much about supporting existing groups and existing culture, and expanding on that. That's very successful in terms of an arts organisation being integrated into the community: not, as is often the case with arts organisations, standing to one side to comment on it or try to help and develop it, but to be part of it.'*

Sutherland mentions integration often because it is fundamental to bring 'creative approaches to things other than art, for instance food and health', and to participate with the full spectrum of local society, from people in their 90s to people with learning difficulties. This integrated approach enables Grizedale to step away from the projects it initiates, so that they become *'something that people own and value and sustain. The things that are most satisfying are those that are taken away from us and people evolve and develop themselves.'*



## 2: The residency programme

Artists come to be embedded in this community through Grizedale's residency programme: a week of 'domestically oriented, disciplined and concentrated' work on Lawson Park Farm. *'The ambition is about talking to artists about working in a different way, to think of how they make art as something that is valued by communities. That's not a very familiar position for artists: they usually expect to have quite a confrontational role with the world. But there's a genuine understanding from the local community that an artist is a useful, good thing, that's introduced richness to their lives and their economy.'*

## 3: The international programme

This element also expands from the village programme, and creates opportunities for 'research and development, to try things out that aren't necessarily going to work, and also to bring groups of people together, from the local community, as well as artists, academics, intellectuals'. Whereas Grizedale and its collaborating artists need to work delicately with the local village, always following the community's ideas, in international contexts it can be more gung-ho and have fun, 'because it's just art people – it's not our world'.

## A challenge from tourism

One of the challenges of Grizedale's world is the ongoing negotiation with a tourist industry that believes 'Grizedale, as an arts organisation, should be making tourist attractions – in effect, large-scale land art that attracts people to come to the village'. This is what Grizedale did, very successfully, in the 1980s, and what Sutherland specifically seeks not to do, because: *'That's not public art, it's an extension of studio practice and a way for the Arts Council to fund artists to make work. What we're proposing is rebuilding local culture and a local authenticity.'*

In seeking to shift the perception of tourism among the community, from a force over which it has no control to something it can shape in its own interests, Grizedale proposes creative new strategies for tourism. *'We don't intend to make tourist attractions in the same way that we don't intend to make art. In fact, we have impacted quite strongly on tourism: a project like the Honest Shop, which really reflects the community and the aesthetics that people in the village hold dear, is obviously a huge tourist attraction.'* Other local businesses were initially wary of the competition – but have since come to adopt Grizedale's methods as their own.

## What next?

A healthy community, Sutherland argues, is one that periodically reinvents itself through a burst of energy and creativity. The cycle of change and decline 'is often very long, 30 to 40 years – whereas you really want to turn those over much more quickly, every five to ten years'. Grizedale is committed to this ongoing process of change, and to 'fundamentally creating new models for how communities and society work'. And Sutherland resists the suggestion that Grizedale needs more funding to achieve this: *'The idea here has been that we don't fund village activity, we take part in it as a participant. If it needs funding, we'll help different groups do it, but we don't want to hold the control, we don't want to be the decision-maker.'*

His approach draws inspiration from the work of John Ruskin: *'Ruskin used to own the farm that we're based on and was a key person behind the development of the institute. "There is no wealth but life" is Ruskin's only famous quote and his idea in his later life was that art had its functional role in communities.'* Ruskin established a museum, intended to educate people, and three craft schools – dedicated to metalworking, woodwork and lace-making – which would generate income and boost the economy even as they built local schools. This is the 'historical precedent' Sutherland looks to when thinking about Grizedale's future, and how it might continue to question ideas and values around education, financial aspiration, gentrification, nature and more.



## LIFT

**A festival of innovative British and international performance, LIFT happens biennially across London, and since 2013 has focused its participatory activity on Tottenham.**

Founded in 1981 by Rose Fenton and Lucy Neal as the London International Festival of Theatre, LIFT has been under the artistic directorship of Mark Ball since 2009, although by the time of this report's publication he will have moved on to a new role as associate artistic director at the Manchester International Festival. A biennial festival, LIFT has a core staff of 10 which increases substantially with freelance and contracted staff in the six to nine months leading up to a festival. Its turnover similarly rises from roughly £1m in an off-year to £2m in a festival year; of the two-year total, 35% is received from Arts Council England, while the rest is split fairly evenly between fundraising and box office income. LIFT also benefits from substantial co-investment from cultural partners, and a £150-200,000 investment from the EU.

### MISSION: global stories for a global city

As a programmer of theatre, LIFT seeks to 'share the stories of the world, focusing on territories of the world that have perhaps not been focused on before,' says Mark Ball. And it wants to share them with 'all Londoners – which means working across London, not just within the four walls of cultural institutions'.

For Ball, this sharing of stories plays a civic role in its own right – but for the festival to have a 'meaningful social impact' it also needs to offer co-creation opportunities, which require 'long-term investment, long-term engagement with a particular set of people or a particular place. The thing that enables organisations like LIFT to have impact is when we give power away, and we give power away through the process of allowing the people that we're with to exercise their creativity.'

Previously, LIFT has offered those co-creation opportunities through the programming of large-scale participatory work across London. The aspiration there was 'around giving people more agency, and developing

a more culturally democratic London'. However, Ball felt that it was hard to trace the legacy of this nomadic approach, and that it did not fundamentally affect LIFT as an organisation.

### A focus on Tottenham

In 2013, LIFT took the decision to focus its participatory work in a single area of London. Tottenham was chosen because the local authority was amenable to collaboration, and it matches LIFT's global mission: *'Tottenham has a very international community, everything from an established ultra-orthodox Jewish community to a long-established African-Caribbean community and more recent Eastern European and Somali communities. It's also the centre of the Filipino community. Although there is tension in that community churn, the tension is quite an interesting, creative, healthy one.'*

For six years, 2014-2020, LIFT is committed to doing all of its participatory work in Tottenham. So far, this has involved three strands of thinking:

#### 1: Connecting the artist community

LIFT's first step was to think about building 'an active community of artists who feel that there is a future for them in their creative practice in Tottenham'. Ball describes National Theatre Wales as 'a particularly important touchstone' in deciding how to begin: *'If you want to develop a project in a place, you can't go in with an existing idea, you have to sit in that space for quite a long time, talking to people and really understanding what makes that place tick. That first year in Tottenham, 2014, from the outside looking in, we didn't do anything. We were just talking to people, or bringing artists in to talk to people.'*

Through these conversations, LIFT encountered ‘lots of artists – music producers working out of their bedrooms, choreographers, actors, designers – who were not connected with each other’. It now hosts quarterly ‘hang-outs’ where 60-80 people gather to discuss their work and the area.

## 2: Raising the profile of the area through programming

Increasingly LIFT seeks opportunities to programme work in Tottenham, for instance presenting Jérôme Bel’s dance work *Gala* at the Bernie Grant Arts Centre as well as Tate Modern and Sadler’s Wells. For Ball, these one-off projects raise the profile of Tottenham itself, create opportunities to raise the profile of LIFT’s work in less visible community settings such as schools, and contribute to the building of the artist community.

## 3: Organisational change within LIFT

Central to all this work is the thought: *‘It’s not just what we can do for Tottenham but what Tottenham will do for LIFT. It’s part of the thing about giving away power: at the end of the six years LIFT has to look and feel different.’*

This is already happening in three key ways:

- i. the governance structure now includes a Tottenham board, whose chair will be invited to join the main board.
- ii. LIFT is actively seeking to offer people in Tottenham paid opportunities: *‘A lot of the artists we’ve met, we’ve recruited to work on projects. And every time we are looking for freelance jobs or technicians, we start in Tottenham. That is already meaning our workforce is more diverse.’*
- iii. Crucially, LIFT doesn’t employ separate Tottenham staff. Instead: *‘Everybody from the executive assistant to marketing is involved in Tottenham. Our full board of directors meet there at least once a year. This is very time-consuming, it requires listening and patience and porosity, and within a sector where we’re increasingly focused on delivering targets, or overstretched, that’s quite hard. But this work is only successful if it’s not siloed.’*

## Challenges

Although dedicated to a single area, LIFT is still nomadic in Tottenham, in that it doesn’t have its own space there. On the one hand this presents a challenge: *‘Every space in the community is politicised, so whichever space you work in, you’re perceived to be buying into the politics of that space.’* But this is also an opportunity, in that it demands the forming of partnerships – and that collectivity can be profile-raising in its own right.

Profile-raising is particularly an issue when the arts media sees this kind of participatory practice as *‘worthy community work. We try and profile it very strongly, and one of the great things about this work is that it gives us a narrative on a year-long basis. But it’s hard to get arts journalists out of their box.’*

## What next?

Ball may be leaving half-way through the Tottenham programme, but LIFT itself is committed there until at least 2020: *‘This is an organisational commitment, it lives beyond the particular likes and dislikes of the artistic director. There’s always one of our staff in Tottenham on a daily basis: everybody in the organisation is engaged.’*

Over the next three years, he says, the organisation needs to think about legacy, in two ways:

### 1: Avoiding gentrification

Tottenham is going through a period of change, and Ball is aware of the negative impact that LIFT’s activities could have, in opening paths to private development. To challenge this, LIFT is one of a number of arts organisations talking to the local authority for Tottenham about the risks of short-term investment in local artists, and arguing the case for ‘long-term, low-cost accommodation for artists at capped rates’ to support a sustainable artist community there.

### 2: Evaluation

Already LIFT are working with external evaluators to build an evidence base of the impact of this work. This will help ensure that the programme is not ‘hermetically sealed’ and makes it possible for LIFT to share its experience in Tottenham with the wider arts sector.



## MIMA

**The Middlesbrough Institute of Modern Art (mima) challenges traditional ideas of what a museum is. Its mission is to be a 'useful' museum truly open for all with co-created programmes and displays.**

Middlesbrough Institute of Modern Art (mima), a showpiece glass-and-steel building in the centre of Middlesbrough, opened in 2007 and classifies itself as a mid-scale organisation: its turnover is roughly £1.5m, of which roughly half a million comes from Arts Council England, another half a million from Middlesbrough Council, roughly half a million is received in a combination of cash and in-kind support from Teesside University, and trusts, foundations and grants along with earned income build the rest in relation to specific projects. It has a staff of 23 with additional part-time project workers, and Alistair Hudson has been director since October 2014.

### MISSION: the Useful Museum

The conception of museums that Alistair Hudson has brought to mima is in direct contrast to much that has been written and thought about art at different times over the past 150 years, including: the idea that art is elitist, or accessory; the glamour of the market-driven modern art world; and the notion of the gallery as a safe-house for precious objects.

Hudson's notion of the 'useful museum' is rooted in his belief that: *'Art is fundamentally a process of change.'* It is one that functions as an 'art school for everyone', where: *'all people learn together this role that art has in society of transformation. That includes cooking, gardening, politics, housing, healthcare, everything. Once you start to get that message embedded into people's minds, that's when you stop them saying we don't need an art gallery any more, or we don't need art, or we don't need culture. Because actually you don't choose whether you have culture or not, it's just a question of what kind of culture you have.'*

Another phrase Hudson uses to describe his thinking is 'Museum 3.0'. In this technology-inspired characterisation: *'Museum 1.0 is where people come along and see the precious artefacts and become better human*

*beings for the experience. Version 2.0 is one of participation, people participating in art and participating in the museum, in education and community projects, but all these things work in support of that primary high-art agenda, it is participating in someone else's agenda. 3.0 is the user-generated version: working with our constituents, working with our users, to create the programme and the reason for the organisation's being.'*

Museum 3.0/the Useful Museum doesn't ask people to 'join the art in the museum', but asks the museum to *'join in with what's happening in the world, and demonstrating how art can contribute to some of the main social problems that we have'*. That contribution involves thinking about all aspects of life in the area, from housing to civic planning, regeneration to healthcare, and building collections and exhibitions that support that activity.

### Localism: an antidote to the blockbuster

mima's initial ambition was to present world-class, international art. Hudson's first move was to curate an exhibition called Localism, inviting the local community through an open call to tell the history of the role of art in Middlesbrough from 1830, when the town started, to the present day. But the exhibition itself was only one strand: simultaneously the galleries were *'activated as a community centre, as a space where you have public meetings, talks by local historians, people starting new pottery workshops, people making'*. This relates to the concept of a Centre of Social Making, *'where people come together to make workshops, but also to talk about how we make a society in more general terms: what do we do about low attainment of schoolchildren, what do we do about the issues of unstable communities, etc'*.

Localism shaped the blueprint for how mima now programmes, working closely with community groups not only to create temporary exhibitions that 'respond to current urgencies, and issues that are actually concerns of people on the ground', but to develop sustainable

resources for their daily use. Localism was followed by projects around the closure of the steelworks and around migration, the latter created in collaboration with the charity IPC (Investing in People and Cultures), who work with migrants and asylum seekers in Teesside. Building an exhibition with refugees led directly to a regular programme shaped with and for these constituent groups, offering a weekly free meal, a food bank, free internet access, bespoke ESOL classes, clubs including crafts, film and gardening, and more. In this way, the exhibition became a platform for advocacy and direct social action.

This methodology is now leading to the museum's engagement in questions of housing provision, community cohesion and wellbeing, working with the local council, private housing providers, the NHS and charities, to develop new approaches in each of these areas. In North Ormesby, an area characterised by generations of unemployment or low-quality work and poor living conditions, in which UKIP is strong, mima is already working with community groups and organisations to reinvigorate local cultural and community provision. mima has also approached private housing provider Thirteen Group to work with them to develop new models of housing and community care for older people. And Hudson has evolved the relationship with Teesside University, beyond the conventional model of university, to open up avenues of research and learning across all disciplines, and use the museum and its social projects as a platform for mutual learning: in effect seeing the museum itself as a social project.

The opportunity that has emerged from these changes is genuine international interest in the work mima is doing, with visitors from across the globe – New York to the Netherlands to Korea – coming to learn from its approach. *'mima always pushed itself as being of international significance but while doing the same as everybody else. What's nice now is that it is getting an international reputation mostly by being really local, and offering something more than what a place like this traditionally would offer.'*

## Challenges

Hudson admits that the seeming unorthodoxy of his approach creates challenges:

### 1: Structural resistance

The very design of the mima building, and indeed all museums, creates 'a hallowed, autonomous space in which 'the precious things' are detached from society'. This thinking, Hudson argues, 'is deeply engrained in the museum culture, in its behaviours, and to shake that off is quite a big task'. It also perpetuates narrow expectations among 'the traditional art-educated audience who expect art to be what they thought art was and isn't necessarily, who quite liked exhibitions of great art in a white room with not very many people in it'.

### 2: But is it art?

These lingering conservative notions of what constitutes art affect everything from how mima is presented in the media to how it is understood by funders. *'This way of working is not something that art commentators know how to write about: they're used to writing about an exhibition or a genius artist. A lot of energy is spent on trying to show people what you're actually talking about – but it's a (much older) story of art that is understood by doing in everyday life, not just looking in privileged moments.'*

## What next?

Before coming to mima, Hudson spent ten years at Grizedale working with Adam Sutherland on its *'evolution from a residency programme to getting the artists to do things that are useful'*, in the process transforming the life of the village. But whereas Grizedale is a village of 600 inhabitants, Hudson hopes to achieve similar effects in an urban settlement with a population closer to 200,000.

Anything innovative in his approach, he argues, harks back to the political activism and social reform of Victorian artist and thinker John Ruskin. *'I want us to be the agency that ensures that things are done with care and consideration and humanity and are generally successful for all sectors of the community: I think that's the role that art in its broadest sense can do. What's missing in a lot of public decision-making, whether it's business or social care or welfare or health or housing, all these things have been drained of any artistic competence, and that usually makes them perform badly. I see it as the job of art or culture to reenergise and rehumanise all these processes in society. And the idea is not for us to be doing this on our own but for that idea of culture to be embedded in all walks of life, to the point where you really get the ecology of a place working fully for all people.'*





## NATIONAL THEATRE WALES

**National Theatre Wales is based in Cardiff, although it stages productions across the country including in village halls and on farmland. It began life online in 2009.**

Unusually for a theatre company, National Theatre Wales began its life in May 2009 online, presenting its first staged work the following year. It has a core company of 17, its staff expanding with each production as creative, technician and stage management teams are recruited. Turnover similarly fluctuates dependent on the staged work, but on average is £2.8m, of which the most significant source of funding is a core grant from Arts Council Wales of roughly £1.6m, with a further 6% of public funding that is project-specific. Partnership and co-producer contributions bring in roughly 22% of total income, trust and foundations another 7-10%. Kully Thiarai has been artistic director since May 2016, taking over from founding director John E McGrath.

### MISSION: a focus on people and place

Like any theatre company, NTW seeks 'to make extraordinary theatre'. What makes it unusual is the way in which it actively works 'across Wales and beyond'. Kully Thiarai unpacks this as: *'a commitment to engaging with the broadest range of people, and trying to embed our relationships with community, so that we get to understand them and they understand us and there's legacy after a piece of work has been and gone'*.

All work is made collaboratively, 'with artists, audiences and communities, sometimes through long processes and sometimes through interventions that are very quick but are very particular around a theme'. And the work always begins with a conversation. That dialogue was initiated online: *'That the company set up a community online before it made its first show was a statement of intent in terms of what it is striving to do. You can make great theatre without dialogue, but it doesn't have the same resonance if you don't understand the context and the community that you're trying to connect with or speaking for or collaborating with.'*

It was this dialogue that attracted Thiarai to join the company: it reflected the values she brought to her previous role as artistic director of Cast in Doncaster, which also reflected her training as a social worker. *'My time at Cast was really about how that building could be the cultural living room for the town: that takes effort and commitment and a dialogue. You end up thinking about, not what you as an artistic director might want to make, but what is necessary at this moment for this dynamic and this bunch of people? Because why would anyone want to connect with the theatre when you feel that your voice or your story isn't present?'*

### A snapshot of activities

Three projects can give a flavour of how NTW operates:

#### 1: The Big Democracy Project

This three-year programme started in 2014 and was *'driven by a sense that we wanted to support active citizenship and make people feel that democracy was worth fighting for and being involved in. Communities raised questions about urgent issues that they wanted addressing, and we would find mechanisms by which to use the arts to explore those things.'*

The project had a number of outcomes, including a day-long event at the Senedd (the National Assembly for Wales) looking at several of the issues that had emerged, 'from disability to education and the austerity agenda'. Participants voted to select the most pressing issue – choosing austerity – and that generated a piece of work in Rhyl, pinpointed because: *'We wanted to look at what austerity might mean in places like Rhyl which were once thriving towns. What happens when cuts, or government policy, mean that they feel ignored? There's also the sense of austerity of the imagination when people are very impoverished or feel abandoned: what does that mean?'*

## 2: TEAM

NTW's extensive online community has a number of focused groups, through which members of the public are invited into a closer relationship with the company. TEAM is 'NTW's community leadership model of engagement, where we rethink what a theatre's civic responsibility is within the world we now find ourselves, and the role that NTW needs to play within that.' TEAM members – who include artists and community activists – apply to join TEAM panels, who meet every quarter to 'look at strategic things they want to try and achieve, and we work together to look at how we can make that happen'. A member of the TEAM panel is also nominated to become a NTW board member. Additionally TEAM members support dialogue and workshops in new communities, and help sustain long-term relationships: for instance, TEAM members in Prestatyn contributed to the work in Rhyl, as facilitators and community associates, roles for which they were paid.

## 3: NHS: 70

This new project for 2018, 'a love letter to the NHS', will involve dialogue with the entire country, gathering stories of people's interaction with the health service, but also looking at: 'the notion of big ideas coming in times of difficulty, and asking: where are the big ideas now? How do we have the big conversations?'

With all of this work, Thiarai is mindful of NTW's responsibility to support the local economy, 'ensuring that, in a country like Wales, where wages and levels of poverty are high, there is public benefit from any work that is being made'. Aside from TEAM members and the online community, NTW doesn't ask people to volunteer, but instead pays local people to take part in, for instance, ushering.

## Challenges

Primarily, being nomadic presents the company with 'a great opportunity: it means that we can be bespoke in our approach depending on where we go. We're much more porous as an organisation, because we need to have relationships and partnerships in order to succeed.'

It does, however, create challenges in two ways:

### 1: Always beginning

'Every time we do something, it feels like we're doing it for absolutely the first time,' says Thiarai. Even choosing where to focus attention is a challenge, and can be warped by simplistic questions of audience reach: 'There is an inherent tension in our practice, which is on the one hand to reach as many people as possible, and on the other hand to reach the parts of Wales that other theatres don't reach, which are quite often hard to get to and may have smaller numbers of people. If we made shows in

*Cardiff all the time we'd have access to much bigger numbers of people, whereas if we make it in the middle of a mountain, who will come and how do you make it possible for people to come who might have challenges getting there? We need to ask all the time where the work is, how we make it, who are we trying to make it for, why are we trying to make it in this place at this time.'*

## 2: Legacy

Working across Wales, it is difficult for NTW to maintain relationships – which is why the online community, and particularly TEAM, are so vital. One of the core values of the company is to be a catalyst, enabling others to develop and grow. NTW's core staff is too small to stay on in an area once a work is finished, but Thiarai is encouraged by the way in which TEAM members supported a women's centre in Rhyl in discussions about setting up its own drama group, following the show NTW made there. 'If you've done your job well, you've empowered people to feel confident enough to make things happen for themselves and their community.'

## What next?

To date, NTW has sought out new communities to visit, and this will continue. But it is also seeking to become embedded more deeply into communities. As part of this approach, the company is returning to communities, beginning with a revisit to Port Talbot, where it staged its early and spectacularly successful *Passion* in 2011. The aim, says Thiarai, is 'ongoing dialogue. Having made some extraordinary theatre experiences, we have an opportunity now to interrogate a bit more rigorously our relationship to people and place, as theatre makers but also as a nation.' She worries about capacity to deliver: the NTW core team is small, and 'we get a tiny amount of money in comparison to our national colleagues'. But she also feels supported by the fact that: '*We have a Cabinet Secretary [Ken Skates] who is trying to embed culture in every aspect of government, in terms of infrastructure, in terms of educations, in terms of the social fabric. It enables a conversation to begin across all of the government agendas, around economy, around wellbeing and health, around social infrastructure and questions of isolation, and about having a national voice and an international focus.'*



## ROUNDHOUSE

**A strong focus on disadvantaged young people is what sets apart the Roundhouse in Camden, North London.**

Reopened in 2006 following total renovation to the building, the Roundhouse has been in the charge of chief executive and artistic director Marcus Davey since 1999. It has approximately 125 staff, and a turnover of £12m, rising towards £15m depending on the commercial programme. Of that turnover, public funding of £950,000 accounts for less than 10%, while approximately £2.5m is fundraised through individuals, trusts and foundations, corporate relationships and events. All other income is generated through the building facilities.

### **MISSION: supporting young people towards a better future**

As one of the key mid-scale music and performing arts venues in London, the Roundhouse looks from the outside like a commercial operation – but on the inside, says Marcus Davey, *‘We run like a social organisation. The money we make from music gigs goes directly to supporting work with young people.’* Based in Camden, a typical inner-London borough in that affluence sits side-by-side with poverty, the Roundhouse is particularly focused on *‘working with those that are excluded, at risk or hard to reach: last year, about 60% of young people came from excluded, disadvantaged backgrounds’*.

Through a multiplicity of programmes, the Roundhouse ‘supports young people through their creativity to get a better future’. That might mean a career as a musician, or as a technician, or in arts management, or in another field or industry altogether: *‘Some have gone on to be policemen, electricians, plumbers, because of the skills that they’ve learned here that can be transferred, from time keeping, communications, responsibility, etc, through their own creativity.’*

### **A range of activities**

The Roundhouse works with more than 3,000 young people each year, giving 70-100,000 hours of contact time. Those from more affluent households know about the programme and would quickly book up all available slots, so places are deliberately kept free for young people who must be reached in other ways: ‘through word of mouth in community settings and housing estates, and working with schools, pupil referral units and homeless shelters in a very detailed way’. There are other differences between attendees: *‘Some of them might come at 11 years old or 18, or 25; some might come as real beginners and some might come on the verge of a career.’* And this is reflected in the range of programmes and activities available to participants:

#### **1: Open programmes and audition projects**

Most of the programmes – of which ‘about a third are in music, a third in performing arts, including spoken word, poetry, circus and theatre, and a third in the digital sphere of radio, broadcast and tech’ – are open to all, and on Thursday are also drop-in. These programmes might end in a performance or sharing opportunity. There are also audition projects, which look for commitment rather than experience or accredited talent: for instance, to join the Roundhouse Choir, *‘you don’t have to show that you can read music, but you have to show your commitment, your passion and that you can sing as part of a group. Roundhouse Choir has gone on to perform at the Proms, on Radio 3, Radio 2 and Radio 1, and was part of the Folk Awards last year – so an amazing level of quality from young people who a year before might not have been singing at all.’*

In addition, all work made in-house, including festivals and commissioned performance work, involves young people, which might mean *‘anything from performing in the participation project with the director of a show to making radio programmes to helping with the rigging or being involved in front of house’*.

Many of the participants in these activities go on to careers in the arts: Davey mentions that roughly 30 of the producers and presenters on BBC Radio 1 and 1Xtra are alumni of Roundhouse Radio, and several people working in British television similarly came through Roundhouse programmes. He also names Little Simz and Maverick Sabre as two of the music acts who emerged through Roundhouse studios.

## 2: Intensive training

For young people who are not in employment, education or training, the Roundhouse also offers very intensive training opportunities to small groups at a time, with a success rate of 85%.

## 3: Governance

Aside from the creative programmes, young people are invited to contribute to governance of the organisation. There is a Youth Advisory Board, and two young people sit on the main board of trustees.

Young people have become integrated at every level of the organisation because it is made clear to all employees that their roles involve collaboration and skill-sharing:

*‘Even if you’re in finance or technical or building maintenance, the first element of the job description says that we are an organisation working with young people and you’ll be expected to support that. When you get a hundred people like that, you make more possibilities happen all the time. We also merged the team that programmes the main space with the teams that work with young people, so it’s not split up into lots of little silos, they’re actually all working together.’*

## Challenges

The key issue that Davey identifies as challenging is communication, in two ways:

### 1: External: the paucity of the media narrative

*‘When you’re talking to the media about young people, all that many of them really want to know is a rags-to-riches story: young Johnny who was shooting cocaine is now a ballet dancer, that kind of story. And that’s dull to all of us because we see young people as what they will be, not what they were,’* says Davey. He prefers the stories of young people who come to the Roundhouse for an arts activity, which ‘unlocks their potential so that they can follow a career in the arts or in another field altogether’, translating the skills they’ve acquired.

### 2: Internal: competing with the commercial activity

Davey admits that the Roundhouse needs to be better at *‘communicating clearly about what we do. When you’ve got the brightest lights in the world – Lady Gaga, Jay Z, etc – performing here, they shine so brightly that everything else is dimmed.’* He feels many many young people already know what the Roundhouse is and does, but many funders and the wider public don’t – and that can be a barrier, especially in a political climate which traditionally, and at times still, has seen ‘the arts as soft, or a fluffy option’.

### What next?

Building on its governance activities, Roundhouse is looking at how it can involve young people on ‘all of our interview committees for important roles in the organisation’, and also achieve greater diversity across the organisation – in programming and in management alike.

Davey is also aware that ‘there are more and more young people who need support, especially those at the margins of society, those that are not in employment, education or training,’ and hopes to extend the Roundhouse’s capacity to accommodate that. Fundraising is about to begin for a new building on the site, with more studios and space for activities. And the Roundhouse is beginning to explore how it might expand into other areas, and share its practice, perhaps through a network of like-minded organisations. *‘We need money to achieve that expansion, and also we need to acknowledge among ourselves that we can lead in this field. If we’re strategic about it and set ourselves reasonable goals to hit, we can probably galvanise that.’*



## STREETWISE OPERA/ WITH ONE VOICE

**StreetWise Opera works across England with homeless people, using the arts to increase wellbeing and foster social inclusion. With One Voice is its global offshoot.**

Based in London but working with people who have experienced and/or are at risk of homelessness across England, Streetwise Opera was founded in 2002 by Matt Peacock, who is still its artistic director. It has a core team of seven full-time and eleven part-time staff, supplemented by 20–30 freelance support workers and workshop leaders. Turnover is roughly £900,000, for both Streetwise and With One Voice, a global network incubated within Streetwise connecting cross-disciplinary arts organisations that work with homeless people. It receives just over 40% of its income through public funding (it is an Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation), just under 40% via trusts and foundations, and roughly 10% through corporate sponsors.

### **MISSION: using music to make positive change in the lives of homeless people**

Matt Peacock was working for an opera magazine by day and as a support worker in a night centre when he first staged an opera with homeless people. Streetwise Opera emerged in 2002 from that performance. The charity runs weekly programmes in five urban areas in England, in Newcastle/Gateshead, Middlesbrough, Manchester, Nottingham and London, across which it works with approximately 700 people each year.

Peacock describes the charity's focus as two-fold: *'increased wellbeing, and increased social inclusion. Homelessness is not just about housing: if you've experienced homelessness, you've also often experienced a huge amount of trauma, and barriers that stop you moving forward. Homeless people, when measured on the national scale of mental health, are three times lower than the national average and seven times more likely to kill themselves. There's also chronic isolation, not only when people are experiencing homelessness, but when they've been rehoused. We work in enabling homeless people to*

*go into arts venues, to perform, to take part in workshops, to go on theatre trips – and that is often enabling them to say to themselves: if I can achieve this, what else is possible?'*

### **The programme**

In each urban area, the Streetwise Opera workshop is sited in two venues:

#### **1: A front-line homeless centre**

The partnership here might be between Streetwise and several other organisations: in Middlesbrough the centre is also used by the Middlesbrough Asylum Project and sessions are run in collaboration with Depaul UK; in Manchester, the collaboration is with the Booth Centre and Opera North. These open-access workshops take place at regular times on set days, for 48 weeks in the year, to offer homeless people a rare consistency: *'They're little islands of tranquillity, sometimes in a sea of chaos. We want them to be dependable, because everything can be changing quite a lot for the people we work with.'*

#### **2: An arts venue, including Sage Gateshead and mima**

This provides a progression route for participants, retains the engagement of people who have been rehoused, and has a further benefit: *'The arts venue is a portal to society. There's a physical and philosophical welcome for people going into one of these main institutions, and these organisations usually have a lot of other things going on as well, so we can introduce people to other groups happening there.'*

As part of both programmes, participants are taken to performances at opera houses across the country. Attendance always follows a period of studying the opera, and performing it themselves, so no one feels outside the experience.



There are also performances from the participants, on invitation (conferences, charity galas, etc), and in showings staged by Streetwise, which culminate every two years in a major opera in one of the five key areas. Although these are made in collaboration with professional teams, primarily the performers are non-professionals who have experienced homelessness: *'That's about showing our performers – and the public – that they can achieve great things. Streetwise aims for equal social and artistic quality in these productions and all have received four- and five-star reviews in the national press.'*

Although the aims of the charity are wellbeing and social inclusion rather than readiness for work, skills and employment opportunities do emerge through the programme, with participants accessing work placements in arts organisations across England.

## With One Voice international movement

In 2012, Streetwise took part in the Cultural Olympiad, working with international organisations similarly dedicated to arts provision for homeless people. This led to With One Voice, a movement building on those initial connections. *'We've found at least 200 organisations like Streetwise around the world, all totally fragmented. With One Voice is about us sharing: sharing best practice, sharing encouragement, talking about the issues we face.'*

Crucially, these things aren't shared only within the organisations: through With One Voice, Peacock organised a visit for a key councillor and policy makers from Manchester to Brazil, where With One Voice set up six choirs as part of the Rio 2016 Cultural Olympiad. He has also found ways to *'get people from different sectors talking around a table. When we've had people experiencing homelessness sitting with local government, politicians, arts practitioners, arts organisations, people from society, putting voices of people who have experienced the issue being dealt with at the centre of the conversation, there's an opportunity to change attitudes and more.'* Already this action has resulted in a shift in policy in Manchester in relation to homeless people and the arts.

This international perspective has changed Peacock's outlook, too: *'Art is embraced in some countries in a way that it's not embraced in the UK. In Brazil, politicians in social development talk about the arts being a human right, and being in the UN Charter of Human Rights. If art were regarded here as valuable and a human right, you'd start having conversations about how art can be good for society in general, and can contribute.'*

## What next?

Peacock now has three key ambitions for Streetwise and particularly With One Voice:

### 1: Every homeless centre in the world has an arts programme

*'It would solve a huge amount of issues, and benefit so many people. With One Voice's vision is a world where the arts are used to support and give a voice to homeless people everywhere.'*

### 2: Cultural spaces around the world have a better strategy for homelessness

With One Voice has commissioned two studies, around arts and homelessness globally, and around cultural spaces working with homeless people, to be launched in 2018. *'These cultural spaces are often in metropolitan areas, homeless people come in to use the toilets and the Wi-Fi, and there's absolutely no shared practice around this. That piece of work may result in some really useful guidelines for libraries, museums, galleries, concert halls, who are not homelessness experts but want to open their doors to be day centres almost.'*

### 3: Increasing the day-to-day value of the arts

In times of economic hardship, Peacock argues, it's even more important to see art as more than *'a diversion or entertainment. My dream for society is for the arts to be used more as a small but important part of the jigsaw of social welfare in general. It is part of everyday life, and if we begin to look at the whole of society with the arts as part of that, then very interesting things can happen.'*



## GOOD CHANCE

**Founded in the heart of the Calais refugee camp, Good Chance is now based in the UK. It is a nomadic theatre company collaborating with refugee communities.**

Established in 2015 as a site-specific response to the refugee camp in Calais, Good Chance is now a UK charity and nomadic theatre company collaborating with refugee communities. Founded by Joe Robertson and Joe Murphy, it has a full-time staff of three aided by six freelancers, and relies on the support of volunteers in every iteration of the project. Initially it was supported through crowdfunding, raising £45,000 in its first public campaign; as a charity it received £250,000 in its first year, but spent closer to £300,000. Funds are raised through trusts, foundations and individual donors, many of whom were refugees themselves, and are now successful in arts industries and investment.

### **MISSION: temporary theatres of hope**

At the height of the refugee crisis, British theatre-makers Joe Murphy and Joe Robertson visited the 'Jungle' in Calais and discovered *'a city basically: about 8,000 people, from about 25 different nationalities, mostly Sudanese, Afghan, Eritrean, Kurdish, Iranian, Iraqi, but also Egyptian, Kuwaiti, Palestinian, Mali, Pakistani, Somali, Mauritanian. There were churches, mosques, restaurants, legal centres, community leaders, a library, an unofficial women and children's centre: really everything you would expect of a city.'*

Although there wasn't an arts centre or theatre as such, they also found art in abundance: *'There was a need to express, and a need to come together. It wasn't so much people telling their story, it was more this is a song or a joke that I remember from home. And there were pockets of performance all over the camp: some people had drums, some people did rap sessions. The music was vibrant and vivid in spite of the terrible conditions, but also because of the conditions: every single person was in a phenomenally strange situation and therefore had to find a way of expressing something about their position. An atmosphere of creativity existed which wasn't just*

*artistic but entrepreneurial: every night people were trying to get across the Channel, and during the day they were building restaurants, shops, houses, and a sauna that people were charged €2 to go in.'*

These encounters forged Good Chance, a charity and theatre company that builds *'temporary theatres of hope in places where a need for expression is not met, aiming to bring people together and foster understanding through art and theatre. It's welcoming people, irrespective of nationality or gender or ethnicity or religion, celebrating cultural difference, and finding ways that different artistic traditions and styles can be in dialogue.'*

### **A spirit of togetherness**

In every aspect of its work, Good Chance seeks to delegate and create space for participants' expertise. 'We try and create a practice that really is all of us: we bring a dome – we build it together.' The dome in question is a geodesic structure that embeds the metaphor of togetherness in its construction: 'each pole works together'. And the invitation is for a refugee community to create it together, inside and out.

Calling it a theatre is important to the company in this respect: *'A theatre doesn't just need art when you're building one. You need benches, you need perhaps a little bit of food, you need music – there are lots of skills that are welcomed by a theatre. We could have called it an arts centre or a community hub but the original idea to call it a theatre is a slight provocation, the idea that you could have a theatre in a refugee camp. Theatre for us has always been somewhere you can go to be safe, but also to have unsafe conversations.'*

## Place-making with the placeless

Even while Good Chance were based in the Calais refugee camp, *'we realised that we were doing something that wasn't just specific to Calais: it was humanising a situation that was being spoken about in a difficult way, and that model could be applicable to other situations that are not well understood'*. Following the partial eviction of the Jungle in March 2016, the Good Chance theatre in Calais was dismantled and brought to London for a nine-day festival: *'That was dictated by the people that we were working with, because lots of people reached the UK and they were people who were artists or who became artists. So we thought: let's take the theatre to the UK and let it be run by these people, and see what happens.'*

Following the second, major eviction of the Calais camp in October 2016, many refugees found themselves in Paris – where Good Chance followed in January 2017. *'If you take the Jungle away from Good Chance what you're left with is people coming together in a culturally neutral space where there is permission to perform, to listen. There is an emphasis on getting involved if you want to, but you can also sit and watch or go in a corner and draw. That's still important in places where there are people who don't feel they have an ability to interact or integrate in a profound way.'*

The Paris iteration of Good Chance runs to a similar model to that developed in Calais: effectively, it offers a platform for volunteering artists to *'do a week of workshops. The expectation from our side was that this would be a challenging week, filled with pretty much anything you could imagine in a theatre – whether you were good at it or not. The week was a great amount of time: enough to get to know people, but not so much as to demand the kind of emotional commitment that would be lost when they left.'* These workshops adhere to a set schedule, because the lives of the refugees using the space *'are so chaotic and changeable we feel that it's important to have an anchor'*. In Calais, many evenings offered a communal event, whether film night, spoken word or music performances; and in Paris, each Saturday ended with *'The Hope Show: a variety performance, with a focus on sharing what had been made throughout the week, from incredible artistry to people doing ridiculous things like chicken impressions'*.

In Paris the schedule has developed to offer *'different stations inside and outside the theatre, with things like carpentry, or sculpture-making, or cooking, or drawing, while theatre workshops happen in the theatre. It's important that a theatre welcomes people with different skills.'*

## The challenge of bureaucracy

Although becoming a charity has afforded Good Chance the opportunity to access funds beyond the donations of well-wishers, it has also brought significant challenges – particularly in the area of evaluation. The company's work *'doesn't fit into an evaluative structure that we're aware of. How would you evaluate the feeling in a workshop when you've got all these different people together improvising? How do you evaluate the change in people from when you meet them in the morning in the street or in the refugee welcome centre and you say do you like music, do you want to come to this, to in the evening when we walk back with them and say, we'll see you tomorrow? We can't give out a survey, or even get people to press a smiley face at the end of the day, because it would fundamentally change the whole idea.'*

Not having answers to those questions is *'a good, interesting challenge: we're determined to press forward something that does fulfil those obligations but doesn't change what we know to be true about the way that we're working. Because we can't do that and remain responsible to the people that we work with.'*

## What next?

Recognising that the refugee crisis will be ongoing for years to come, Good Chance argue for the need to *'question how we welcome people into our towns and cities and villages and rural places, and make the best of everyone's skills and talents and personalities'*. Initially the company intends to travel to other cities facing similar issues to Paris, including Athens and Istanbul; but it also dreams of creating a home for itself in the UK: *'A building entirely run by refugees and migrants where people who arrive can go and be listened to and then if they want to stay on and run the place. And then that building builds domes where they're needed in other places, around the world.'* These theatres might reach out not only to refugees but all *'disadvantaged people'*.

To push forwards the company needs not just money but *'great volunteers: artists who are courageous, responsible, sensitive, who want to explore the world and learn new languages and culture. We need people to do this in their own communities or other communities and to be fearless about building something that brings people together. People can really do it, but for some reason feel like they can't.'*



## RUIDO PHOTO SPAIN

**RUIDO Photo is a photography agency but also a non-profit organisation specialising in human rights issues.**

Established in 2005 in Barcelona by a group of photography students, RUIDO Photo is a photography agency but also a non-profit organisation specialising in human rights issues. Three of its co-founders – Edu Ponces, Toni Arnau and Pau Coll – remain as associates, working with two employees. Money earned through publication of images in the media is supplemented by funds raised via foundations, national grants and EU funding.

### **MISSION: revealing stories to inspire change**

As described by Edu Ponces, RUIDO is a photography agency with a difference: *'We not only produce the photo stories, we assume the responsibility for making those stories public, because we want our photos to change something in the real world.'* Over the years the organisation has expanded the tools it uses to tell those stories: as well as selling images to mainstream media like a classic agency, it also publishes its own literature and produces exhibitions – particularly outdoors on city streets. This has been necessary because: *'We think that part of our job is not only to produce the journalism but also to be the media. Our experience of trying to make this kind of work in the media is that it's almost impossible. We found a wall. And when you do work there, you're not doing the kind of photography you want to do. If you want your work to have a good effect, you have to take responsibility, because the media are not doing that.'*

Doing so has required the group of photographers to develop multiple additional skills: *'We had to learn how to write a project, how to talk to donors, how to get the money to do that, and after that how to get results, how to influence people. Now we work 25% of our time doing journalism and 75% of our time doing all these other things. But when we are doing the stories, that 25% of our time, we can do things in the way we want. You don't have an editor saying no: we make all the decisions based on*

*our journalistic interest.'*

RUIDO has also become an NGO, although not one that relies on volunteers: *'We are non profit but work like a professional team: everybody in RUIDO receives money, but we can only receive money for our work on the projects. All the money we earn when we publish our stories in a newspaper goes to RUIDO, to invest in other projects.'*

### **New methodologies**

As students, the founders of RUIDO were 'interested in the classic values of photo journalists – ideas coming from the Vietnam War photography or these kind of stories that changed things in the real world'. As the collective has pursued this path, it has developed three distinctive methodologies 'to make that idea real':

#### **1: Street exhibitions**

Inspired by JR, a French artist who creates huge installations using photography in public settings, whether Parisian streets or the wall between Palestine and Israel, RUIDO developed its own strand of street exhibition, not only locally in Spain but in Mexico, across Central America, and in US cities including Miami. As Ponces argues: *'We are not interested in a public that goes to an exhibition in an art museum; we want to reach the common people, not the art market. We don't want to be alternative, we want to be popular – our responsibility is to be popular, because we want our message, our work, to reach a lot of people.'*

The next step with these exhibitions is to learn how to evaluate impact: *'We are trying to be more professional with this, for example creating verification tools, questionnaires for people going to our exhibitions.'* The group has also worked with a specialist consultant to learn new ways to be 'more effective in the street'.

## 2: Long-term projects

Those exhibitions draw on an embedded photography practice that might see a single story pursued for two years. *'Our main topic in RUIDO is migration: we've worked for two years on the migration route from Central America through Mexico to the United States, travelling with the migrants, talking about the motivations for migration, the violence or medical reasons that make all those people want to go. We try to understand the whole story: we don't want the news, we want to explain the phenomena.'* In addition to the street exhibitions, this specific project resulted in stories published in Central American and US media, speeches delivered in migration think tanks in Washington, and a documentary film, which *'we tried to show in the States because we think it's important for the people there to understand what's going on with the people coming'*.

More recent projects have focused on the journeys of refugees from Jordan to Greece and from Western Africa across the Mediterranean. Again, with this work the street exhibitions are being supplemented by additional activity: *'We have infographics, we have maps, and when we go somewhere and put an exhibition in the middle of the main square of the town, we also offer workshops to the schools or to the different associations there, because we want to fight the hate speech that is becoming common in some media in Europe.'*

## 3: Work in prisons

Another member of RUIDO, Pau Coll, specialises in *'fotografia participativa, participatory photography'* specifically in prisons, giving cameras to prisoners and inviting them to *'make a story with guidance'*. Coll has been pursuing this path in three prisons in Catalonia for over seven years, and Ponces describes that project as progressing from making *'portraits because the prison authority didn't give authorisation to take photos of anything in the prison, to making the first documentary film made inside prison, filmed by the inmates'*. That documentary went on to win an award at the 2017 DocumentaMadrid international festival.

## Resistance

All of this work faces the challenge of political resistance. Coll's prison activities have been curtailed, says Ponces, *'because the prison authority is not very happy with our work. When the inmates talk to the camera in the documentary they say there's a lot of drugs here, we had a problem here last week because I was beaten by another inmate – and the prison authority were uncomfortable with that.'* While stories exposing, for instance, violence in Central America are *'not easy to publish, not easy to show to the people, because the stories are not easy. But we prefer to do that and fight that resistance: it's important.'*

## What next?

Ponces feels optimistic because the collective now has a workable professional and paid organisational structure. *'People come here to the office and say: how is it possible that you earn money doing that? The old market for photo agencies is disappearing and their future as a business is black because the big newspapers don't have money any more. And for us, the future looks well because we are not only doing the kind of photography or the kind of journalism we want to make, we also have a viable business model.'*

Even so, he describes money as a *'problem'*, because RUIDO's team still needs to expand. It now includes a fundraiser, but *'we don't earn enough to have other roles here in the organisation. I take photos, I design the projects, I write the projects, I go to the meetings with the donors, I also give the speeches – there is a limit to that. So we need other kinds of professional, because with a bigger team you can think bigger.'*

The intention is not for RUIDO to work differently, instead to *'do the same but better. We have to get a better relationship with the main media – because it's not doing one thing or the other, I think we can do both. Also we have more work to do taking our campaigns to other countries, especially in the US and in Europe beyond Spain.'* Although Ponces confesses to feeling frustration on seeing photographers with more conventional, solo careers progress faster than the RUIDO collective, he and his colleagues remain committed to the belief that: *'When you walk alone you go fast but when you walk within a group you go far. And we want to go far.'*





## PELE PORTO, PORTUGAL

**Based in Porto, Portugal's second city, PELE works with community groups, in prisons and with deaf communities to make theatre and multi-disciplinary art.**

Based in Porto, Portugal's second city, PELE works with community groups, in prisons and with deaf communities to make theatre and multi-disciplinary art. Funded on a project-by-project basis since it was established in 2007, it hasn't yet developed a paid organisational structure, and so all operational work is conducted on a voluntary basis. It is led by Maria João Mota as president and co-founder Hugo Cruz, who assumes the artistic direction of most projects.

### **MISSION: using art to empower communities**

For the first five years of its life, PELE was seen as doing strong social work, but felt to be instrumentalising art. It wasn't until 2012, when the company first applied for national arts funding, that its work was 'recognised by the artistic context too'. That shift, say Hugo Cruz and Maria Joao Mota, has been 'really important: the aesthetic of our work has been strongly empowered on an artistic level'.

But PELE's directors do describe the arts as 'creation instruments' – and point out that many people, particularly those at the margins of society, such as 'prisoners, deaf people, or the most vulnerable and peripheric communities, usually don't have access' to them. The company uses performative arts, especially theatre, with the participatory, dialogic tools of Augusto Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed as its ethical inspiration, 'to empower the individuals and the collectives of more vulnerable communities, to promote participation and citizenship'. It works with these communities over long periods of time, not only to create performance but to encourage social change, as well as offering training, and programming a biennial festival.

As the company's work has developed, its dialogue with communities has changed, such that: *'We have a less paternalist logic. We think the people know about things, and the people make change in the process.'*

### **Ethics and aesthetics**

All PELE projects, regardless of the community participating, begin in the same way: *'with the question, what do you want to say? The artistic process starts from that question – and we are committed to be truthful to the answer, and deal with that consequence.'* It also begins with the company building relationships with the institution(s) relevant to that community, *'creating conditions and working on the end of the project from the beginning, because the idea is to create continuity. We cannot work for social transformation, or social change, if we only think about one show, one experience. So there is always this balance between the group and the institution, and being ethical and truthful to both.'*

Each project will have 'a core group that is the centre of the creation and with whom we spend a lot of time, sometimes one year'. And those core groups will have one of three contexts:

#### **1: Prison**

PELE oversees projects in three different prisons, working with incarcerated people to create performances and documentaries, and where possible bringing that work to the attention of a general audience. Initially, this work was met with resistance, but time and trust has made 'the relationship with the guards more flexible, so we're able to work with bigger groups'.

## 2: Deaf communities

A desire to establish a dialogue through theatre – which it describes as ‘a universal language’ – between deaf and hearing people led PELE to begin working with the Deaf Association of Porto in 2008. The partnership has generated several performances as well as a local deaf theatre group.

## 3: General communities

Moving across the city, PELE makes large-scale participatory theatre projects – sometimes gathering and integrating up to 100 people from across a community – with the intention of building legacy. A two-year project starting in 2009 with a social housing neighbourhood generated ‘a number of actions and allowed us to work with different groups: social workers, teachers, the staff of all the different institutions, families, young people and women. After participating in the project, the people that live there created an association for that neighbourhood.’ Although its funding was cut, PELE continued the project, in particular maintaining its collaboration with one of the women’s groups.

Another project, MAPA, made in 2014, drew on other long-term collaborations with community groups PELE had already been working with for more than a year. Staged at the National Theatre, it inspired one group to create a cultural association, through which ‘people have been working with music and theatre in a more autonomous way, also in their community. And we have been working with this institution since, which allows the work to have that continuity.’

## Challenges

In all its work, PELE faces three key challenges:

### 1: A lack of core funding

Although the company’s work is ‘really distinctive, based on the ethics and on the aesthetics of the processes that we’ve developed’, it is also ‘hybrid: we are not a traditional artistic company, and we are also not a social institution’. This creates difficulties in terms of funding – with the effect that the company receives no core or continuous funding, while the directors are paid only for their work on specific projects. The financial shortfall is made up in voluntary work, both ‘to give continuity to some projects’, and to fulfil ‘all the logistic and general work of the organisation’.

## 2: Traditional attitudes

Institutions, PELE argues, have a ‘*traditional logic – and when you make artistic creation, you make another kind of logic in the world. You think and you feel and you construct, you make the impossible possible, and this is very strange to traditional situations. Our work is not wholly artistic and community: institutional change is also our work.*’ As an example, when PELE first approached the National Theatre with a presentation of a prison project, it raised ‘some questions and issues that the theatre was not used to, and the negotiation was more difficult, because this kind of work doesn’t quite fit in their frame-work’. By the time the company returned to stage MAPA there, with a cast of 100 people, that change had taken place: ‘we felt it was a mutual negotiation process – there was a huge difference in all the staff’.

## 3: Political resistance

Over the decade, the company has become ‘more publicly political, because we feel that it’s a way to empower the groups’. As a result, ‘*social institutions have felt that our work was too much, too much in every level, especially the political engaged level. We don’t have any support from the local political power – consciously they are friendly but unconsciously it is not the kind of work they want. Our work is not partisan but it is politically engaged, and at the moment in our city they want everyone to agree. Maybe because of that they feel that we will say some things or do some things that are not good for the image of the city.*’

## What next?

At present PELE is in a period of reflection: having existed on ‘lots of high energy and a big necessity to make complex actions’, it is slowing down, and looking at the outcomes of its work as a way of deciding what to do next. ‘*We did a book about art and community, and began to think about what is important to PELE. We’ve realised that we cannot be responsible for everything: we are a small, small part in the process of change. We have to think more about the consequences of the work that we are doing. We will start going forward, but we need to focus on what’s important and strategic for us, and the conditions we need to do that work.*’



## DEEP CENTER GEORGIA, USA

**Deep Center in Savannah, Georgia, USA is a dedicated writing centre for young people from disadvantaged backgrounds.**

Founded in 2008 as a literacy organisation by local writers, Deep Center in Savannah, Georgia has developed into a dedicated writing centre for young people from disadvantaged backgrounds. Its staff of nine – five full-time – have been led since 2014 by executive director Dare Dukes, and work with a team of 26 volunteers. Its budget is just over \$500,000 dollars: some is received from local individuals, local family foundations and local corporations; some is received as national grants, from instance from Georgia Council of the Arts, Ford Foundation, and the Mellon Foundation; and some is federal money via the National Endowment of the Arts.

### **MISSION: helping young people to be confident learners and powerful agents in their communities**

Deep Center's mission is a direct response to its social context: Dare Dukes describes Savannah as 'an extraordinarily conservative place: politically, socially, racially. The society here has 27% poverty, with 39% of people under the age of 18 living in poverty, and this disproportionately impacts people of colour.' The rate of gun crime is high, and 'the juvenile justice system has more court-involved youth than any other county in Georgia – not because the kids are bad, but because we have a culture of over-sentencing our young people.' This affects the mainstream media narrative around young people, which 'is almost always about crime'.

The result, Dukes argues, is 'a pernicious culture of blame around young people of colour'. And Deep Center exists to 'disrupt the entrenched racist, classist narratives about young people from low-income communities, both for the people who hold those ideas, and for the young people themselves, who often internalise them in harmful ways. We're trying to create a space where young people have a chance to think about those representations, and to think

*about who is saying them and why, and think about how true or not true they are in terms of their own experience. We're giving young people eyes to see the structures that are negatively impacting them, to realise that their position in the world is not necessarily their fault. And then we're trying to put them in places where, using creative writing, they can speak back to power, and be part of the conversation when people in power are making decisions about them.'*

### **Activities: a ladder to creative leadership**

Most programmes in Savannah designed to 'solve' problems related to young people and crime are, says Dukes, 'usually talking about controlling bodies: let's have a thing at a certain time of day where we could put those young people. They're not talking about the prerequisites to helping a young person to thrive.' Similarly, youth leadership programmes are 'often about teaching kids how to conform, or be respectable'. By contrast, Deep Center works to inspire 'creative leadership, using self-expression as a way to speak back to power'. It does this through a staged programme that becomes more focused and intensive as the participants age:

#### **1: The Young Authors Project**

This introductory-level programme, designed for young people aged 11-13, takes place in schools, after school hours. Workshops are run by two trained volunteer teaching artists, who are themselves creative writers, and supported by 'an English language arts teacher, who is our volunteer liaison for that school'. The project offers 11 weeks of programming, to a curriculum, with 14 children per workshop. The focus is '*assets-based creative writing: we're really assuming that the young person has everything that they need to thrive, we are just there to help them tap that and create opportunities for them. We tell our teaching artists that they should be listening 80% of the time that they are in the workshop, and that they are there not as authority figures but as co-writers, to learn with the young authors and to share their work. We*

*encourage the young people to use their own life as primary text, and we don't censor them in terms of content or language, as long as they can justify the choices that they are making.'*

The project features not only writing but 'a revision process, aiming towards publication', and a closing party, in which participants read their work to each other and 'vote on the most fearless and vivid writing'. The winners from each workshop then perform at a live event called Deep Speaks, open to the entire community.

## 2: Block by Block

Dukes initiated this intermediate programme for 14-18-year-olds as a way of holding on to the young people who most connected with the Young Authors Project. It 'takes the assets-based approach to the next level: young people are learning how to identify stories and then also doing ethnographic research, looking at the institutions in a neighbourhood, and interviewing people'. Those stories are then written up 'in whatever genre they want'. Participants 'all heavily identify as writers' and receive 150 hours of programming.

This project also culminates in a party event, but Dukes' primary aim is to 'create opportunities where our advanced writers can be having a conversation with the people who are creating policies that are harming their communities'. For instance, in 2017 participants attended an annual community safety forum on the subject of youth sentencing, reading their 'powerful poems specifically related to sentencing in Savannah to a room full of cops and parole officers, and juvenile court judges'.

## 3: The Youth Leadership Team

The newest tier of the programme invites the eight most advanced participants in Block by Block 'to meet with the staff to give feedback on the programme, so we can have youth participation in decision-making for the programme'. They are also invited to go on 'leadership trips', including taking part in a spoken-word festival in San Francisco and attending an activist centre in Tennessee.

This project relates to wider work taking place within Deep Center addressing the composition of the board, to ensure representation of poor communities, people of colour, and LGBTQ+ people. This is important, says Dukes, because: *'Deep needs to be a "we" organisation, not an "us/them" organisation.'* Such thinking doesn't necessarily come naturally at an organisational level, not least because: *'the assets-based framework that we use is the opposite of the missionary mindset, which is prevalent among non profits in the US. The missionary mindset assumes that the people you are working with are broken, and there is almost no conversation around the structural issues impacting these communities. We have conversations about how to break down privilege, how to*

*be asset-based when we are talking about what literacy means, how to recognise that though young people may not know the Queen's English, they have their own literacies that are of value.'*

## What next?

At present Deep Center is based in a public library, but Dukes' ambition is to create *'a centre where people can come and use creative practices as a way to do research about, and then offer solutions about, some of the issues in their communities. Creative writing and art do a uniquely good job of bringing people into a space and getting them talking in hard, risky ways about hard topics.'* That centre would be 'an intergenerational space', where youth and adult stakeholders can research and write about complicated community issues, which he feels is important not only for dialogue but for adults to realise how skewed their ideas about young people are.

Dukes also hopes to expand the Block by Block programme, 'so that we can have shorter spaces and workshops where youth and invested community leaders are using creative writing to investigate very particular topics', for instance, policing. And he expects to continue to expand the leadership strand, creating 'more pathways for the young people in our programme to connect with regional and national groups'. All this requires money, however – and: 'It is extraordinarily difficult to raise money for this kind of work.'



## BELARUS FREE THEATRE

### BELARUS

**From its London base, Belarus Free Theatre challenges the social restrictions of dictatorship in its homeland – and of democracy elsewhere.**

Belarus Free Theatre was established in 2005 by human rights activist Natalia Koliada, her husband Nicolai Khalezin, a journalist and playwright, and theatre director Vladimir Shcherban. The company still creates and performs new work for underground audiences in Belarus, where it employs five core staff and a permanent ensemble of over 10 actors, but the risk of imprisonment rising from its political activities led its three co-founders to flee the country, along with actor Aleh Sidorchyk. They are now based in London, working within a staff of 7.5 FTE. In 2016, BFT's turnover was roughly £975,000, of which £65,000 was received from Arts Council England, £240,000 was earned income, and a significant percentage received as grants from international human rights and democratisation funders.

### **MISSION: taking on personal and societal taboos**

Given its founders' backgrounds in activism and journalism, it's no surprise that Belarus Free Theatre are drawn to 'create theatre on taboo subjects'. Since its inception in 2005, says Natalia Koliada, the company's twin mission has been 'to say whatever we think, whenever we want, wherever, with whoever, by means of the theatre' – and to ensure that, in response, its audience does not remain silent.

It's not merely exile that has encouraged the company to look beyond the political situation in Belarus. As Koliada says: 'The moment you take a story out of a global context it loses its value. It's necessary to think broadly and understand that everything is interconnected.' Its methods of challenging the status quo, whether upheld by a dictatorship or democracy, have led it to be 'recognised as the leading campaigning theatre company in the world', with an ability not only to tackle 'personal and societal taboos' but to generate change.

### **Activities: entertain, educate, activate**

Belarus Free Theatre's work falls into three interrelated categories:

#### **1: Producing 'high-quality art'**

Just because the company's staged work challenges social issues and human-rights abuses across the globe, doesn't mean it can't be *'entertaining. It's not necessary to put a tough message right into your face: we put it across in a very engaging, participatory form, asking our audience to participate in different ways. We truly believe that audience are not bystanders: they're active participants, same as the people who are on stage.'*

A variety of means are employed to create that sense of active participation, including opening up space for dialogue during and after the performance, and *'solidarity parties, where we'll bring DJs and our whole crew will spend time with the audience just dancing and talking, so we have a serious conversation but then have fun together. In Minsk we make shows that are dinners: our audience is talking with our actors and they eat all together, and this is the whole show. This is what we're starting to do in London, through dinners engaging theatre and audience in conversation on specific topics and their solutions. When the audience understand that we talk about issues that they could share with us, that creates a fantastic dialogue.'*

Independent evaluation of this work in London suggested that audiences were not only receptive to such conversation but felt its lack elsewhere: *'They said it was the first time when they felt engaged in conversation, not by a panellist preaching to them from a stage, but requested to say what they think.'*



## 2: Giving artistic and pragmatic tools through education

The company's work began with education: says Koliada, this is how 'we discover taboo subjects and find the weak points within the governmental system'. This learning not only inspires stage and activist work: it also encouraged the company to create its own 'two-year universal artists model', a curriculum it teaches in Belarus and, in edited form, 'in the best universities around the world'. Students learn 'artistic qualities, such as writing, performing, directing, staging' alongside 'marketing, targeting an audience', and 'cultural geography', looking at the social systems operating in different countries. Plus, 'we give them citizen journalism, so they're able to capture original content and distribute information on their own. The whole system of education has to be changed, to give mobility to artists and make getting into direct contact with audiences much easier.'

## 3: Campaigning

Both the theatre and education strands have a common goal: 'systemic change. Very often we're asked, do you believe that art can make a social change? Yes, we do, otherwise we would not do it.'

The company engages in political conversation: 'we talk to politicians and ask them to use their mechanisms to put pressure on other politicians, in order to bring a systematic change'. It also initiates direct action: for instance, on discovering that in Belarus blind people are not allowed to audition for arts institutions, it placed a piano in front of the Academy of Music and held guerrilla auditions there instead. After four years of such activity, that law was changed. Similarly, Koliada is now creating 'the first show in Belarus with the participation of disabled people', as part of an ongoing conversation between the company and diverse bodies that has already forced the government to provide public toilets for disabled people, where last year there were none.

In the UK, Koliada has been surprised by the extent to which 'people don't know about the many violations of human rights here. For example, we've recently been working to develop new projects in Tower Hamlets, where 17% of households live on £15,000 a year, and do people care? Do they even know? A huge obstacle is how to educate audiences in reality, without spoon-feeding them all the time.'

## The funding challenge

Working within a dictatorship and a democracy gives Koliada an unusually broad perspective on the financial challenges theatre companies face: *'Under a dictatorial regime, the price for saying what you think is your life. Under democracy, the price for sharing your thoughts and tackling the system is losing funding. In both cases you will be banished, because when an arts organisation stops getting funding, that is the end of its existence. It's easy for big organisations to say, we're OK for now, we have funding – but it doesn't work like that, it will come to everyone. How organisations defend each other has to be a joint position of the whole industry. It is a very known technique from resistance movements in different countries that when you do it jointly it's not possible to destroy all of it; when you do it on your own, then definitely you will be destroyed.'*

She describes funding applications as 'like writing a PhD: it's a very specific language that is used in order to tick all boxes'. This is particularly a problem for young artists, she argues, who aren't experienced in that language, skewing access to public and private money towards bigger, building-based organisations.

## What next?

The company are themselves 'looking for a building in London, because back in Belarus we have a daily space where we teach students, where we perform, where we have dinners together, and this is what brings results. We want to replicate that model of engaging people at different levels, the education model that we know works, and engage people in artistic stunts campaigning for their own rights in their own boroughs: we want to show that it's working, and that it's possible to build up that community.'

The hope is to create a space in which performance-makers, audiences and theatre critics can be brought together to talk to each other: *'That will create results when people understand that they are respected and their opinions are taken into consideration – and then you replicate that model into society.'*



## YIRRAMBOI FIRST NATIONS ARTS FESTIVAL AUSTRALIA

**An indigenous lens is brought to every aspect of Melbourne, Australia's YIRRAMBOI First Nations Arts Festival.**

Established by the City of Melbourne as the Indigenous Arts Festival, with a first outing in 2012, YIRRAMBOI has been led since January 2016 by director Jacob Boehme, who brought the change in name. The festival's staff of seven are employees of the City of Melbourne, which is also the major sponsor of the event. Further funding is received through Creative Victoria and federal government funding for indigenous languages and arts programmes.

### **MISSION: indigenous leadership, indigenous ideas, indigenous processes**

Jacob Boehme didn't found the Melbourne Indigenous Arts Festival himself, but his sense of how best to 'showcase Indigenous arts in the city, to inspire participation and to develop the next generation' is transforming it into not just a showcase of art but 'a philosophy, a driver', particularly for cultural change. Feeling that the festival he inherited operated to an outdated model, he immediately changed the name to YIRRAMBOI, 'in the local languages', and constructed a set of 'key principles' around leadership and process.

Indigenous leadership – Boehme's own heritage includes Narangga and Kurna people – is vital, 'so that we can practice and endorse indigenous authority and decision-making over every part of this business, and so that we are in charge of how we represent, what we present, and to whom'. Another principle focuses on 'visibility and dialogue, because perceptions of indigenous arts could be better: we're relegated to the spiritual story tellers using lots of dots and digeridoos and we're more than that'. Making that more visible requires attention to 'new working ideas, in terms of process: we have over 60,000 years here of performance-making and methodologies, but because our main stages and galleries are

*programmed by non-indigenous people, the content and the form is compromised to feed a certain paradigm or a certain narrative'. Boehme also prioritises 'international collaboration and exchange'.*

All of this work leads towards a single goal: 'to provide space, and to facilitate that equitably'. Boehme resists describing this work as innovative, preferring to 'think of everything we do in terms of integrity and honesty. As long as it has integrity and honesty then I think that's worth fighting for.'

### **Structural change**

From leadership to communication around the programme, Boehme's focus with YIRRAMBOI has been to dismantle hierarchy. Within the festival programme, that's visible in the choices he's made to prioritise 'interdisciplinary experimental work', in an attempt to challenge 'perceptions of who we are, what we do, what we look like, what our stories are going to be'. But behind the scenes the same impulse plays out in three notable ways:

#### **1: The elders council**

Indigenous authority is now central to the festival thanks to a council of elders established by Boehme. 'My staff consult with them constantly, so everything goes through a cultural lens before it goes through an arts administration lens.'

#### **2: Streams of activity**

A visit to the YIRRAMBOI website offers, not a list of main events with subsidiary participatory activities, talks, etc, but five 'streams that you enter through. In our culture there is no such thing really as visual art or dance or theatre or music – they're all elements of storytelling. Everything is interconnected and that's the way we put those streams together, so that you can tap into and through as much as you want of your free will.'

### 3: Spaces for development

As conceived by Boehme, these spaces are two-fold: within the festival programme, it's possible to see work in development alongside finished work, because 'the making process is just as important as product'. This creates opportunities for Boehme to keep YIRRAMBOI active between festivals, and facilitate opportunities for artists beyond once every two years.

This also becomes a potential site for development of dialogue between artists and audiences, further supported by a *'critical discourse model, which is for artists and audiences to develop language around what they've just experienced. In terms of culturally informed dialogue and critical perspectives I think that's going to make a huge impact, not only for non-indigenous people in the way they perceive, but within. I've seen a couple of bad habits in the language indigenous artists have used to describe themselves in marketing copy: it's tired and perpetuates myths.'*

### Challenges

Boehme admits that implementing these changes, and putting 'our voice front and centre at every decision' has been 'a daily fight, because of fear: that unproven fear of losing power and authority and control'. He acknowledges that Melbourne council *'have been very brave, because I've come in like a tornado and said: it's happening like this and you're going to have to trust me, because otherwise everything remains the same. We're at the perfect point where we can be taking some risks because there's nothing left to lose.'*

He recognises that the barriers arising from fear are *'not only within the non-indigenous world, but within the indigenous art sector as well. We've lost so much cultural knowledge that any scraps remaining are held on tight.'* He is particularly resistant to a 'cultural tourism' that avoids talking about colonisation, or inherited trauma. So while *'People expect the traditional elements, we just want to smash perceptions.'*

### What next?

As the festival builds, Boehme hopes it will become a 'stomping ground, the meeting place for first nations from all over the world. A destination that people make pilgrimage to, to look at, to share cultures, to share art, to dream the future.' His sense of 'mob' (first nation peoples) is global: artists at this year's festival hail from the USA, New Zealand, the Pacific islands, PNG, Taiwan, Canada, Wales, Scotland, and Zimbabwe. And he's already in conversation with institutions in those countries about *'reciprocal hosting. That has been another mission: while the world builds walls and bans people, we need to leave the gates open, we need to force our gates open so you and I can meet.'* Finding 'allies and accomplices' is important to him: *'This industry is so built around strategic relationships and partnerships that we need people of like mind, people that want to achieve the same visions, or if not the same, similar.'*

But the social changes Boehme is trying to initiate through YIRRAMBOI are about *'more than just indigenous shows on a stage. I would like to see a republic, a treaty between our country, our government and the commonwealth. That would ensure that the question of an equitable share of power and authority was on the table.'*



## IDEAS FACTORY BULGARIA

**Ideas Factory in Bulgaria emerged from grassroots activism. It believes in art for social impact.**

An extensive community of creative thinkers, ‘fabricators’ and volunteers, Ideas Factory is led by a core team of eight, including co-founder Yanina Taneva. Mostly its work is funded by project, via a variety of European grants, although it also benefited from six years of effectively core funding from an American foundation.

### **MISSION: creative thinking as a social glue**

Ideas Factory came together in 2007 as a grassroots activist organisation. Its initial impulse, says Yanina Taneva, was to campaign against *‘illegal building in a protected area on the Black Sea coast. We created a big network of artists and creatives to respond to this, and it worked so well, we turned it into a movement that could serve for any other problem or challenge: environmental, or challenges to our values of democracy and participation.’*

A decade on, the group is still ‘inventing, trying to figure out how to really work’. But central to its practice are a belief in ‘not only art for the sake of art but art for the sake of impact’, and *‘innovative solutions that change the centre-periphery dynamics, centralising the quality of human relations. We try to create the social glue that connects different disciplines, generations, cultures, cities, peripheries, areas, spaces, people, ideas, through mixing a wide palette of approaches and all kinds of creative and design thinking.’*

### **Activities**

Ideas Factory has three main programmes of activity that Taneva describes as ‘the synthesis of what we would like to be our message to the world’:

#### **1: Granny residence**

Inspired by the richness of Balkan culture, which ‘we are losing as fast as bio-diversity’, Ideas Factory identifies villages across Bulgaria ‘that are cut off economically and culturally, where there are challenges but not enough resources, and local people who would carry on ideas’. It runs an open-call application process to recruit artists who will live for a month with the elderly households of those villages, ‘creating together, in participatory manner, using design thinking, technology and anthropology approaches’. The matching of artist and local population is a sensitive process: ‘the rural culture is very different to the urban one, also some of the villages are Muslim villages, and they have a different culture’. Selected artists are given ‘a very experiential learning-focused training on how to develop empathy, not to go to the village with ready ideas and wanting to help these old people, but to create this humble attitude of service and co-creating’.

During the residency, the artists collaborate on ‘activities that the local people need, that maybe the village thought were not possible, really researching the communities and some of the resources that these villages have as a historical cultural heritage’. Results of these residencies vary according to those discoveries: in one village Ideas Factory crowd-funded the recording of *‘43 songs that were about to be extinct because the elderly women in the village are the last ones to sing that very traditional way. All the money from the CD is going back to them, so they are able to travel to festivals and show what they have as a cultural heritage.’* In another village, a bakery closed following a conflict between the Muslim and Christian communities was reopened after 15 years: *‘Our people motivated them and also dedicated a*

*lot of voluntary hours to clean and restore the old bakery and so on. It was the first time in 15 years they had local bread, and that has a lot of cultural value for the people – more than the bread as a physical thing.'*

These outcomes are economic, but also emotional: *'The first and most important impact is that the elderly people feel visible. Because they felt totally invisible: it's a traditional culture, very humble. When we go to a village, very often they say you should have been here five years ago, because we already lost so many things.'*

## 2: Social innovation challenge

So far, Ideas Factory has initiated this activity in nine cities, working with partners in each to identify 'challenges that local organisations, society groups, grass roots, artists and citizens frame as design-thinking missions'. Participants register for the challenge, with anyone from '17-year-old students to a 63-year-old teacher participating on the same level'. But they can choose only one of the place they will work or the topic of the mission, not both, so it's 'sending people somewhere out of their comfort zone'. Arriving to the challenge at midnight, participants have three days to *'solve a challenge that has been a social problem for a long time. It's important to us that the solutions are clear and convey democratic values as well as creativity and innovation, so at the end they turn into sustainable organisations or groups or companies that keep on with the work.'*

Instances of successful challenges include a group of IT developers working in a Roma ghetto to discover ways of achieving economic emancipation from the local mafia: 'They created a mobile accelerator for small business, in order to support and amplify the results of the local craftsmen and the local resources.' Another group, of architects, became so passionate about a challenge to maintain Bulgaria's thermal springs that they formed 'a social activist group, and a whole strategy about how citizens can reclaim the thermal resources, participate in decision-making about them, and turn it into innovative financial and social and cultural models'.

## 3: Empathy-driven change

This programme works with local communities to *'connect practitioners working for empathy or participatory methodologies through art, culture or social interdisciplinary projects all around the world. It's an important opportunity for exchange: it's not a conference, it's sharing practices, not through talking about it but through experiencing it.'* Having this sense of wider connection is vital to a small organisation in a country 'very much oppressed by corruption'.

## Challenges

Ideas Factory does not think of itself in isolation in pursuing these activities: 'We're building a really big community of individuals that are interested in changing the way things are.' That collaborative methodology widens opportunities, but also creates two key challenges:

- 1: 'So much is happening that it's hard for us to track the impact.' Whether it's the activities of alumni from its 'change-makers academy', or the invitations extended to collaborators (for instance, the mayor of one region invited an Ideas Factory collaborator to establish a new 'department for social innovations'), Ideas Factory lacks the capacity to trace the permutations of its work.
- 2: The work is 'economically marginalised' in the wider infrastructure of the country, lacks resources generally, and isn't personally lucrative for anyone involved: 'The work is an investment in the common good and it's not possible to have that all paid back.' That makes it harder to maintain a stable team, one that can build on activity rather than constantly be in a place of beginning. *'People get really fast burn out and that's how we lose a lot of potential in the field. We need organisational development, because it builds the resilience of those people. An idea can come and go but those people are the ones that really you need to invest in.'*

## What next?

For Ideas Factory to thrive – and among its ambitions is extending the Granny residence programme across the Balkans and Mediterranean into Africa – it needs to build its financial resources. Already the group have commercial activities planned, including renting out space in its small hub, and offering training and services to businesses. But Taneva believes a fundamental change is needed, and describes that as: *'a system of trust. Very often cultural innovators are marginalised because they don't fit that well in the existing system. Bureaucracy is basically a way to describe fears when, instead of embracing innovation and the unknown, you just want to be secure. What's needed is an environment of trust: a system that allows innovation to emerge, not to plan it but to let it grow, over different institutions and sectors, and individuals and companies. We need a new complex of values in order to go further.'*





## FORKLIFT DANCEWORKS

TEXAS, USA

**Forklift Danceworks is a participatory dance company which creates dance projects with a diverse range of communities, including sanitation workers and guide dog owners.**

Forklift Danceworks was founded by choreographer Allison Orr in 2001, the name signalling her interest in machines and the movement of everyday work, and in collaborating with the different communities of Austin, Texas, her home town. The company has a core staff of three – apart from Orr, a managing director, and a second choreographer, Krissie Marty, who is also director of education – but also employs artists, composers, stage managers, production designers, etc for individual projects. It raises most of its funds through individual donors, supplemented by arts funding received via the state tourist tax, and some federal funding.

### **MISSION: activating communities through a collaborative creative process**

When Allison Orr first started creating participatory dance works, her interest was less in civic engagement than in *'making compelling and memorable and impactful dances. I felt that the way I could do that was to work outside of the studio with people who were expert movers and to show the often invisible labour of everyday life. But the feedback we've gotten from collaborators is: this project has changed the way I think about my fellow employee, or the way I think city residents see us, or the way I think about my job. We now think of ourselves as playing in the world of civic engagement, because of what our collaborators taught us about what the works do for the city.'*

The company's mission has formulated in response. Previously it referred to transforming communities, but now Orr understands it more as *'leveraging the creative process to support communities to activate themselves, in a way that they determine needs to happen. The idea is*

*that we use the dance-making process to support the community to build connection, build understanding, advocate for itself on its own behalf, be heard, be witnessed, feel more agency, feel more hopefulness.'*

### **Principles**

Orr's primary interest is in 'the invisible choreography of labour that powers our city. We are very connected whether we notice it or not.' She aims for her work to *'give people a look into how their cities function, and how their lives operate on the backs of the work of so many other people. And we're really working to activate all kinds of people in relationship to how they see each other and how they see themselves as part of an interconnected group, or an interconnected community.'*

The company has a 'broad definition' of community. On the one hand it might mean a city department: 2009's The Trash Project, for instance, was made with refuse collectors and their vehicles, and was 'pivotal' for the company in terms of its artistic success and appeal to audiences (the remount of the show, in 2011, reached upwards of 4000 people). On the other it might mean a neighbourhood: 2014's Play Ball was made with the African American Cultural Heritage District and celebrated a historic baseball field, encouraging the company to work 'not only with movement but also the story of a place'.

Whoever the community, all Forklift's work shares some common principles:

#### **1: Authentic relationships**

Forklift tends to design and lead the fundraising for its projects, shaping their creation from the beginning because: 'It takes a really long time to authentically build relationships with a community.' Orr might spend a year doing so with a group – and in that time will avoid using the word dance. *'When I'm working with certain groups of*

*folks, dance can be quite a terrifying word. I also have learned to not talk much about the final show at the beginning, but to spend time listening, asking questions, just learning about the work and gaining trust.'*

## 2: Communal expertise

Orr's choreography works on the principle that *'everyone is inherently creative, and that all people deserve access to the creative process. We're working to reveal the extraordinary in the ordinary, finding inspiration in the stories of everyday people. We're certainly not the only experts in the room: we want to value the role that we all play together.'* Having built trust with a community, she searches for 'great movement material: expertise, ease of movement, where somebody is doing something embodied, and you can really sense their presence and their love of it'. She choreographs from those movements, relying on the community members to 'help guide how the actual dance is put together. They are giving the choreographic solutions, and they really are the experts.'

## 3: The performance as the middle of the process

Rather than work towards an end-product, Orr seeks to 'use the performance as a catalyst to garner greater public support and understanding behind city issues'. Currently Forklift is working with the Parks and Rec department in Austin, specifically looking at the city's swimming pool system, and is *'trying to use this project as a way for the public and city staff to deepen understanding of each other and the issues surrounding pools. Ultimately we're trying to impact policy, by listening long enough to know what the community's really wanting, to see how we can impart some tools or experience that then would allow them to go after those things.'*

## 4: Staying connected

Part of that forward thinking involves staying in contact with community groups after the performance ends. A positive development in Forklift's practice has been a shift towards communicating publicly about its work in the company of its collaborators: *'If I'm speaking at a conference I'll bring a sanitation worker with me or somebody from the power company. The way we make the dance is very much a conversation and a collaboration, it's not just my story alone to tell.'* Forklift will also return to job sites and community sites to 'relive' performances, sharing a meal with participants and their peers, and inviting the performers to tell the story of the show back to those who didn't take part.

## Benefits for all

Although Orr admits to facing logistical difficulties in Forklift's work – from the burden of fundraising to the bureaucracy of city departments – she suggests the challenges she faces are less pronounced than for 'other choreographers who work in more traditional ways. I feel like I'm doing it the easy way and I don't understand why people don't do it this way.' Collaborating with working-class people, 'folk who do critical labour that is often invisible or overlooked', gives her a clear appeal to city departments: *'They want the true story of their employees to be told, and we can help them do that in a very unusual and different way. But it has to be about: what am I going to do for you as a community? What are you going to get out of it? What will that benefit be?'*

An insistence on reciprocal benefit has made Forklift 'a little more confident about what the dances could do civically – and more confident that this process of art-making is just as meaningful or viable as a strategy, as master planning or policy groups or whatever else a city does to solve problems or tackle issues. We get people talking that wouldn't know how to talk to each other any other way.'

## What next?

Orr's ambitions are less for Forklift itself than for an entire culture shift. *'Wouldn't it be great if the city were trying to solve a problem like traffic, or housing, and they had their typical consultants and they had an artist? When a city pulls together a planning team, I'd like to see them pull together artists, and artists push ourselves to think in these ways. We have to try to sit down with city staff and say: in five years, how would you like things to be different? And really think about how we could design a project that would address what they're saying their needs are. Through the creative process, we could offer a means to create understanding and dialogue that would be just as useful, or possibly better even, as other means that cities have figured out to engage.'*

# ANNEX 1

## PHASE 1 RESEARCH AND CONSULTATION

Phase 1 of the Inquiry research and consultation comprised a series of interlocking strands of activity.

- King's College London prepared an initial literature review
- We established an Advisory Panel of 32 and an International Reference Group of 11.
- The Institute of Cultural Capital (ICC) conducted research including a literature survey, Delphi Workshop and online survey.
- Our engagement partner What Next? supported four local area studies and three artist commissions, ran 11 workshops and their chapters around the country hosted discussions about civic role.
- The RSA ran two workshops with their Fellows and also hosted a large consultation conference on 8 December 2016.

The **Institute of Cultural Capital (ICC)** undertook a literature review; a Delphi analysis of expert opinion to develop a set of conceptions of the civic role of arts organisations. These were tested in 13 workshops and discussions run by the RSA and What Next? and via a survey that had 148 responses. The survey also asked arts organisations about their current engagement with the civic to create a baseline for the evaluation of the inquiry.

**What Next?** as the engagement partner worked with their 36 local chapters across the country. Each chapter discussed the ICC conceptions of civic role in one of their meetings and provided comments.

**The RSA** disseminated information about the Inquiry to their fellows and held two workshops. They also hosted the Phase 1 Inquiry consultation event on the 8 December 2016, attended by 177 delegates.

### Workshops

Between July and November 2016, What Next? organised 11 workshop discussions across England which 220 arts and civil society practitioners attended. They brought together different groups to discuss the civic role of arts organisations: their conceptions of it; issues and themes and examples of inspiring practice.

Date	Location	Cohort	Chair
27 July	London	Younger People	Sam Cairns
12 Oct	Hull	Hull	Dominic Gray
24 Oct	Derby	Derby	Sean Gregory
31 Oct	London	Local Authorities	Andrea Stark
2 Nov	London	Education	Andrea Sullivan
7 Nov	London	Older People	Sir Stuart Etherington
9 Nov	London	Artists	Hannah Bird
14 Nov	Newcastle	Newcastle	Andrea Stark
23 Nov	Canterbury	Canterbury	Mark Williams
25 Nov	Bath	Bath	Tracy-Ann Smith
29 Nov	Redruth	Redruth	Lizzie Crump

## Local area studies

As part of the research four What Next? chapters ran local area studies examining arts organisations' work in:

### Sunderland

The Sunderland deep dive looked at the current role of arts organisations within the city and their future responsibilities. Through eight round table discussions with organisers and participants in the arts in Sunderland they explored the different roles which arts organisations can fulfil and how arts organisations can influence, participate in and shape Sunderland's civic agendas on issues such as health, education, inclusion and diversity.

### Nottingham

In Nottingham the local What Next? chapter extensively studied the local arts and civic infrastructure and eco-systems. Nottingham is in the process of developing a Cultural Framework and Investment Strategy for the next 10 years and the local area study added to the evidence base. The local area study was delivered in partnership with Nottingham Trent University and included desk research, case studies, three public debates, interviews with key thought-leaders in the city and a local literature review.

### Great Yarmouth and Lowestoft

Great Yarmouth and Lowestoft focused on consulting with arts and wider civic players on what they wanted the future civic role of arts organisations to be. A new board game 'Artopoly' was created as a way of exploring cultural asset mapping and interviews were conducted with a range of local stakeholders.

### Basingstoke

The Basingstoke study looked at the strong links between arts organisations and the local authority that have been built over a number of years and how they have led to arts organisations taking a lead role in developing the Arts Strategy for the borough. The local area study, which included one-to-one conversations and group discussions as well as feedback captured from the general public participating in local cultural activity, linked to the development of this strategy.

## Artist commissions

What Next? ran three artist commissions with the brief of creating work that engaged underserved audiences with the Inquiry:

### Deborah Mason and Rebecca Manson Jones, Aylesbury Estate, Southwark, Sticking Together

A joint commission using crafting, listening and action learning techniques to create a conversation about how/whether arts and culture could or should open up public debate and involvement in civic processes, captured in a multimedia collage for public display and online – a people's manifesto for civic life.

### Sally Tonge, Shropshire, Cake and creative conversations – pop up and playful dementia cafés in unusual settings

Hosting dementia cafés in new civic venues to have enjoyable, creative conversations with people living rurally with dementia and their families, friends and carers. The aim, by sharing songs, stories and memories, was to find ways in which local venues and arts promoters could more effectively engage them in meaningful activities.

### Kyle Walker (Creative Experts, Contact), North Manchester, What Next? – North Manchester

Creative Experts engaged with groups of 10 young people from North Manchester over six weeks to explore how young people from the area felt about the civic role of arts organisations in their local community, and how they thought their communities could benefit from arts organisation engagement. The outcome of the project will be a documentary film.

# ANNEX 2

## ADVISORY PANEL AND INTERNATIONAL REFERENCE GROUP MEMBERS

### Advisory Panel

Tony Armstrong	Locality
Maggie Atkinson	Chair, A New Direction
Maria Balshaw	Whitworth Art Gallery
Andrew Barnett	Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation
Jerrell Barnwell-Duhaney	Contact Theatre
Michael Buffong	Talawa Theatre
Deborah Bull	King's Cultural Institute
Mary Cloake	Bluecoat
Lorraine Cox	Arts Council England (Panel Observer)
Stella Duffy	Fun Palaces
Stuart Etherington	NCVO
Doreen Foster	Black Cultural Archives
Diana Gerald	Book Trust
Shaks Ghosh	Clore Social Leadership
Dominic Gray	Opera North
Sean Gregory	Barbican
Polly Hamilton	Blackpool Council
Steve Hodgkins	Police and CEO, Jobs Friends and Houses
Hilary Jennings	Happy Museums
Lucy Neal	Happy Museums
David Jubb	Battersea Arts Centre
Teasha Louis	The Agency
Caroline Mason	Esmée Fairbairn Foundation
John McGrath	Manchester International Festival
Lucy Ribeiro	Arts Director, NHS
David Robinson	Community Links
Jenny Sealey	Graeae
Tracy-Ann Smith	Diversity in Heritage group
Andrea Stark	Foundation for Future London
Andrea Sullivan	Bank of America Merrill Lynch + Arts Impact Fund
Adam Sutherland	Grizedale Arts
Sydney Sylvah	The Agency
Mark Williams	Heart n Soul

### International Reference Group

Jamie Bennet	ArtPlace	USA
Jacob Boehme	Melbourne Indigenous Arts Festival	Australia
Pascal Gielen	European Cultural Foundation	Netherlands
Paul Heritage	People's Palace Projects	Brazil
Tommi Laitio	Executive Director of Culture and Leisure, City of Helsinki	Finland
François Matarasso	Writer	Europe
Risto Nieminen	CGF, Music Department	Portugal
Diane Ragsdale	Independent consultant	Netherlands/USA
Graham Sheffield	British Council	UK
Daniel Silver	University of Toronto	Canada
Russell Willis Taylor	Independent consultant	UK



# ANNEX 3

## RECENT RELEVANT POLICY PAPERS

### 2017 Election Manifestos

Culture was referenced in all the major parties' manifestos for the 2017 election. The Conservative manifesto specifically linked the value of cultural assets with the vitality and prosperity of towns and cities.

### Culture White Paper

The Culture White Paper, published in March 2016, outlines the government's view of culture's role in our society. Key themes include increasing participation in culture, ensuring that cultural sectors contribute to local economies across the whole of England, and building on existing initiatives to increase our international standing.

This paper surveys the many different and important values of cultural activities, classified as intrinsic, social or economic: 'cultural participation can contribute to social relationships, community cohesion, and/or make communities feel safer and stronger. Research has found positive links between cultural participation and improved social skills and engagement with the wider community, and evidence that culture can play a role in tackling crime.'

The paper announced several flagship policies including a Cultural Citizens Programme to create new cultural opportunities for 14,000 young people from disadvantaged backgrounds concentrating on 70 areas where cultural participation is lowest. The experimental Great Place Scheme (currently being piloted in England) challenges local decision-makers to put culture at the heart of local planning, and to use it as a tool to support jobs, economic growth, education, health and wellbeing.

Building on the 10-point philanthropy plan for culture launched in 2010, the paper also highlights the value of mixed funding models, specifically referencing the Arts Impact Fund which provides repayable finance to arts organisations in the UK.

### Museums Review

The Museums Review seeks to evaluate the role of museums in the cultural sector and, in conjunction, the role of the government in supporting museums of different scales. The review, to be published in 2017, will concentrate on improving and diversifying participation, enhancing soft power and developing resilience in the museum sector.

### The Tailored Review of Arts Council England

In April 2017, the Department for Culture, Media and Sport published a review of Arts Council England, evaluating its efficiency, effectiveness and corporate governance. The review concluded that 'Having built up its reputation over 70 years, many stakeholders felt the Arts Council was currently at a "high point" in its history'.

At the same time, it made a number of recommendations, including that Arts Council England develops a clearer definition of its 'development agency' role to complement its function as a funder. The report suggests investing in more local partnerships, promoting learning between sectors, and collaboration with diverse experts, beyond just the arts and culture sectors.

Other recommendations include:

- strengthening its place-based approach through creating more local partnerships across England;
- showing leadership in assessing the outcomes and impact of its funding, including a focus on the different impact that projects will have on diverse audiences
- working with other relevant grant giving bodies to share expertise and best practice.

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## A SELECTION OF PREVIOUS CALOUSTE GULBENKIAN FOUNDATION (UK BRANCH) WORK IN THIS AREA

**1959**

### ***Help for the Arts***

Better known as the Bridges Report after its chairman Lord Bridges (Churchill's wartime cabinet secretary). This report mapped what a recovering Britain needed artistically.

**1965**

### ***Making Musicians***

This report was an investigation into the professional training of musicians. This inquiry was chaired by Sir Gilmour Jenkins, a former Permanent Secretary, and Vice President of the Royal Academy of Music.

**1968**

### ***Community Work and Social Change***

Pioneering researcher Dame Eileen Younghusband was behind this report, which shaped an environment where social work and community work is taken seriously.

**1975**

### ***Going On Stage***

Lord John Vaizey and Huw Wheldon chaired this inquiry into a vocational training programme for actors, following concern at the haphazard way in which so many trained for and entered the profession.

**1976**

### ***The Arts Britain Ignores and Support for the Arts in England and Wales***

Naseem Khan's *The Arts Britain Ignores* considered the cultural issues linked to the racial tensions Britain was experiencing. *Support for the Arts in England and Wales*, or the Redcliffe-Maud report, looked into how far Britain's infrastructure had developed since the Bridges Report in 1959.

**1982**

### ***The Arts in Schools***

Ken Robinson's report became a key document for those advocating to keep imagination and creativity in education.

**1988**

### ***The Economic Importance of the Arts in Britain***

This highly influential report explored the need for regeneration following the industrial restructuring of the 1980s.

**1990**

### ***Moving Culture***

This report increased public understanding of the creativity contained in what was dismissed as consumerist youth culture. It triggered a successful campaign to restore a nationwide right to public funding for dance and drama students.

**1993**

### ***At the Heart of the Community Economy***

This report set up the principle of social enterprise. Author John Pearce argued they should be recognised in the law and special assistance given them to achieve sustainable local development.

**1997**

### ***Use or Ornament? The social impact of participation in the arts***

Francois Mattarrasso's book demonstrated how participation in the arts has social benefits including personal growth, community development and social cohesion.



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