'*We did stir things up*'

The role of artists
in sites for learning

Researched and written by Emily Pringle

Arts Council of England
14 Great Peter St
London SW1P 3NQ

T 020 7333 0100
F 020 7973 6590
Textphone 020 7973 6564
www.artscouncil.org.uk
enquiries@artscouncil.org.uk

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Biography

Emily Pringle trained as a painter and worked for several years in gallery education as an artist delivering workshops. She subsequently became the education coordinator at Chisenhale Gallery in London. More recently she has completed a number of arts education research and evaluation projects and is currently working towards a PhD at the Institute of Education. The provisional title of her thesis is *The Practitioner as Teacher: The role of the artist within gallery education.*

Contents

Foreword

The transformative nature of creativity and participation in arts activity is advocated by this Government. Alongside this, there is considerable interest in life long learning and the contribution the arts have to wider political and social agendas. The Visual Arts Department's 'Artists in Sites for Learning Scheme' (AiSfL) supports artist-led participatory arts projects in a range of cultural and educational settings. It seems timely to look at the role of artists within participatory arts initiatives such as these.

This research uses the scheme as the starting point for an enquiry into the creative practices and pedagogic approaches of artists working in this area. As the literature review indicates, there is little related published work to date. Where it exists it tends to focus on artists working in formal education settings, and the emphasis is on outcomes for participants. Where there is a broader context in terms of the sites for learning, the focus is on issues around social inclusion and sometimes the management of such projects.

This is one of the first attempts to explore the role of the artist and the development of a particular area of arts practice. It is important to note here that because of the nature of the AiSFL scheme, the artists interviewed are all interested in socially engaged participatory practice, therefore any conclusions the report draws do not reflect participatory arts practice as such. Although the research mainly focuses on visual arts projects, it raises issues relevant to practice across the arts and related disciplines.

The brief was to explore the 'forms of engagement' that occur between artists and participants. Forms of engagement we took to mean the nature of knowledge and experiences that were being shared between the artists and participants. The interviews provide an insight into the artists' practice. The artists discuss fundamental issues to do with the nature of teaching and learning. Many talk about their own education and training, representing diverse career paths, which has not always prepared them to work on these projects. One of the key conclusions which the author Emily Pringle arrives at relates to the conventions of the art world for a practice which is process based; there are major issues about how the final product is valued by an art audience.

My thanks go to all the artists who generously gave their time and responded passionately to this enquiry. In particular I would like to thank Emily Pringle, whose collaborative and thoughtful approach leads to the unravelling of an intriguing and expanding area of arts practice. The Arts Council is committed to promoting artists work and I look forward to opportunities in the future to explore further the role of artists in participatory arts projects.

Vivienne Reiss
Senior Visual Arts Officer, Arts Council of England

Executive summary

Background

The Arts Council of England's 'Artists in Sites for Learning Scheme' (AiSfL) supports visual artists working in a range of places and situations. The scheme, which has been running since 1996, aims to extend educational practice and promote access, enjoyment and learning to a diverse group of identified participants. The role that artists play in this scheme is multifaceted and the nature of the 'teaching' the artists undertake during these projects is equally complex. To date there has been little research addressing these issues.

The intention with this research has been to explore the various roles the artists play and investigate the **'forms of engagement'** between artists, participants and others, which occur within AiSfL projects. The research has not attempted to investigate the nature of the learning experience for participants in the projects.

Methodology

The use of the term forms of engagement was an attempt to acknowledge the complex relationship between the artists and participants, since it was recognised that part of the research's remit was to problematise terms such as 'teaching' and 'learning' to understand the extent to which this form of practice challenged existing ideas.

The particular research questions were addressed using a qualitative approach, since what were being explored were individual artists' perceptions of given situations. Data collection was done primarily through in-depth, semi-structured interviews with artists who had completed a project funded through the AiSfL scheme. These artists were chosen to reflect as wide a range of working practices, art forms and client groups as possible.

These interviews are reproduced in edited form in the final document to accurately reflect their dialogic nature and also the collaborative experience of the practice under investigation.

The literature review

To locate this research in context and to demonstrate what existing research exists in this area, an extensive literature search has been carried out. The range of literature referenced reflects the cross-disciplinary nature of this

practice, since relevant texts are to be found in the literature on education, art history, critical theory, artists' writings, project evaluation documents and government research and policy documents.

What is apparent from this literature is the complexity and broadness of the area under investigation. Existing research has identified that artists working in a range of sites for learning are engaged in a variety of creative and pedagogic activities. Descriptions of their activities suggest they exemplify good 'teaching' practice, particularly in relation to creative and collaborative teaching and learning. Writers have also identified that artists can be politically and socially motivated, engaging in 'collaborative' activities to empower particular individuals or communities. The existing literature also indicates that artists function as role models and researchers in terms of how they approach their own working practice.

The literature has also revealed that any investigation into this form of practice raises wider questions concerning the role and purpose of art and the artist in society and the ways in which creative individuals and practice can be 'educational'.

Forms of engagement – understanding the artists' role

Analysis of the interviews has revealed particular key themes, which reflect the nature of the artists' involvement with the participants and the creative and pedagogic activities they are engaged in. These can be summarised as follows:

The artist as educator

◆ Within the AiSfL projects, the artists work with the participants to develop the latter's individual creativity and encourage them to critically reflect on their activities. The teaching of specific techniques or craft skills is perceived as secondary and necessary mainly to enable the participants to better realise their ideas in visual form.

◆ The artists engage with participants primarily through discussion and the exchanging of ideas and experiences. There is evidence of 'co-constructive' learning taking place, whereby shared knowledge is generated and the artist functions as co-learner, rather than knowledge being transmitted from the artist (positioned as infallible expert) to the participants. The artists also promote experiential learning, with an emphasis on giving participants the opportunity to experiment within a supportive environment. The artists see the restrictions of the curriculum and timetable as prohibiting teachers from working in this way within schools.

The artist as collaborator

◆ The artists recognise the value and importance of collaboration within projects of this nature, but are aware that this is not always possible or desirable. Key issues include the extent to which the artist retains control over the process and the final products, and the final ownership of a work that is produced collaboratively. This in turn is affected by how and whether projects, such as AiSfL ones, are assessed according to purely artistic criteria.

The artist as role model

◆ The artists embody a critical and conceptual 'problem-solving' approach to making art and this is how and why they perceive they are able to engage with participants in the same way.

◆ The artist engages with the participants as a mentor or role model in three interrelated ways: first by exemplifying a profound level of engagement with their own practice; second by demonstrating their own particular working methods and critical and creative approaches; third by embodying the concept of 'the successful artist'. The pedagogic model of apprenticeship is relevant here.

The artist as social activist

◆ The artists consider they have a responsibility to address social and political issues and to enable the participants to articulate issues that are important to the latter group. The artists seek to give 'a voice' to the participants and to encourage their broader critical and reflective thinking.

The artist as researcher/enquirer

◆ The artists have acquired their skills and knowledge through their own education, but also through their individual creative and life experiences. There is no set career path that these artists have followed. Equally, the relationship between the artists' individual creative practice and their collaborative, community-based work is complex, with some keeping the two activities separate and others combining them. Within each form of creative/educational practice, however, the artists are engaged in a process of 'enquiry'.

Introduction

The Arts Council of England's 'Artists in Sites for Learning Scheme' (AiSfL) supports visual artists working in a range of places and situations. The scheme, which has been running since 1996, aims to extend educational practice and promote access, enjoyment and learning to a diverse group of identified participants. The role that artists play in this scheme is multifaceted and the nature of the 'teaching' the artists undertake during these projects is equally complex. The intention with this research has been to explore these various roles that the artists play and investigate the 'forms of engagement' between artists, participants and others, which occur within AiSfL projects.

From this initial exploration, the research aims to gain a greater understanding of the particular form of practice within artist-led visual art projects, which, by definition, embrace both creative activity and pedagogy. A perceived lack of analysis or evaluation of the artists' role has focused this research on the meaning and significance that particular activities have for the artists involved. Hence the emphasis is on the 'teaching', rather than the learning, which occurs in projects. However, as will become evident, the research does take the position that learners are active and collaborative in their learning, as opposed to passive recipients of knowledge transmitted by the teacher (*Carnell & Lodge, 2002*) and recognition is given to the significance of the relationship between the artists and the participants within the projects and the effect this has on the approach taken by the artists. There is not space in this research to explore the nature of the learning experience of the participants – an area that, although relatively well researched, deserves a separate study.

As is perhaps to be expected, the research raises more questions than it answers. Assumptions of what it means to be an artist, a teacher and a learner are challenged, as are the processes of creating and teaching. However, what does emerge is a picture of a particular form of creative practice, which is extremely complex and sophisticated and involves the artists simultaneously adopting a range of different roles while taking a variety of approaches to engaging with participants.

Key themes and methodology

The research questions

Initial discussions with the project's directors (Vivienne Reiss and Mariam Sharp at Arts Council of England) identified specific research questions. These were:

1) What are the artists' perceptions of the roles they play in certain 'Artists in Sites for Learning' projects?

2) What are the forms of engagement that occur between artists and participants in artist-led visual arts projects?

3) What factors contribute to these forms of engagement?

The use of the term forms of engagement was an attempt to acknowledge the complex relationship between the artists and participants. In exploring this relationship it emerged that the research could usefully embrace a pedagogic model, which recognised collaboration and interdependence, although it must be recognised that this recognition is partial, since, as already stated, the perceptions of the learners have not been explored here. Similarly, the research needed to investigate in as wide-reaching a way as possible the nature of the knowledge and experiences that were being shared between the artists and the participants. Terms such as 'teaching', 'learning' and 'skills' were avoided as far as possible, as it was acknowledged that part of the research's remit was to problematise these in order to understand the extent to which this form of practice challenged existing ideas.

The research questions were addressed using a qualitative approach, since what was being explored were individual artists' perceptions of given situations. Rather than testing a specific hypothesis, this research was attempting to identify what meaning certain experiences had for the artist participants, given the contexts in which they are located (*Maykut & Morehouse, 1994*). Data collection was therefore done primarily through in-depth interviews with a number of artists who had completed a project funded through the AiSfL scheme. The artists were chosen, after discussion with the projects supervisors, to reflect as wide a range of working practices, art forms and client groups as possible. Subsequent analysis of this data has been undertaken to identify and develop themes and patterns so as to arrive at a series of key propositions. It was agreed from the outset that although the initial research questions would form the basis for the research, subsequent research discoveries could and would inform, expand and revise the project as a whole. This has been the case, as ideas and questions

emerging from one interview have reappeared in and shaped subsequent dialogues. Also, ongoing conversations with the project supervisors and other interested individuals have guided the form and content of the research.

The interviews

Semi-structured interviews, each lasting about one and a half hours, were conducted with the following individuals:

Artist	AiSfL project
Richard Neville (MAPPA)	'Maps for Life' project with Lewisham Bridge Primary School
Esther Sayers	'Journeys' project with Camden Arts Centre
Sue Williams, Steve Rooney, Karen Hickling (TAG)	'Seeking the Positive' project with the Younger Rehabilitation Unit
Humberto Velez, Alessio Antoniolli	'Piñata' project with Gasworks Gallery
Freddie Robins	'The Politics and Poetics of Cloth' project with Hereward College
Liz Ellis	'Mapping Digbeth' project with Digbeth Centre for Arts & Digital Media
Maria Amidu	'Joining the Dots' project with inIVA and Acland Burghley School

Mervin Jarman from Mongrel (Invisible Geographies project) was approached, but due to time constraints was unable to do an interview. Instead, he submitted detailed responses by email to the same questions as were in the interview schedule.

The choice of semi-structured interviews reflected the aims and epistemological stance of the research. By using semi-structured interviews (as opposed to questionnaires or structured interviews) I was able to explore complex issues in detail, while the personal engagement and open-ended nature of the questioning provided opportunities for clarification and further

prompting (*Brown & Dowling, 1998*). The interviews were structured around a series of ten questions devised by myself in consultation with the supervisors.

The final version of these questions was :

1. How would you describe your own artistic/creative practice? What is your understanding of the ideas around 'post-media' practice in relation to projects of this kind?

2. What does the term 'education practice' mean to you?

3. In what ways does your own creative practice inform your education/community-based work?

4. How did you become involved in this type of education/community-based work?

5. What would you say were the major influences on you undertaking this type of work, for example, art school training, other education/training, political/social commitments, financial considerations?

6. Do you draw on any particular theories when doing this work, for example, learning theory, art history, critical theory, other artists' practice.

7. How would you describe your relationship with the participants in a project of this kind? In what ways can it be a collaborative process?

8. What educational roles do you think you play during projects, for example, teacher/instructor, mentor/role model, social activist, catalyst for inspiration and change, co-learner?

9. What, broadly, are your aims and objectives for projects of this kind, for example, to inform the participants about art and art history; to develop the participants' own creativity and creative skills; to enable the participants to better articulate their concerns about issues relevant to them; to empower participants; to have fun; to deliver the curriculum; to create dialogue and develop your own creativity?

10. How do you see yourself operating in relation to the 'art world' and how important is it for you to protect your artistic profile during these projects?

These questions were sent to the interviewees prior to the meeting; however, during the interviews themselves, the questions tended to act as

prompts which informed the dialogue, rather than a rigid list that was followed absolutely. What became clear during all the interviews was that certain issues had more relevance for particular interviewees than others and they tended to talk about these in greater detail. When this occurred I encouraged it, allowing the interviewees to develop the theme as they wished. Similarly, some questions were addressed more than once during particular interviews, as the interviewees would return to a particular issue sometimes to correct a view they had given earlier.

During the interviews I would also volunteer information about my own experiences and views. This was a conscious decision partly informed by my reading of feminist epistemology, where it is recognised that knowledge is constructed from where the researcher is situated (*Stanley, L. 2000*). There was no pretence that I was an objective, detached researcher; instead I was keen to establish a climate of openness, intellectual and emotional engagement and trust where the interviewees and I were 'coequals who are carrying on a conversation about mutually relevant, often biographically critical issues' (*Denzin, N & Lincoln, Y. 1998: p36*).

Related to this, it was agreed with the research supervisors that in this final document, the interviews should be reproduced, albeit in edited form, rather than extracting small amounts of data from them to support the analysis. This decision, alongside the one detailed above, was informed by the nature of the practice under investigation.

One of the significant themes to emerge from the interviews was that the artists and participants appear to engage in a process of 'co-constructivist' learning. The co-constructionist model of learning relies on dialogue, with the emphasis being placed on collaboration and the mutual sharing of experiences. The role of the teacher within this model is to 'instigate a dialogue between and with their students, based on their common experiences, but often the roles of teachers and learners are shared'. (*Carnell, E. & Lodge, C. 2002: p15*). This is in contrast to the 'reception' (*Carnell, E. & Lodge, C. 2002*) or 'banking' (*Friere, P. 1993*) model of learning, where the learner is perceived as a passive recipient of knowledge transmitted from the teacher.

The artists refer to the importance of dialogue in the interviews and the importance it plays in prompting 'reflection, critical investigation, analysis, interpretation and reorganisation of knowledge' (*Carnell, E. & Lodge, C. 2002: p15*). Key to this concept is the collaborative nature of the enterprise; it is about exchanging ideas and generating shared knowledge that neither individual could have attained alone. This was also true of the interviews themselves, where I considered that the interviewees and I were engaged in a

process of collaborative research into a subject that held considerable interest for both of us. It seemed important to reflect that process and the underlying practice it is referring to, and that the dialogues should be reproduced as fully as possible.

An initial reading of the interviews revealed particular key themes that appeared to provide a useful framework on which to locate further analysis. These key themes are clearly linked to the questions being asked, but more broadly reflect the nature of the artists' engagement with the participants and the particular creative and pedagogical activities they are engaged in. Every interview contains elements that apply to each of these themes, which reflects the multi-faceted nature of the artists' activities and their awareness of the complexity of the issues under discussion. But it is also apparent that individual interviewees articulate or evidence specific themes with insight and force. Analyses of these will be given in a subsequent section of the report.

The literature review

To locate this research in context and to demonstrate what existing research exists in this area, an extensive literature search has been carried out. The range of literature referenced reflects the cross-disciplinary nature of this practice, since relevant texts are to be found in literature on education, art history, critical theory, artists' writings, project evaluation documents and government research and policy documents.

Background to the research – the literature review

Introduction

There is an assumption among artists and educationalists that artists have a unique capacity when it comes to 'teaching'. However, what this unique capacity is, and indeed what it is that artists are 'teaching', is rarely analysed in detail. For example, Colin Painter, in a paper written following a conference exploring the distinctive role that artists play in art schools, observed that for the artist participants at the conference, the reason artists are employed to teach was self-evident:

> *'For them, the answer to the question was so obvious that it did not need to be articulated – and that is that artists know best about the skills and knowledge associated with being artists. Of course, they also need to be good teachers – it is not a sufficient condition to be an artist but it is an essential one.'*
>
> *(Painter, C. 1994: p14)*

What the differences are between the 'skills and knowledge' associated with artists and those of teachers is not articulated, although it would seem that it was apparent to the artists present at the conference. Claims are also made on behalf of artists and by artists themselves in relation to the benefits of artists working with people in educational settings. Statements such as the following, made by in a survey of artists in schools undertaken for Ofsted are characteristic of these:

> *'There is a growing body of evidence and testimony to indicate that the work of artists in schools and colleges enhances the quality of teaching and learning in the classroom and makes a significant contribution to the quality of school life.'*
>
> *(Oddie and Allen, 1998: p18)*

There is, however, little detailed research that explores how and why it is that artists make these 'significant' contributions and why an artist's input differs from other teachers engaged in arts education (*Sharp, 2001*). It has been acknowledged by almost all the writers considered here that there needs to be more research in this area (*Adams, 2001, Sharp and Dust, 1990, Sharp, 2001*) and that artist-led education projects must be evaluated more *fully* (*Oddie and Allen, 1998, Eisner, 1974, Smith, 1977, Burgess, 1995*).

The claims being made for artist-led education projects form part of a broader recognition that creativity is an essential human characteristic that needs to be actively developed through education. 'Creativity' as a concept is

hard to define (*Wallace, 1986, Dust, 2001*) but is increasingly seen as important not only for personal development, but also for its contribution to economic growth. The recent report from the National Advisory Committee for Creative and Cultural Education, *The Robinson Report*, (*NACCCE, 1999*) defines the nature and purposes of creative and cultural education and makes a number of detailed recommendations designed to support the development of creativity in the formal and informal education sectors. The report recognises the association between the arts and creativity (while arguing that creativity should not only be considered the province of the arts) and recommends, among other initiatives, the development of partnerships between schools and outside agencies, including cultural organisations. The authors see the work of artists and other creative organisations in education and the community as having 'vital roles for them in achieving the objectives set out in this report', (*NACCE 1999: p120*) but there is little detailed investigation of how and why these creative individuals and organisations should achieve so much.

Following on from this report, the Government's recent Green paper *Culture and Creativity: The next ten years* outlines the establishment of 'Creative Partnerships' between schools, professional cultural organisations and creative individuals to 'free the creative potential of individuals' (*DCMS, 2001: p10*). Emphasis is placed on the unique skills of creative individuals and their ability to develop creative skills (defined as 'imagination and concentration, team-work and problem-solving, coordination and spatial awareness' (*DCMS, 2001: p10*) in others. There is a sense in the report that artists will solve all the problems that teachers working in the strictures of formal education are currently unable to address. The 'Creative Partnerships' initiative, which is now operational in 16 areas across England, involves partnerships between up to 25 schools in each area and a range of cultural and creative people. The aim of Creative Partnerships is to 'provide a bridge between schools and cultural organisations so that they can work together and develop creative skills with pupils' (*Arts Council, 2002*).

There is also a focus in recent Government publications on the contribution the arts can make to social inclusion. *The Policy Action Team 10 Report* (*1999*) commissioned by the DCMS argues that participation in the arts can contribute to neighbourhood renewal (improving health, crime, employment and education), as well as build confidence and encourage strong community groups. The report cites a number of education and community projects initiated by or involving artists, which have tackled social issues successfully. Although the report does state that 'we do not believe that every artist or sportsperson should be a social worker by another name' (*PAT10. 1999: p5*), it strongly advocates the development of further community-based projects. Within this climate, where numerous positive claims are made for artists as

educators and Government itself is championing the transforming power of creativity and participation in arts activities, it is timely to look at what research exists which examines the role of artists working in sites for learning.

The artist within formal education

The history of the involvement of practising artists in formal education has been charted by a number of writers. Burgess (*1995*), in a short history, identifies the early 1970s as the time when artists began to work in schools in the UK. A number of schemes were established to encourage the links between artists and schools, including the 'Artists in Schools' scheme set up by The Gulbenkian Foundation. The aims of these early schemes were broad and, interestingly, included providing employment for artists as well as enhancing schools' arts provision. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s projects involving artists in formal education developed and diversified to include a range of approaches and experiences, from the one-off visit to the longer-term residency. So much so that in the Arts Council document *Leading through Learning*, published in 1997, the following could be claimed:

> *'There has been a huge growth in educational activity by artists and arts organisations – not only those specifically set up to carry out education work but also those such as galleries and performing companies, where education is part of a wider remit.'*
>
> *(Arts Council of England, 1997: p14)*

Alongside this expansion was the recognition that projects involving artists needed to be evaluated more systematically and effectively. In 1987 the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) commissioned a two-year study of artists in schools' work in England and Wales that culminated in the publication of *Artists in Schools: a Handbook for Teachers and Artists* (*Sharp & Dust, 1990*). A number of artists in schools' projects were researched and the resulting book uses particular case studies to provide practical guidance for teachers and artists. The benefits of artists working in schools are described in some detail:

> *'Artists can contribute to pupil learning in and through the arts and, by talking to the pupils about their working lives, to their learning about the arts. Projects focusing on learning in the arts involve artists in helping pupils to develop artistic skills or in sharing insights into the process of making and presenting the arts. Artists working through the arts use the arts as a medium to explore other areas such as history, science and technology, or issues such as racism, gender or disability.'*
>
> *(Sharp and Dust, 1990: p3)*

There are specific benefits for pupils, teachers and artists by participating in artists in schools' projects. For the pupils, the benefits include increased understanding of the process of art making, developing artistic skills and concepts, greater understanding of the professional arts world, increased motivation, enthusiasm and confidence and greater personal and social learning. Teachers can benefit by increasing their confidence, developing their artistic abilities and gaining greater understanding of the arts. The benefits for artists are described as improved communication skills, opportunities to interact with others and financial betterment.

More relevant to this research, there are three ways in which artists can become involved in schools:

1. As makers — The artist(s) concentrate on creating their own work, possibly making a commission for the school

2. As presenters — The artist(s) present a finished piece of work (mainly performing arts projects)

3. As instructors /facilitators — The artist(s) helps pupils and teachers make their own work

> '*In the majority of projects, artists combined more than one approach and all are important*'
>
> *(Sharp and Dust, 1990)*

The artist as educator

It is as 'instructors/facilitators', as the terms indicate, that artists come closest to adopting a conventional 'teaching' role. What a 'conventional teaching role' is, however, is difficult to articulate. Even a seemingly innocuous term such as 'pedagogy', which can be defined as 'the science of teaching' is not uncontroversial (*Mortimore, 1999*). In the literature being explored here, the 'conventional teaching role' is generally allied to the 'banking' concept of teaching, as identified by Paulo Friere (*1993*), where knowledge is deposited by the teacher in wholly passive learners, the latter being discouraged from thinking critically or self-directing their learning. Consequently, it is the differences between the artists' approaches and activities and those of professional teachers that are commonly stressed. Artists are seen to 'bring specific experiences, skills and approaches that add to and enrich the work of the teacher in unique ways' (*Oddie and Allen, 1998: p35*). Artists are also credited with bringing different pedagogic approaches to the classroom. Support for this in the literature is mainly in the form of anecdotal evidence

from teachers and pupils (*Sharp & Dust, 1990, Manser, 1995*), although there are some cases where artists have described their approach to teaching.

The influential 'Artists in Wigan Schools' project, which took place in the 1980s was well documented. This was associated with 'The Critical Studies in Art Education Project' (CSAE), which was established in 1981 to address a number of concerns that were being increasingly expressed about art education, one of which being the lack of exposure school pupils had to original works of art and to artists themselves (*Taylor, 1993*). Interestingly, CSAE aimed to develop more reflective, contemplative and critical approaches to art, with exposure to art and artists being seen as critical to this development. Throughout the 'Artists in Wigan Schools' project document, artists describe how they managed their residences. In particular the artist Andy Shaw states how he encouraged the pupils to take risks, while teaching them specific drawing and welding skills. In terms of his teaching style he states:

> *'I'll deal with that child as an individual and let that child talk back to me. I think you have got to be open-minded about an awful lot of things. Adults tend to think that they are the ones educating children and they can't teach us anything. But if you let that child develop as an individual and also in a group, and encourage that child to communicate as well, all of that comes back.'*
>
> *(Quoted in Taylor, 1991: p43)*

Perhaps without realising it, Andy Shaw is articulating many of the characteristics that have been identified as contributing to effective and creative teaching and learning. Creative teachers 'identify' young people's creative abilities, 'encourage' young people to believe in their creative potential and 'foster' young people's creative tendencies (*NACCCE, 1999*). Interestingly, in art schools in England, artist/teachers have been seen to successfully facilitate learning, primarily through asking questions, hearing responses, sharing experiences and appraising performances (*Cowan, 1994*).

The effective educator has also been described as a facilitator or guide to learning, while not controlling the learning process, by imposing a form of didactic teaching (*Dewey, 1938*). The 'Portable Personal Histories Museum' project, organised by Ikon Gallery in 1997, provides an example of an artist taking this approach. During this project the artist Yinka Shonibare worked with a group of participants to create an exhibition made up of objects that had particular significance for those involved. The documentation of the project describes how Shonibare's:

> *'premise was that once given curatorial control, the participants could then ask themselves what they wanted to say to the visitors to the exhibition*

… (He) adjusted his approach to suit the participants, working at their pace of development. The group meetings became very much like counselling sessions, as participants revealed personal histories and stories, disclosing what mattered to them.'

(Gagola, 1998: p61)

The emphasis was on the participants discovering for themselves, with the artist acting a support or guide, encouraging the participants, while introducing key ideas and challenging existing perceptions.

The teacher as artist

Although it can be argued that artists have particular skills, it can also be observed that the skills attributed to artists are what inspired and creative teachers, working within a supportive environment, provide anyway. In particular, the extent to which artists are uniquely qualified to teach art, since they are perceived to know the subject 'better' than the teachers, can present difficulties (*Eisner, 1974*). The assumption that high levels of artistic ability determine the efficacy of artists to teach can be questioned. Instead, the more important issues of the personality of the individual and their ability to establish a rapport with the students should be recognised as contributing to effective arts teaching (*Eisner, 1974*).

Other key factors contributing to effective arts practices include adequate internal and external support for the arts and the art teacher (including support from artists in residence) (*NFER, 2000*). More importantly, however, the presence of specialist art teachers with 'high levels of personal involvement, passion and commitment to the art form … who were able to give practical demonstrations of the art form and participate in class activities' (*NFER, 2000*) are a more important determinant of effectiveness. An approach 'perhaps based on the traditional apprenticeship model of learning from an arts practitioner – was a significant and particular strength of arts teaching' (*NFER, 2000: p37*). (The model of the artist as 'master practitioner' is explored later in this review). The NFER report suggests that this can be provided by teachers, rather than requiring external artists to supply this role and recommends that teachers should be given regular opportunities for creative renewal, thereby recognising their status as artists as well as teachers. It does not suggest that a greater number of professional artists should be brought into schools.

It must therefore be acknowledged that a great many teachers of art and design are by training artists 'with roots firmly embedded in their identity as person as artist, craftsperson or designer'. (*Prentice, 1995: p12*). 'The Artist

Teacher Scheme', which was established in 1998 by individuals representing, at that time, the Arts Council, John Moores University, the National Society for Education in Art and Design (NSEAD), Tate and Wimbledon School of Art, recognises that teachers who are also artists provide creative and effective teaching, given appropriate support. The scheme aims first to 'provide opportunities for artist teachers to review and develop their creative practice in relation to the highest levels of contemporary practice', but also to 'significantly improve standards and teaching and learning in art and design in schools and colleges through the development of the individual practice of artist teachers.' (*NSEAD, 2002: p2*). The implication is that teachers who are permitted to behave more as artists, drawing on their own creative practice, are more satisfied and effective educators.

Curriculum and environmental constraints

The environment in which the artist is allowed to work with greater flexibility and the absence of a rigid curriculum to deliver can enable them to teach more creatively. The introduction of the GCSE exam has tended to produce a dominant method of working among art teachers and a discernible orthodoxy (*Binch & Clive, 1996*). Teachers are perceived to be under pressure to teach what has to be tested, rather than assess what has been taught and learnt. Other environmental barriers to creativity include standardised routines and tests or an inflexible curriculum, authoritarian attitudes and environments, the overemphasis on results or rewards and the insistence on fixed or predetermined answers (*Hallman, 1967: p325*). There is a direct contrast between the prescriptive nature of the art curriculum that teachers are required to deliver and the radical and challenging thinking inherent in much contemporary art practice (*Godfrey, 1996*). Also, artists visiting a school are 'frequently able to invest greater intensity and energy into a short time than the teacher who needs longer distance, rhythm and pacing to work their way through a demanding school day' (*Oddie & Allen, 1998: p39*).

In the existing literature there is evidence to support the view that the 'artist as educator' adopts an approach that is highly creative and that their approaches correspond to theories of effective and creative teaching. It is difficult to determine from the existing research whether artists are aware of these theories and consciously draw on them when working on projects such as AiSfL.

The artist as role model

In addition to the 'making, presenting and instructing/facilitating' roles that can be ascribed to artists working in schools, the list can be expanded to

include the broader roles of 'motivator, role model, outsider and broker' (*Oddie & Allen, 1998*). These are less strictly pedagogic and imply that a professional artist, with different approaches and working methods, can, in themselves 'educate'.

The idea that the artist functions as a role model is fairly widely acknowledged, although again, it is more often referred to by teachers or pupils rather than artists (*Manser, 1995, Sharp & Dust, 1990, Oddie & Allen, 1998*). Most obviously, artists talking about their experiences can provide insights into their working lives. For example, an art student who participated in an education project in 2000 with a girls secondary school commented:

> *'Through me they saw a positive role of art in the real world. The pupils were able to ask questions about studying art after their secondary education, making a living as an artist, and they discovered a fresh approach towards learning a creative skill.'*
> *(ArtOut. Connecting Art Students with Schools, 2001: p7)*

Artists from a range of cultural, social and ethnic backgrounds can also provide positive role models, particularly if they make reference to their background within their own practice. (*Oddie & Allen, 1998, Taylor, 1991*). The study of contemporary art and artists is also essential in relation to the broader issue of multicultural education, since it helps students to understand their own place in history and emphasises 'the capacity and ability of all human beings, including those who have been culturally degraded, politically oppressed and economically exploited' (*Cahan & Kocur, 1996: xxiii*). These arguments underpinned the 'Arts Education for a Multicultural Society' (AEMS) project which was established in 1987 across the UK by The Arts Council, the Commission for Racial Equality and the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation. This project had an overtly political agenda, as well as artistic aims, as it aspired to challenge racism in schools and higher education, while encouraging multicultural awareness in the arts curriculum. Central to the project's operation was the employment of black and cultural minority artists whose unique skills, knowledge and resources were seen as enhancing and reinforcing the work being done to develop the existing curriculum. Additionally, and crucially, the artists were seen to act as catalysts and positive role models in education as they did not fulfil 'popular' images of black people (*Eggleston, 1995: p24*). Although the evaluation report on the project does not provide any comments from the artists involved, it does stress that the project enabled the artists to reach audiences and places in positive and influential ways:

> *'Inspired by the model of the black artists and, above all, the evidence that it was socially acceptable to white people and black people, many young*

black people were able to turn negative self-images into much more positive ones and achieve similar acceptability. Indeed, for the first time many black – and white – young people experienced and understood a positive black self-image'

(Eggleston, 1995: p70)

The report also concludes that for the good work of the AEMS project to develop, coherent and sustainable relationships need to be established between schools, teachers and black artists. It is, however, difficult to identify whether that has occurred.

Artists can function as role models in terms of how they approach problems within their own working practice and connections can be made between artistic practice and teaching itself. For example, the concept of 'reflective practice' in art and design can be considered as a basis for the professional development of specialist teachers of that subject. In particular, the creative and reflective/responsive capacities that are required to be an artist, as well as the artist's need to remain open, take risks and make radical changes where necessary. This model of the reflexive practitioner can be adopted by teachers as preferable to that of the 'infallible expert' (*Prentice, 1995*).

The connection between artistic practice and teaching can be made even more explicitly. In an article exploring 'The Art of Pedagogy: Artistic Behavior as a Model for Teaching', (*Parks, 1992*) six characteristics of 'artistry' are identified, which provide models for effective teaching. These are:

1. The artist as communicator: able to express a personal point of view in a way that can be expressed and understood by others.

2. The artist as one who knows themselves: knows their thoughts and feelings before they can be objectified.

3. The artist as enquirer: actively seeking knowledge, truth and personal growth, self-motivated, embracing change and unwilling to be restrained by conventions.

4. The artist thinks qualitatively: striving for more powerful symbols, developing new ideas, exploring better forms of expression.

5. The artist is concerned with technique: to the extent that it enables, or the lack of it hinders, the expression of an idea.

6. The artist exhibits their work for recognition and feedback

The role of artists in sites for learning

(The model of the artist as enquirer is explored in greater detail later on in this report)

Although artistic practice differs from 'teaching' it can be argued that the educational role that artists play could, or should, be adopted more closely by teachers. In particular the focus on exploring ideas, remaining open and reflecting on action.

The artist as collaborator

Some artists writing about their own projects have identified that their pedagogical practice relies on collaborative effort and effective communication. The artist Kimberley Foster, speaking of a project she completed with a number of secondary school pupils stated:

> 'My relationship with the group was created by the levels of discussion that took place during the sessions rather than me being named as the artist and feeling I was leading the sessions. I was a facilitator, but the labels that we give each other weren't really necessary. The project enabled me to question and look at how the artistic practice lies in the play between facilitation, communication and collaboration …'Beyond Words' was about finding or maybe creating a common ground.'
> *(Encompass Evaluation Report, 2000: p63)*

Support for the approach identified above – where emphasis is placed on discussion and equality between the project leader and participants – can be found in the work of bell hooks, who stresses the need for active participation on the part of students and recognition by the teacher of the collaborative nature of learning. For hooks, an 'engaged pedagogy', requires teachers to establish relationships with students that are based on 'mutual recognition' in order to strive 'not just for knowledge in books, but knowledge about how to live in the world' (*hooks, b. 1994: p15*). hooks, in turn, is articulating the co-constructivist approach to learning. Co-construction is based on developing meaning through engaging in dialogue, while being part of a knowledge generating community (*Carnell & Lodge 2002*). Key to this process is collaboration on the part of teachers and learners in order for both to engage in effective 'investigation, analysis interpretation and reorganisation of knowledge and in reflective processes that have meaning in the learner's lives' (*Carnell, E. & Lodge, C. 2002: p14*). There appears to be little or no research exploring how this approach is relevant in the specific context of artist-led projects; however, there is evidence in the literature that artists engage in dialogue and a process of exploration and 'co-investigation' in other teaching situations (*Godfrey, 1996, Prentice, 1995*). For example, the artist Jon

Thompson identifies that within art schools, students and artist/teachers share a desire for art and therefore:

> 'There can be no distinction between teacher and student, at least no authoritative one. And at this point it is a measuring of and a testing of a mutually held desire for the unattainable. At this point it is a discourse between equals, between, in other words, artists who are together seeking after something in hope and good faith and good trust.'
>
> *(Thompson, 1994: p48).*

Although this does appear somewhat idealistic and for many art students there was, or remains, little 'discourse among equals' with their tutors during their time at college, it is interesting that this model of teaching is being described at all.

The issue of how and to what extent the artist 'collaborates' within artist-led projects outside of formal education is relevant here. Writers and artists stress the need for dialogue in art projects of this nature (*Gablik, 1991*) and the significance of 'giving voice' to those previously unheard (*Lacy, 1996*). This, in turn, echoes the pedagogic theories of Paulo Friere again, who articulated the importance of enabling the oppressed to break out from a 'culture of silence' and act on and transform their world (*Friere, 1993*). The teacher's role, according to Friere, is to enter into a dialogic relationship, based on mutual respect, with others, in order to empower them. Friere stresses that the motives of the teacher are critical and that pedagogy which begins with the 'egoistic interests' of the educator does no more than maintain and embody oppression.

The dilemma of where the artist's own practice is located within these educational/community-based projects is exemplified by the work of Tim Rollins. Rollins, an artist who trained as a teacher, set up the 'Art and Knowledge Workshop' in 1982. Working with young people from The South Bronx, New York, who identify themselves as 'the Kids of Survival' (KoS), Rollins makes large-scale paintings that take their inspiration from works of fiction. In a lengthy interview Rollins describes how, on setting up the workshop, he:

> 'Ceased being an artist who taught, and collapsed my artistic and teaching practices into one strange and stumbling hybrid.'
>
> *(Quoted in Paley, 1995: p22)*

By saying this, Rollins seems to imply that he can no longer separate his creative and pedagogical practices, and instead sees his role as guide and mentor, providing an accessible role-model to his students as well as a source

of inspiration and team leadership. Yet it is interesting that when the finished products from these workshops are exhibited and sold, they are identified as being by 'Tim Rollins & KoS'. It appears that Rollins is keen to maintain his role as artist-as-producer as well as, or possibly rather than, artist-as-facilitator/collaborator.

Within this same text Paley identifies the pedagogical process at work within the Art & Knowledge workshops as bearing a resemblance to the artistic workshops of the Renaissance with its emphasis on the collaborative, incremental learning of a craft. The focus is on an active and engaged form of study, whereby 'learning comes naturally, not so much from study, but from occupation' (*Paley, 1995: p45*). This approach bears similarities to the theory of Situated Learning, articulated by Lave & Wenger (*1999*). Situated Learning is based on the concept of 'legitimate peripheral participation', where learners participate in communities of practitioners. The key to effective learning in this model is engagement in a specific social practice, which enables the learner to participate in activities and gain understanding through experience. The authors draw parallels with examples of apprenticeship where 'masters do not teach, they embody practice at its fullest'. (*Lave & Wenger, 1999: p85*)

Links can be made between the ideas advocated in Situated Learning and concepts outlined earlier in this paper. For example, the extent to which the artist functions as a role model is relevant here, as is the emphasis on collaboration and learning through engaging in particular activities within a specified environment. The emphasis on different forms of learning communities is also significant.

As is evident, the extent to which projects are truly 'collaborative', particularly where artists define this form of participatory work as their own practice, is difficult to assess. At stake are issues of the authorship, as well as the intention and outcome of a project (*Harding, 1998*). The artist Anna Best, for example, acknowledges that although ostensibly working collaboratively, she never loses control of the project and steers her participants so that she can research and develop an idea via workshops. One commentator on her work has raised the issue of whether 'Best's participants and audience are really learning anything or are they guinea-pigs?' (*Wilson, 2001: p23*).

There is clearly a need to explore this area more deeply in order to understand what such an artist's motivations are in a project of this kind, and what they consider the nature of the engagement is that they have with their 'collaborators'.

The artist as social activist

Contemporary artists work in a wide range of settings outside of formal education. Projects, similar to those undertaken under the Artists in Sites for Learning, occur in prisons, hospices and hospitals (*Kaye & Blee, 1997*), homeless shelters and community centres (*Felshin, 1996*), after school clubs (*Paley, 1995*), sanitation departments (*Gablik, 1995*) and on the streets themselves (*Zinggl, 1999/2000*). Although it must be recognised that each location and circumstance brings specific demands and challenges, common themes are apparent in the literature on this form of activity.

The term 'New Genre Public Art' (or Community Art, as it is better known within the UK) describes the practice of artists working in community settings and can be defined as, 'visual art that uses both traditional and non-traditional media to communicate and interact with a broad and diversified audience about issues directly relevant to themselves, (it) is based on engagement' (*Lacy, 1996: p19*). The focus on 'communication', 'interaction' and 'engagement' is particularly significant, since a contrast can be made between this form of artistic practice and that espoused under Modernism, where art is perceived as autonomous and, 'this sovereign specialness and apartness was symbolised by the romantic exile of the artist and was lived out in modes of rebellion, withdrawal and antagonism' (*Gablik, 1991: p5*).

In 'New Genre Public Art' projects, the focus on collaboration and social engagement foregrounds the artist's relationship with the participants and impacts on the subject matter, methods of production and final artistic outcome of the work. Whereas previously the educational roles for artists within formal education have been identified as primarily those of instructors/facilitators and role models, in this area artists may have a broader social responsibility to address issues such as discrimination, marginalisation and oppression (*Lacy, 1996*). Education in this context involves providing the participants in a project with the necessary skills and opportunities to enable them to articulate and make visible their individual and collective concerns.

The development of these engaged forms of practice stemmed from the 1950s through the work of feminist, ethnic, Marxist and leftist-leaning artists, whose interests lay in social activism, redefining the role of art and the audience and in developing a collaborative methodology (*Lacy, 1996*). However, as early as the 1930s, Marxist intellectuals and artists, particularly within The Frankfurt School, were questioning the function of art and the role of the avant-garde. Walter Benjamin's seminal text *The Author as Producer* (*1934*) argued for a radical, innovative, socially engaged practice wherein artists (in this instance writers) have an overall responsibility to teach. The notion of what it was that artists should teach and how they should

teach it springs from a Marxist view that education should bring about the emancipation of the proletariat. Within this conceptual framework the role of the artist/intellectual is transformed 'from a supplier of the productive apparatus into an engineer who sees his task in adapting that apparatus to the ends of the proletarian revolution' (*Benjamin, 1934: p102*). The artist must collaborate in order to educate.

Although artists are more likely to cite the example of other artists, such as Joseph Beuys, Allan Kaprow or Hans Haacke rather than theorists such as Benjamin (*Zinggl, 1999/2000*), descriptions of their aims and objectives and working methods frequently seem to echo the underlying principles outlined by Benjamin. Wolper (*1996*) described the Artist and Homeless Collective (A&HC) in New York, which developed from the frustration of one artist, Hope Sandrow's, frustration at the representations of homeless people by artists and photographers, combined with horror at the treatment of residents in hostels. She established a programme where professional artists worked with residents of the hostels to make artworks which addressed the issues they suffer from, from domestic violence to racism. The aim of the project is about 'bringing arts professionals and shelter residents together to make art, it is less about social change on a grand scale than about empowering individuals and eliminating the boundaries that keep the privileged and the underprivileged so far apart' (*Wolper, 1996: p187*).

In the UK, the work of John Latham and Barbara Stevini, who established 'The Artists Placement Group' (APG) in 1965, was significant in developing and formalising this type of socially engaged practice. APG placed artists in non-art settings, encouraging the artists to make work coming directly from that experience. Interestingly, in the context of the AiSfL projects, the focus was on process rather than finished product and their concern was 'not with producing 'the right art' but rather with producing the right conditions in which communities can have their own creative voices recognised and given sufficient space to flourish' (*Kelly quoted in Harding, 1995: p31*). The emphasis is on developing a shared practice that is socially or politically, rather than purely aesthetically, motivated.

The artist as researcher/enquirer

The model of the APG was taken up by The Arts Council in the UK and developed into the idea of the 'artist in residence' (*Harding, 1995*). In residencies or placements, the context becomes increasingly important, with both the environment, and the participants/collaborators influencing or directing the process and final outcome of the artist's activities. This activity, where the artist works outside the studio, exploring and refining their

practice, can be seen as akin to the research process. However, for this activity to be deemed research, the process of enquiry undertaken by the artist, rather than the finished artwork, must be foregrounded and made highly visible (*Raphael, 1999*).

These research practices in art and design can be investigated further. A differentiation can be made between 'research into art and design', which includes art historical, theoretical or aesthetic research, 'research through art and design' and 'research for art and design' (*Frayling, 1993*). 'Research through art and design' comes closest to articulating what Raphael mentions in the other text. In this practice the artist undertakes a form of 'action research' by keeping a detailed research record and by writing a research report, both of which are intended to 'communicate the results' of the artist's explorations, that is, to document the process. This is contrasted with 'research for art and design', the latter being closer to the gathering of reference materials, where the emphasis is on the final art product, not a visible process of enquiry, and hence is not 'research proper' (*Frayling, 1993: 5*).

It is this final category, which most closely resembles artistic practice, that arguably enables a recognition of the artist as researcher. It can be postulated that it is those of the 'modernist persuasion' who support this view, since it also promotes the idea of research for purely personal creative development (*Buchler, 1999*). A related issue arises: that as with academic research, research within art is significant in terms of its 'quality'. For it to be considered of merit, artistic research and the products that may or may not come from it will be judged 'under the established conditions of art's distribution, dissemination and reception' (*Buchler, 1999: p24*). This is particularly relevant for artists who choose to work collaboratively with non-artists. As for socially engaged art activities, it is essential that evaluation should move beyond the purely aesthetic to judge the extent of social change they bring about (*Lacy, 1995*). More recently, the work of artists such as Anna Best, Jeremy Deller and Nina Pope has demonstrated that the problem is a complex one. For artists such as these, who consider their 'collaborative' activities as their own creative practice, the issue of how to evaluate and validate the work is critical (*Hope, 2002*):

> '*Where do projects seek validity when artists are straddling the worlds of art and social work? There is a need for a project to have some function, to effect change, but also to have a degree of autonomy so that the project can be interpreted as a work of art in itself'.*'
>
> *(Hope, 2002: p32)*

In the context of AiSfL projects it is significant that research goes beyond a process of ordered enquiry and the contribution of original knowledge, to

'imply a certain responsibility, whether moral or social: the investigation of the world in order to understand it better, to add to it or improve it' (*Nairne, 1999: p7*). The purpose and aims of research, therefore, must be considered in addition to the activity itself. This echoes the broader argument, outlined above, concerning the role and purpose of the artist in relation to society itself. There is little documented to indicate the extent to which artists engaged in this form of creative/pedagogic practice are consciously engaged in it so as to develop their own individual practice; or to investigate the nature of the knowledge created between themselves and the participants; or to develop models of good practice so as to 'improve the world'. However, there is scope to explore to what extent these artists see themselves as researchers according to the definitions identified above.

Conclusions

What is immediately apparent from this short survey of relevant literature is the complexity and broadness of the area under investigation. Existing research has identified that artists working in a range of sites for learning are engaged in a variety of creative and pedagogic activities. The extent to which artists are aware of or draw on particular pedagogic theories is not clear from the literature, although descriptions of their activities suggest they exemplify good 'teaching' practice, particularly in relation to creative and collaborative teaching and learning. The nature of why and how the artists engage in these activities is also documented, although in some cases this evidence tends to be anecdotal, with less written by artists themselves. However, writers have identified that artists can be politically and socially motivated and, whereas some artists engage in 'collaborative' activities in order to develop their individual practice, others are working to empower particular individuals or communities. The literature has also revealed that any investigation into this form of practice raises wider questions concerning the role and purpose of art and the artist within society and the ways in which creative individuals and practice can be 'educational'.

Edited interviews with the artists

Maria Amidu

Q: I have read the applications for 'Joining the Dots' and it really stresses collaboration and also stresses the idea that it was a research project and I'm interested in how you saw yourself possibly as a researcher.

M: My initial idea was to have a collaborative process, particularly with the pupils, and find out from them what they learnt from the Schools Programme, how they perceived it, because the original idea behind the artists being in the school was to get the kids to think about artists' practice above and beyond the obvious environs like a gallery. The whole idea of actually placing an artist in a lesson other than the art lesson was so the pupils began to understand how artists actually use their environment to develop their practice, so I was really interested to see whether it had been 'successful'. The idea was to get them to look at ways of documenting and evaluating – the whole process of asking various questions, deciding which questions are more important and the process of research. How you start here in a particular place and then as you progress through your research you end up going over there somewhere. I wanted them to see that as a kind of practice. But of course it didn't evolve that way because the way I had wanted to work in the school was just impossible in the end. I set up a whole workshop schedule, which involved getting the pupils to do lots of interviews with other kids who had taken part in the Schools Programme. I wanted to work with two children from each year group, but it was a practical impossibility getting two pupils from each year group to work together at one time. So, in the end I had a very minimal interview schedule in which I was the interviewer. But the pupils I did interview were brilliant; what I loved was the fact that they all remembered the Schools Programme quite fondly and had a lot to say about what they thought of it and what they did, what they thought they were doing, how it all worked.

Q: And is this going right back, four years ago?

M: Five years ago. The year five pupils, I have to admit, were less able to talk through the whole process and what happened, but they still remembered it and were still keen. I was really interested in all the subjective elements that get hidden in the process of evaluation. So they were my two motivations: getting the pupils to do the research and their subjective responses. Originally, I wanted the ideas for the site to be generated with the pupils but that didn't happen. I finished the video interviews, which I then took as the basis of what the site could be. The video got corrupted, and I thought how could I get this project to work? So, I created a book which is called The Little Book of

Opinion, which includes various images and questions. It was A5 size, with large format text as I didn't want the pupils to feel like they were in an exam. It was really interesting because the way they responded on paper was that rather than verbal, they were much more formal. That was the only practical time that I actually had with the pupils. From there, I read through all the previous evaluative material and started trying to piece it all together; finding a way to allow the pupils to see what they'd done during the Schools Programme. Since the whole idea of Joining the Dots wasn't to create a formal evaluation in any shape or form, it was more about re-presenting what had happened and saying 'what do you think?' Also, I didn't want Joining the Dots to be completely from my perspective. I decided to divide it into two, so there would be an archive space and evaluative space.

Q: And this is on the site?

M: This is on the website and the starting point, the home page, is actually a map of the school because it has this really interesting geography, which is circular, so you start 'here' and wander round and find yourself back where you were. It was a really nice way to make visible my role because I saw myself as a little roving component in this school, literally running [around?] trying to get people to get involved. It was also a really nice way to pull each Schools Programme project together.

Q: It would also make real sense to the kids.

M: Yes, they'd recognise that environment. So, you click on to each of the subjects and then it takes you to a page where you have the option to go to the archive or the evaluation. The archive is very simple; basically one page which shows you what the project was, the names of the pupils, the teacher and the artist; and what they did. You have the option to look at the images in a little bit more detail. The evaluation spaces are all slightly different – we took one or two elements of each project and reconstructed them as little games. For example, Modern Languages included a jigsaw, which, in Joining the Dots you have to fit together, which then triggers the evaluation to appear. Each game is very simplistic but quite engaging on all levels.

Q: But also it's quite interesting because they're quite educational in a traditional way?

M: Definitely, I also didn't want them to overshadow what the artists had already done. It was really about me somehow just magnifying the way they had worked. There is also a third space – The Little Book of Opinion. I decided not to incorporate the pupils' views with the adults' evaluation because they were coming from very different perspectives. Some of the answers are quite mundane and some are really amazing. I wanted them to remain unedited.

Q: Give me an example of the kind of question.

M: I started off with very obvious questions – how old were you when you did the project and how old are you now? Do you remember the name of the artist you worked with? Do you remember what the basis of the project was? There are quite a lot of question marks as well as responses, because two of the pupils (who are now sixth formers) didn't put in an answer. I think that's really important because often with evaluations everybody wants really good outcomes all the time, and the so-called 'failures' are the strongest learning points. I liked the fact that they may have thought 'I'm not answering that' or 'I just can't be bothered because that's irrelevant'. Joining the Dots is not about having a definitive answer or coming up with lots of solutions or saying 'oh yes we think the Schools Programme was fantastic', even though I think it was; it's not about any of those things. It was actually about presenting a real review in a creative way and having an opportunity to give the pupils a voice, so that their views are not overshadowed by a broader or wider [view?] or by what are perceived as more important concerns, which is often to do with the funders or the collaborators wanting to tick a number of boxes.

Q: Did anyone put any pressure on you to have a nice neat and tidy package at the end?

M: It's interesting about Joining the Dots because it's been a long time in coming for lots of practical reasons. The original idea evolved in 1999, and we had to apply for funding before the project could happen. There were practical issues to do with working with the web designer and working in the school. And now that it's finished [after all this time] I think there is a kind of antagonism in the sense of 'is this really an evaluation?' But actually fundamentally it's an artist's work; that's how I presented it. It was also a big experiment and none of us knew, myself most of all, what the outcome was going to be.

Q: And how would you define what you think is the difference between it being an artist's work and an evaluation?

M: I think for me it's become a bit of everything. It works as an artist's work because it makes visible my ideas, but my own practice isn't directly evident. My work is very much about narratives, archiving, personal testimony and hidden history. Because I've been working with other artists' work and worked directly with the web designer, my own aesthetic concerns had to be modified in a way. Although not completely, because Michael's (the web designer) sensibilities and mine are very similar, so often I'd say to him 'I've got this vision in my head that this could work like this' and then he'd go away and come back with this thing that was amazing. It was often what I wanted

but even better. I think my own practice within the site is intangible, it's conceptual, and I think as an evaluation it's at the beginning stages, because really I'm asking other people to evaluate. I'm presenting all these results in this format and actually what I'm saying is 'what do you think about the project and do you think it worked?'

Q: It sounds like that relates more to your practice which is giving people a voice without asking them to answer particular questions.

M: Yes, and also encouraging people to begin to research further. It was also very much about making a tool for teachers and artists.

Q: Then it becomes essential that the problems are in there as much as the positives?

M: The one thing that's missing from Joining the Dots is my evaluation, my experience. But in the end I decided to leave it out because I felt it was complete, in that it focuses on the Schools Programme as a long-term project with particular outcomes. What I mean is, I wanted it to be explorative and without a set of teacher's notes or artist's notes or teacher's tools. I want it to be seen as a visual, creative site.

Q: I think that's interesting, as that's the line where it becomes an artist's project. If you start putting all that on then it becomes something very different and perhaps just an educational tool.

M: Yes and that's probably what people will perceive as its 'downfall' because once you use the word 'evaluation' people will forget it was a creative project and all they're looking for is outcomes and answers to all their questions. Some of the answers are there, but in a very organic way. You have to find them; they're not just presented to you. You have to do something in order to find those answers. I think that's why it's quite good to keep reminding people that actually it's an artwork and it's not about giving you a solution to a problem that you might have.

Q: I think it's really important information, I think there is real value in giving people their voices. It relates to some of the ideas within this piece of research about what is it that you're teaching people in projects of this kind and one idea is that you're enabling them to articulate things, perhaps in a very different way than they would normally.

M: What's really interesting is when you give kids the opportunity to discuss their views with you, you give them a sense of responsibility. You're actually saying 'what you've got to say is very important' and the revelations are amazing. Whether it's children or adults, the fact is people are often thinking about these things you might ask, but they don't necessarily articulate them in

the way, say, that an artist might or musician might. In the past we've made the mistake of going into spaces thinking the participants are not already aware. So I always go into a space now not assuming anything and that as soon as I say 'what do you think?' I'll be bombarded with very clear opinions about what they like and what they think should happen. But it's also important to include my voice somehow. In another project I did a very formal evaluation, but at the beginning of each sub-heading I inserted a short diary extract. I put my personal opinions in there at the beginning; it was a precursor to the rest of the text.

Q: I think it's more honest. There can be this perception that you go in as a totally objective observer with none of your own value systems, whereas I feel that you inevitably come with some preconceptions, particularly if you've worked as an artist delivering a project. You know what's going on.

M: And also, as an artist going into that space and actually talking to the artists, the teachers and the pupils, you are in an invaluable space, because not only are you delivering this evaluation but you're also subconsciously evaluating your own projects. So, what happens for me is I then think 'okay great, next time when I do that I must remember that little bit of information'. So, I see it as a really useful way to develop my own practice. As an artist, I also work as a project manager and as a consultant and as an evaluator. I no longer separate them out because I realised that you bring all of you to any situation and you never really separate it out. As a result, I find it quite hard to define my practice because it is very much about dialogue, and of course that's an intangible thing and I spend a lot of time trying to make that tangible. But I do think I can call myself an artist, because I make things.

Q: But that's interesting that you have to qualify it. One thing I was going to ask you is what do you think has informed what you do? Do you think it's the training you got at art school, do you think it's dialogues that you've had with other artists?

M: I don't actually know, as I've kind of fallen into art education, but I think it's probably an amalgamation. I trained as a glassmaker. I went to Farnham and had a very formal training but I was always trying to break free of that. I then went to the Royal College to do an MA in ceramics and glass but I knew there was something missing. I carried on making glass work in my studio in Hackney but I got to the point where I thought this just doesn't make sense to me making this stuff in a studio, I felt like I was in solitary confinement. I knew that I wanted to work in dialogue with people and in collaboration. I stopped for a while and I realised that I didn't necessarily want to make things. Once I knew what I didn't want to do I suddenly had this open space to consider the things I was interested in. If I had to define it, it's the process of having a studio, doing bits and bobs for different people, the information

you gather, the things you learn, the whole way that you work, that is what has informed me working the way that I do now. Also because I'm interested in language and words I think it was just an obvious path to take, but I didn't realise it was obvious at the time. One of the reasons why I've chosen to work as a freelancer is that you can create the space for yourself to have those kinds of dialogues, whereas when you're in a more fixed environment, the production becomes the key factor in what you're doing. To me, product is kind of incidental, it's the whole process that's really, really important. I think it's far more important to look at a thing properly instead of thinking 'somebody's given me these objectives and this timetable and I must have an object to present to these people by this date'. I don't work like that; it's important to teach yourself how you are as an artist.

Q: And again, I think you have to get confident enough in your own practice to think 'I don't need that validation'. I didn't train in craft but I imagine your training is so focused on having a beautiful object at the end.

M: Yes and I had to look at the whole notion of working in that way and break it down and say 'no that's not for me'. It's so liberating. Also, writing for me was such a liberating experience, realising I could express all my ideas in this format as well, because the key motivation for me is sharing information. It's about dialogue, the whole process of throwing everybody's ideas in a pot and seeing what happens.

Q: Other artists have talked about seeing themselves as a role model. Do you see yourself acting as one, both culturally and in terms of your experience as an artist?

M: In one project, I photographed my daily journey and transformed the images into postcards and sent them to the pupils. I took images of my studio and in those postcards I said 'in my studio I sometimes think about this or that and this thing might inspire me or that thing might inspire me'. They had the opportunity to see an aspect of my life beyond being a 'teacher' in the art lesson. I had said to them at the very beginning of the project 'I'm not a teacher, I'm an artist'. Being seen as a role model is something that is always quite key in the projects I have been involved in. At Clapham Girl's Technology College during an evaluation I was doing, it was interesting because I looked and dressed like the girls, so immediately some barriers were broken down even though they perceived me as being in a position of authority. Also, I didn't stand at the front and talk at them, I talked with them during their lesson. It makes a massive difference and I always get the sense that teachers are desperate to work the way artists are working in schools. What I am really interested in is using my practice as a tool to engage with people and actually to create projects where I feel I'm making some difference, whether it be a miniscule one. I am concerned with social change

and somehow effecting some kind of real change. I'm not interested in doing exhibitions or developing my practice in a way where people say 'oh isn't that brilliant and I can buy that'. It just doesn't motivate me as much. What motivates me a lot more is how visual arts is a tool to get people to perceive their world in number of ways or engage in a different arena or create an opportunity for pupils to see other creative or career possibilities. I definitely see being a visual artist as a tool, as opposed to something in its own right.

Q: *That's interesting, nearly all the artists that I've interviewed: that's their motivation. It's about giving people voices but also about having the opportunity to ask questions that they find interesting. They're engaged in a process of self-discovery in a field that they're really interested in and that's why I do it.*

M: That's exactly where I'm coming from and that's exactly what Joining the Dots is about. I think there's no point producing something if you know what the answers are going to be.

Q: *And that's where it becomes research, because you're asking questions and then trying to find some way of getting towards it, but in that process you just get a lot more questions. It's a process of discovery.*

M: Also, you can open up so many possibilities for yourself and other people; it can be a real starting point in so many ways. It's such a brilliant way to work and I love it.

Liz Ellis

Q: What I'd like to do is look at the project you've done but also, when talking about that project, to broaden out the discussion to talk about other work you've done and how you see that project fitting into your broader practice. Have you done quite a lot of work in Birmingham?

L: No, I've done work in Manchester but no, I hardly knew Birmingham and I started off thinking that was a problem but I've done a lot of that kind of work in east London. I thought, if I'm very straightforward with the students about what I don't know and the skills that I do have to share with them then that's quite an interesting way of working. It was obvious I didn't know the area really, so there was no point in me acting otherwise.

Q: And do you think that came as a surprise to them, do you think they were expecting you to be the source of all knowledge?

L: I don't know. One of the things that was really helpful was an external evaluation done on this, because on the evaluation it's clear that the students really enjoyed working with an artist, they'd really enjoyed having experimental approaches. At the time, I hadn't realised how they weren't familiar with some of these ways of working. There were quite a lot of problems within the group.

Q: Yes, it seemed like it was quite a difficult mix and the cohesion wasn't always there.

L: That's right, so I think I felt very acutely aware of those things but not necessarily always able to see what they were enjoying, which was why it was very helpful when somebody else did that evaluation because it revealed that most people had really enjoyed the practical things we had done.

Q: They were, what, mature students?

L: It was a mixture. It really kind of divided along gender lines, but on the whole the women were mature students, mainly single parents. The male students were mainly younger and Asian and Caribbean. The women were Irish, mixed race, but the male students were younger – 16 to 19 – and much more shambolic in terms of time management. I remember at the beginning of the project, thinking that there were ways in which I ran the project as a white woman that might be why it wasn't working, but talking with some of the male tutors who were black or Asian, they were saying 'we are having all the same problems'. There were lots of issues of low self-esteem, poor previous experience of education, getting stoned at college, all that kind of stuff. The group was culturally mixed but the split was much more in terms of

age and commitment to education really, with the women on the whole being far more intent on getting a qualification and finding the whole exam system just really difficult and stressful, but being determined to do it, whereas the young men were much more ambivalent about whether to turn up at all.

Q: Do you think it was significant that you were working within the college?

L: Yes.

Q: And do you think there were issues around the students seeing it as being separate from their course work and you as separate from their teachers, who were there to see them through their exams?

L: No, I think that got really blurred and I felt certainly quite a lot of the young men just saw me as another nagging teacher, there to get them in on time and do something. They would very easily see any kind of attempt by me to get them to think about a piece of work or exhibiting a piece of work as being pressure and deadlines, whereas I tried to emphasise that the stress there is about making a piece of work and it being shown, but that being a different deadline from an exam. There was a sense that they understood it was different, but also problems about managing time, authority and about seeing your work in public, particularly for the young men. That was really stressful for them, the students, the idea that they had choice, and I was working with them to get them to think where they wanted to show their work. There was initially real enthusiasm for this but of course as you know, it's really hard making work to go out in the world and, interestingly, two of them didn't show their work right at the end, although they showed it after the opening night.

Q: One of the things that crops up in the literature on this is the importance of having the artist as role model – do you think that was relevant here, that you in a sense were a role model for a way of working?

L: I think so. I tried to be very overt about the way I made work so we got sketchbooks and I kept my sketchbook alongside theirs and I showed them what I thought was working and what wasn't working. I showed them ideas I'd had in between or when I'd got stuck, so I tried to be very concrete about what I was doing. Also, I made a piece of work using photos I took with the students. But also, there are different ways of being a role model. On one of our first walks, we went past this steel factory and I felt a bit intimidated but I thought 'no, it's really important, I am with this group of students and I've got to show them what to do if you want to take a photograph, in terms of getting permission and being aware that it is a potentially dangerous workspace'. And I went over, and of course the guys working there were great and it was good.

Q: So they took the photographs did they?

L: No, these are mine, but what I mean is that I took these photos with the students, I wasn't going off on my own.

Q: So, do you see it as a collaborative piece of work?

L: No, I don't. I see it as my piece of work based on an experience that we shared as a group.

Q: In terms of the actual physical pieces of work that they finished with, were they all of mixed media?

L: Yes. Some of them made books; we did very practical, skills-based work together, which ranged from print making to sound recording to simple book making, and what I was really pleased about was that no dominant form emerged, they all kind of used a mix of those things.

Q: Were they methods and techniques that they were already familiar with or were you having to teach them from scratch?

L: Yes I was, more or less. Although some of them had done a bit, there was a huge range in the group between what they really knew, and also their capacity to allow themselves to learn. Some in the group were really hungry for as much technical stuff as possible and I would have to make a decision to stop, as I didn't want to spend the whole time teaching them how to print, and I'd say 'that's not what I'm here to do'.

Q: I think it's very relevant that you considered you were not there just to teach them skills and I wonder what you think the wider contribution is that an artist can make?

L: I think it's that as an artist, I have a contribution to make about what's happening in that area. The fact that it's shifting from being an area defined by heavy manual labour to one that is becoming culturally much more mixed, and none of us knew what it was until we discovered it on our travels, and as an artist I can notice these things.

Q: So, do you think it's about getting students to approach a problem or an issue in a different way?

L: Yes, I think so. So, for instance, when we went out to take photos I would emphasise that it was important to think about what we noticed. Each week I'd go and shoot a roll of film and I noticed how much barbed wire there was round the area and lots of them had noticed that and commented on that, so

what's that about? It's about keeping people out, and from what, and what sort of feel does that have? And so it was about critically looking at things. And certainly that comes from my own training and study but also the artists I look at, so I brought in Martha Rosler and her work around the Bowery, or Cleo Broda, who's doing quite witty maps about parks and they're a bit more anarchic. I tried to bring in a mixture of people so there's a sense of ongoing practice, not just my individual wacky ideas.

Q: Is this your practice?

L: No, but I think I have a real interest in urban space with all its contradictions and am interested in how to make work about an area without being sentimental.

Q: Have you done other projects working with community groups exploring this?

L: No, I haven't, but the basis of what I did in Birmingham has made me formulate how this project could develop. This certainly really helped my practice.

Q: I think another issue that's really interesting is: what is it possible to do in terms of collaboration, and whether it is ever possible to truly collaborate on projects of this nature? What do you feel?

L: As I say, I see the piece I made very clearly as being my work, but the words that I use in it reflect very much my experience of being part of that group. So I think it wasn't a collaboration, although some of the students chose to work together. I think the disparate nature of the group meant that it wouldn't have been good to force too much collaboration there.

Q: No, and it seems to me that you see your own practice as separate from this activity that you were doing with the group.

L: I wouldn't have made that work without that group; I would have come up with very different images.

Q: Do you think there was a sense of collaboration between yourself and the other tutors at the college?

L: Definitely, with the coordinator, Mo White. I mean, I think the fact that she is a practising artist is just hugely, hugely important.

Q: Why?

L: Because I think her total belief in the value of me being an artist with the students, she really made sure that I had time to pursue my own ideas and didn't get locked into just teaching them.

Q: Right, so when you made the decision not to just concentrate on developing prints she was there to support you?

L: Yes, totally. I think that as an artist with a strong critical background she completely championed the idea of having an artist in the college, which wasn't particularly supported by her superiors, for instance. And then, because she had been there a long time and worked in that perspective, she brokered a group discussion between the other staff and me, which I really needed.

Q: Was it made clear enough to you at the beginning that you weren't there to police the students or did you think 'I must do well by them, whatever it takes'?

L: I think I'm aware how hard it is to get money to do this kind of project and that this was a precious opportunity. Not me working with them, but the opportunity for them to be able to think in a different way was special and I really wanted them to have the best go, but I did ring up students when they didn't come in, having checked with the tutors about that. I wanted them to know that I cared whether they were coming in. I am sure they saw me as another nagging tutor, but I wanted to do it. I mean, for all the problems of working with this group, that kind of borderline anarchy is really interesting. You know whether something's working or not. I mean, by the end of the project we had achieved a lot with the collection of all the information and we got through sound and photography. Also, really forcing people to look at each other's work, which was difficult for some of them to do, then getting those critical responses. The responses were there, it was just a case of really being a bit more overt about why they were doing it. And I think it's important for artists to have to explain what we are doing.

Q: I spend the whole time trying to articulate why I think that artists are good in this situation and the more I think about it the more, for me, it's about an approach to looking at things and an approach to resolving a problem and a way of tackling fundamental questions. It's asking questions and then trying to answer them in a particular way.

L: Yes. And hopefully you'll see that they're making a lot of those choices already, it's just that they may not know that they're making those choices, so it's about trying to enable them to be decisive about looking at something that they've photographed or chosen, rather than drifting into something because that's what they've seen an advert look like. It's certainly about developing critical skills and these are fantastic life skills.

Q: *Do you think there is a situation where you were relating back to their personal experiences? Because I think that notion that an artist can draw on their own individuality to inform what it is that they're making is also significant.*

L: Yes. I certainly felt that about a young woman who chose to make work about the absence of women graffiti artists. It was really interesting seeing her work because I think it was good for her having a woman artist running the project, but it also raised lots of difficulties for her. She mainly identified with the young men. She had lots of friends in that group and she shared lots of their ambivalence about being at college and it was very interesting watching how much she would allow herself to realise that there were things that she didn't share with them, like the whole machismo thing. We came to talk a lot about how she might want to introduce any of these ideas in her work. Lots of options about whether there was going to be anything written by her work and in the end she wasn't overt in either her imagery or in the text, although she actually said all sorts of things. I think it was really unsurprising, the fact that she wasn't overt, because the peer pressure against her being political with that would have been very hard for her and she's got to be with these guys for the next couple of years. It was interesting and hard watching those kind of battles. The women were the most insistent on doing some work and enthusiastic, although they had great doubts about their skills as well. And I think, for them, having an artist was really a great thing. Also, I think Mo, as a feminist artist, was clearly putting in a stake for that kind of critical practice.

Q: *The other issue that I'm interested in is how you see the work that you're doing on this project in relation to the art world and this idea of whether artists feel the need to protect their artistic profile when they're doing community based work. I wondered what your feelings were?*

L: It's interesting looking at that and I think the problem is that artists do feel that. I'd like not to believe it but I do think there is kind of an absurd snobbery and as artists we know all that, but I don't agree with it. But for years, because I've made work as inserts for magazines or things to take away, the idea of showing in a gallery for me is the least interesting way of showing my work. For myself I'm always interested in thinking about other ways that work is distributed so I don't see it as a problem. But I suppose these kinds of projects are very time and energy consuming and I think that any artist who lightly agrees to any of these projects is usually astounded by how engrossing they are, so I can understand that for those who are kind of set on gallery careers, they can feel that it takes up too much energy. But although it is tiring, those kinds of fundamental questions of why we're bothering being alive(!), being involved in the creative process, what role art has in society, they need to be addressed. I see the kind of work I'm employed in as being part of the tradition of Tim Rollins and Kids of Survival or the work of Jo

Stockham here, she's much more successful in the art world than I am but shares many of the same concerns

Q: One of the things we haven't talked about, and we could talk about it in terms of Tim Rollins, is the idea that you as an artist have a role to play as a social activist and whether art and the artist can address social inclusion issues. Are projects like this the way to do it?

L: You know, there's no one way is there? I feel that certainly as an artist one of the things I've thought about for years is how I can make work for myself that is beautiful, that does have some sensory pleasure. But I think the idea that things can be beautiful and have something to say politically or critically for me is a real obsession and has informed everything I've made. I don't want to be an artist like Steven Willats, for instance, who has been thinking about social issues, but I think there's lots of space for us in the same way there is in a gallery setting. We need much more of the opening up of that kind of dialogue in a way that there is in the art magazines for gallery artists. There's not enough debate around it.

Q: I agree with you. I think there is still this hang-up on what is an artist and what does an artist do, and also in this country I think there is the really strong tradition of community art, which is almost the either/or. You work in community art or you show in galleries and trying to break down that is really tricky.

L: Artists who have any kind of strength or skill in this tend to get asked to do it again and again, and gallery-successful artists tend not to do that. So then we are somehow seen as being very earnest and worthy, whereas for me this is as difficult and challenging and exciting as everything else.

Q: I know what you mean and I think there are whole issues here around skill and quality and whether producing a finished product legitimises what an artist does because they make that beautiful thing, rather than that they've engaged in a really interesting process with a group of people. But the other thing about the idea of the artist as social activist is the idea that you are raising peoples' consciousness. Several of the applications state that the aim of the project was to empower people and I don't know whether you felt that there was an element of that here?

L: I think people have got a right to state their opinions; to have critical skills is essential as a life skill. I was working on encouraging that within the project; how you deal with having to resolve something, having to be brave enough to make a finished statement that is going to go on the wall or in the car park or in a steel factory. I think that involved developing peoples skills, which is really valuable. And many of the students really needed those skills to be employable. So I think that was on the agenda and it's a classic, really kind of woolly vague one.

Q: It is amazing how many times it's said that the benefit of having artists working in schools is it raises people's confidence and it's sort of left at that without actually going 'well, how and why and to what extent and over what period'. And if you go back in a year's time will it really have made that much difference or does it just give everyone a bit of a feel good factor?

L: I'm really curious about that myself. I do think to be consistent you need to go back in a year's time. What if anything or nothing has been remembered? How many of them dropped out of college anyway? It's really difficult and in that way you can understand why artists don't wish to get involved in this kind of work because it does become very vague and mushy. It needs to be clear what's actually going on. For example, working on a project that has a clear end date, using and developing skills which will result in a public exhibition. In this case, this also included using critical and reflective skills, which for some of the group were valued skills and will inform future college work and employment.

Richard Neville

Q: It would be useful if you could talk about Mappa and how you came together.

R: We came together by a whole series of personal coincidences. Emily had heard me telling stories, and she was doing a project at the Museum of London with Rachel who is the other member.

Q: What is Rachel's practice?

R: She focuses on making, weaving, that kind of work.

Q: And what's Emily's practice?

R: She does things like paving work and she works in concrete. But there is a difference between what I do and what Emily and Rachel do. Emily and Rachel, being visual artists, produce something which has to be planned, because they need to anticipate what materials they need and what process is going to be used and they need to have time to make something at the end of it. Whereas storytelling is not like being a poet, in that a lot of storytelling is about it being a vehicle for a relationship between you and the people you are working with. But maybe that is true of all art practice and that it's something about that relationship that drives what happens. I don't need to plan as such, although obviously I need to be competent enough to be relaxed and open and I need a wide repertoire of tricks and stories and so forth.

Q: What is your background? How did you become a storyteller?

R: I don't think that there is any standard way of becoming a storyteller and again this makes me a bit worried when I work with other artists, because they invariably have very clear professional paths that they have been down. The fact is, all my life I have been interested in stories and I have always told them and I was interested in mythology and at some point I came across people telling stories and I thought, maybe if I tried telling stories I'd have a greater insight into the nature of a story or nature of a myth and I still feel that. So really all that is my personal research, my life research path. My whole career has built up on a series of coincidences, although now I have a body of work as I have been working since 1994.

Q: Is the involvement in some form of community arts a conscious decision that you made?

R: No, however, retrospectively I have realised that it is the place to explore issues to do with storytelling and I have got a lot of work through the

Lewisham Library Service who I met via working on the Lewisham Bridge project. We started to do much more community-based story collecting projects. Until working with the travellers I'd focused on folk tales as a vehicle, as a window into whatever art activities followed on from that. After that project I started to ask myself what were the living embodiments of folk tradition that we could look at now, rather than expecting some rather romantic discovery of a still-surviving tradition that could be traced back hundreds of years. What I realised was that people still tell stories and they are still as strong and as powerfully structured as the folk tales but they are just not recognised to be that. So since then, I have done a number of projects around collecting stories and talking to people and moving into video work. I did a Year of the Artist project involving collecting stories in Lewisham and making a video around that and how the urban environment contrasted with their life narratives.

Q: And do you see any difference in that project that you did as The Year of the Artist and say the Artists in Sites for Learning project?

R: I think there is a big difference. I think there is a difference between me working on my own and working with Rachel and Emily. I think there is a big difference if you are a group, if you can present what you do in some sort of wider context. I am very influenced by folklore theory and anthropology to some extent, but mainly what would be called 'folkloristics' which is not really an English study at all and is derived either from Eastern Europe or from America. The version of it that would go on here would be called anthropology. In the areas where I am interested, it is a study of storytellers and their social, political contexts, probably beginning in the 1850's. That was the start of actual transcriptions of storytellers, going up until the 1950's and beyond. There are lots of concepts that I find very inspirational for what I do and the one that I kept talking to the others about was this one called 'Emergence'. The idea of Emergence is that you don't know what something means, particularly what a story means, until you begin to tell it with that particular audience and then the meanings emerge collaboratively through the interactions that go on. Therefore, if you are going to capture what the story is, you have to regard it as what they call 'narrative events' rather than a chunk of texts.

Q: So again it's about the relationship as much as the actual body of the text.

R: Absolutely. For me that is the focus of everything I do; art as a vehicle, rather than art as a distinct experience. In folkloristics they talk about four perspectives of folklore and this helped me to think about the Lewisham Bridge project. These are firstly 'folklore as an artefact', which involves thinking about the works of art as artefacts. Applying that to Lewisham, that would be

the things we produced. Then there is folklore as what they call 'transmissible entity', which means that you can pass it on, like a story can be passed on, or a style of knitting or a weaving pattern. What you explore then is how it persists, who takes it up and where it goes. Applied to Lewisham, it would be 'what did we leave behind and did it get transmitted in any way?' Which it did in interesting ways. Then there is folklore as 'personal resource'. An example in folklore would be somebody who is troubled by strange dreams becoming a visionary within his community.

Q: So in a sense that is an example where people become empowered through participating.

R: Yes, and in Lewisham and Dover it was quite clear that, through the act of doing the work, somehow or other people grew as individuals and became empowered through it. The last one is folklore as 'community identity', so you can say that is what my people produce. For example, when we were working with travellers, there was one occasion when one of the mothers came to our end of project celebration and she looked at a particular photo. This was made by projecting a slide onto a traveller girl's face and she said 'ah, that sums up the travelling life'. Which is saying in some way, well that expresses our identity. Those four perspectives did apply quite well to the project.

Q: And how do you think that Rachel and Emily related to those concepts?

R: That is a good question as I think they had their own way of thinking about it and it wouldn't be that, but they could see that it was relevant and made sense. I am sure they would use a different language. I have been trying to persuade them of this idea that work and storytelling have always been traditionally related, since perhaps ninety per cent of the stories that were told were much shorter stories than were told during the course of work, so that somehow the story fits in with some craft process. With the Lewisham Bridge project we were trying to think of some simple process of making that would also lend itself to being narrated, which could be understood and enjoyed by young children.

Q: How did you manage to do that within the project? Were they talking as they were making?

R: It might have been better if we had created a story together as we were doing it, but with that particular group it somehow it didn't work. On this particular occasion we tried to physicalise the experience of making a footprint. Originally the idea was we would cover the whole of the floor in clay and we would get them to dance, but in the end we had four trays filled

with sand and I narrated a story about being on a desert island and walking round the island and stamping. I improvised as it went on and I picked up how they were responding and as they stamped round this imaginary island they made their footprints. Then we mixed up the plaster of Paris and everyone got to stir it and I told a story as the stirring went on and then we poured it. When it came out they had this beautiful look of ancient records of transient passage. We thought, that connects to journey making, to map making and even to these footprints we saw in the mud at Appleby horse fair. It was very rich and that was an example of 'Emergence', in that we began to understand what it was all about between us and our collaborators.

Q: Do you feel that you are on a collaborative process of learning in a project like that?

R: Completely. That's how I would see it, but with Emily and Rachel, I think it's slightly different. They want something physical, and they have got far less room to manoeuvre. But even with that, the meanings alter and I know they did have moments when they re-imagined what they were doing. We are still learning about whether and when should we come together and maybe the footprint thing was successful because that was a time when we were all happily engaged and had a role, rather than one person doing something and the other two hanging around. That is always a question. Do we work separately and then find an interesting way to bring our work together – is that what our collaboration is about? Or do we restrict and structure what we do a lot more, so that we and the children all work collaboratively throughout? What is the difference between those two experiences for the children? I think our approach is quite unstructured, although on the Dover project it was more tightly structured because we thought it was a more high-profile project.

Q: Was that because the funders of the project had clear aims and objectives, that you felt you needed to take on board?

R: Yes, although we had more or less formulated our own. We are lucky in that we are not given a brief, but we develop our own. We got on very well with South East Arts, the main funders and they were interested in the vision of the project.

Q: How would you describe the vision?

R: For us it was a vision of an integration of craft practices with narrative practices, which could potentially connect with the traditions that the refugees were bringing with them and to work with ideas of identity and personal empowerment.

Q: So do you think there was a political agenda in the sense of empowerment?

R: Yes. Because that area, east Kent, is very deprived, and there was a focus, connected to the funding, on deprived and excluded communities in that area.

Q: So there was a social inclusion issue?

R: There was, and also we wanted to work with what we were calling a 'peer-pairing system' in that each refugee or collaborator would chose someone from their class to work with them. That only broke down when we went to a secondary school, where it seemed that they made it hard for us to do that.

Q: Why?

R: Dover is a very complicated place because it's an area that is very unused to people stopping, it's used to people travelling through. This was the only secondary school that willingly took refugees. However, there were lots of tensions between the refugees and the other pupils in the school and we got the feeling that they wanted us to take the refugees off their hands for a while. We were given this little room and given all the refugees and a couple of rather unwilling NVQ students. But interestingly, as news spread about what we were doing, people would poke their heads round he door and ask if they could join. We spent two days a week there over three weeks but we thought if we could come every week for a year, then maybe news would have spread through word of mouth through the school and we could have evolved some extraordinary way of working that would have made real sense. But what happened was that we really became a ghetto and people would say, they refer to them as 'the blacks', that was their term for refugees, even the very, very pale blue-eyed Albanians. So people would say 'why are the blacks making a film', so it created envy and it identified people as refugees when many of them didn't want to be identified as refugees. We suddenly realised that good intentions are just not sufficient and you need to be very aware that the category of refugee is not a friendly one to ask people to join. But also it's all very well for us to think that art is a good idea, but often they just want to get on with their lives, so the best we can do is use it as a vehicle for having honest, open and satisfying contact, which is positive for both of us.

Q: And relevant to them. Projects need to be relevant to the participants' lived experience.

R: We are always very concerned to find out what they want to do and why. We also worked in a research and development phase with this project,

because that is one of the things we felt we had not had enough of in Lewisham. We tried originally to get specific money to do an R&D project, but it was thought not to be appropriate and the sort of projects they were funding under that scheme were experimental theatre companies and so forth. Clearly that is not what we were doing, so eventually we got money to do it as part of the later project.

Q: Would you like that to be part of projects in the future?

R: Definitely.

Q: Was part of your remit to teach specific storytelling skills?

R: I never felt that and don't feel that.

Q: Was there ever any pressure on you from schools to do that?

R: No. I think they were probably just pleased that we were there at times to bring something different and I think they were always generous and supportive. They'd sometimes talk to me about story telling and we'd have conversations either about the traditions the stories are from or about the value of story telling in teaching.

Q: And did any of the teachers say they might use some of this?

R: Occasionally. There was one teacher responsible for working with refugees and she was very enthusiastic. I had a feeling that what she enjoyed was the fact that we didn't push things with them and worked within the grain of their interests. I think she picked up particularly on using storytelling as a means of centring and bringing a group together, before proceeding to another stage of the work and I think it does have that. There were one or two cases where that really worked and you could see people suddenly understanding how the language of symbols and picture language can actually mean something. There were moments when you had that sense of somebody desperately trying to drag as much as they could out of the experience and it was very poignant because you know that you're moving on. It happens rarely and I always feel that those are the moments that we're aiming for, to open up what looks like an inner space. Sometimes, particularly with children, but I suppose also with adults, they tend to think everything is out there and you just want to say, 'you don't have to look anywhere, just stop and find it inside'. There isn't any systematic way of breaking into that world.

Q: You see someone's response and then respond accordingly and you can't pre plan. I think that's where the skills come in.

R: I think it's very difficult to define what those skills are, but they're vital skills and I think it also comes with having experience and being sufficiently confident. But for me, the art is somehow to stand back and not get too anxious about trying to keep everything controlled. But Rachel has said that to get the results that she wanted, her energy had to be quite focused. Whether that's just our personalities or something about the nature of our work, I don't know.

Q: *Particularly with visual art, you get this antagonism between process and product. You want to allow people freedom within the process to experiment and make mistakes, but you're in a finite project, everybody wants something nice at the end. How do you resolve the two?*

R: It is, the process is important but I know Rachel put in a lot of time to create the final piece.

Q: *It sounds interesting to have the contrast between your working practice that is really by definition fluid, and hers, which is much more structured.*

R: Also it's quite obvious if the visual art work is good or not, whereas the story is told and then it's just vanished and I can choose to retell it but I'm in complete control of the telling. And no doubt the children will retell it and they're also in control of the retelling, but there's no ideal that it has to correspond to.

Q: *There is always the difficulty with visual art objects related to finish and quality and whether kids get very upset if they feel it's not of good quality.*

R: I can see you don't want to patronise children by pretending that what they've made is really good if it's not, so you have to make something that looks really good so they are shocked and astounded by having contributed to something which has real transformation in it.

Q: *And yet they can still have an ownership.*

R: But perhaps that is the key. There is this other folkloristic idea, which is, as you make something, you tell a story, and the story then feeds in to the making and you end up with an object, which is incomplete without the narrative. And for me that is the ideal. There is some Russian word which means something like 'integrity' from folklore theory, where the physical activity, the visual arts, the narrated story and the life context are all brought together in one complete indivisible whole. It is a great idea, but the reason it tends not to work is that the people are not themselves sufficiently skilful to engage in a craft activity and think about other things at the same time. For

example, initially the students would be making the felt and I would be talking to them and that upset Rachel because she perceived that the quality of the felt making was suffering. And again it's about the end result so we compromised and they would work and then I'd take them away and have a chat with them. But that's frustrating for me because I feel that the activity releases a different set of stories. For me that is the ideal that has yet to be fully realised.

Q: Do you think it ever tips over into therapy?

R: I'd hate it if it did. We talked about that particularly in the Dover project. On one or two occasions, particularly at the secondary school, people started to talk about very nasty experiences and then it seemed that they got something valuable out of talking about them. That's the one and only time when folk tales directly connected to their experiences, because folk tales evoke a world which is extremely violent and somebody said by hearing these stories they can see that their experience is a common experience. It has some currency and it's not just a nasty thing that happened to them and nobody else. So I think on that occasion it worked but generally no. In a way I'm not interested in that because our focus is on the creative process rather than therapeutic.

Q: Do you think there is any training you've had in the past that you draw on?

R: Yes I do. There's a particular clown within the physical theatre that is derived from Russian theatre traditions, who came to England. His teaching related to aspects of communication to do with openness and simplicity and honesty and I applied that to story telling. It had nothing to do with words but to do with how you show yourself and how you encourage a relationship. A lot of stories focus on verbal skills and visualisation and completely ignore what I think is the most significant thing, which is what goes on between you and the audience; the meaning and what that is and how you work with that or how you allow that to appear. He certainly taught me more than any other living human being who I've actually met.

Q: I think that's really interesting, because that notion of where meaning resides, is how I think as a visual artist in terms of the relationship between the audience and the art work. I think there is a parallel there.

R: I had a long debate with Rachel about meaning and our attitude towards it and I think she sees a difference between her individual practice in one sense and her community practice. In her individual practice she begins with a very clear idea of what, for her, the work is going to mean and then good luck if somebody else finds something in it. Whereas for me, I don't see any

difference between the work I do on my own and my work anywhere else, it's all one practice. And I don't begin with an idea of what it should mean even to myself. I just begin and I move from moment to moment, merely trying to make each moment a satisfying one for me and that group and, not worrying about where that ends up. That is the difference between us.

Q: Again it ties into the product versus process notion. Because if you're putting a finished product out there, although there is that negotiation, that's always going to be fixed in one sense, on the object. Whereas your process is continuous.

R: It could end up anywhere. It could end up in a dance. This again will illustrate a certain attitude, but there were a couple of Romany children and a couple of English children, and the English children had learnt, possibly unusually, English country dancing and the Romany children had a dance, so I got them together an hour before we did the final assembly. I said, 'come on, let's make a dance' and I played the accordion and they started to make this dance and when they performed it, they were finding out how the dance was going to work and that sort of searching, that clumsiness, but such an honest searching that to me expresses so much about communication and about collaboration. It was the honesty of the search that made the work. But it wasn't a polished and finished work. Even the clumsiness of my accordion playing I thought was really successful. But that's quite close to the clowning idea, which is that the clown doesn't want to be successful but just wants to be seen. In a way the clown is attempting to be successful but if he fails he's delighted that people have watched his failure just as much and with the clown that's what we sympathise with.

Q: Again it's that idea of it has to be of quality and a universal notion of what is quality.

R: Yes. I did a project with a dancer in Newham with young people and it was the same thing, so similar to working with a visual artist. She had to produce a dance and the dance had to look good. With her I found the way was to work with the young people to make a sound track by going on journeys around the school and getting them to talk about it. We made this thing, which could then be played and woven into the dance. As usual I was poking around from the outside saying 'let me in, let me in, all you wonderful finished-product people!'

Q: But it's interesting in relation to the way art forms are taught in schools as well, where there is possibly a very clear right and wrong, and what is liberating around these kind of projects, is you get artists going in saying there is no right way, we will discover whatever way it is but forget the idea that I've got the answer and you've got to find it out from me.

R: Yes I think that's true, it's like the whole project becomes a performance. But the truth is I should be very grateful to Rachel that she produced

something which looks really good at the end. But if it hadn't looked really good would it have been such a success?

Q: Do you ever see yourself as having to act as a role model? Do people ever ask you about the practicalities of your life, how do you survive being a storyteller?

R: Very rarely. Only adults are fascinated by that. The children accept you at face value. They're interested to meet people who are not parents or teachers and I think in a way you're being a model in terms of you're concentrated and you're engaged with what you're doing. I think you're trying to teach those skills as well.

Q: And the skills of honesty and openness?

R: Absolutely. The essential things. Taking whatever comes, making something out of it and sending it back in an honest and open way. That for me is the essence of the art.

Q: Do you get those moments where you think 'I have made a real difference'?

R: Yes, and there were three or four on the Dover project, I think, but we were there a short time. You can't feel too bad about the fact that you can't do follow up work because then you become something else, an arts support worker perhaps, and I think the legacy has been quite strong. People still talk about it and we did stir things up.

Q: Sometimes it takes a while, you leave a project and you think what was actually happening there. I always think it would be great to go back six months later and see if it has fallen into place in the long term.

R: I think that's very true. You understood what you did in the light of further thoughts and subsequent projects.

Freddie Robins

F: My own practice now is working with knitted textiles but primarily I've made pieces which resemble garments or parts of garments. I enjoy working with the technique that has so many social stereotypes and expectations and talking about other issues using friendly, understandable domestic techniques.

Q: So you knit on knitting machines?

F: Yes. Sometimes I do hand knitted things and sometimes I pay other people to hand knit for me. Most things I've done have been non-functional garments which talk about expectation to do with the body, expectation to do with being human and how we might or might not want to be or feel.

Q: And do you show the work as fine art pieces?

F: Yes, I do but because I came from a design craft background … I was at Middlesex doing textiles and at the Royal College doing textiles; when I came out of that I was much more into the craft side, but I have been showing in a fine arts context as well.

Q: One of the things that I picked up in the evaluation report was a sense that you worked really closely with the students at the college during this project and although they were producing pieces of work which were theirs, they were very collaboratively produced. It sounded like you ended up giving them an enormous amount of technical assistance.

F: Many of the students needed phenomenal amounts of physical and technical assistance, so I was doing that and other members of staff volunteered to help, but that's very much the nature of the college, because some of the students are severely disabled. I had one student who can only communicate through touching a pad, and a lot of the students can't physically make, so they would say what they wanted and you would do things for them.

Q: So you were facilitating?

F: Yes. You end up being their hands.

Q: And how did you feel about that?

F: I'm happy about that but even though we had masses of staff you can never have enough. I wouldn't say it was a problem, but when you see three students who need you and you're like 'where do I go?' But the students are obviously very used to working in that kind of way and they were great. I really enjoyed working with mostly young people who'd had very different life

experiences because their bodies were different. So they'd been treated differently because they had to be, but also because that's how society treats them. I was just completely fascinated by it and completely, maybe in a sentimental way, moved by the whole experience. It was a really, really strong creative and emotional time.

Q: Do you think it fed into your own practice given that you're interested in those issues?

F: I'm not sure how it fed in actually creatively. I think intellectually it really fed in. It's really strengthened my views on the way society treats people and the way society could function in a more open way. It's expanded my understanding, which of course will feed into my work, but I can't say it's directly fed into my work.

Q: But do you think that was one of the attractions for doing the project?

F: Yes, the attraction was working with people who've had a completely different life experience to me. I was asked to do the project because of the work I'd been making.

Q: It's really interesting that it all came out of your practice.

F: Yes, and the project ran alongside an exhibition and that worked incredibly well. When it was installed at the MAC Gallery in Birmingham some of the students' work was selected and shown alongside professional makers' work and it was great. They curated and selected really appropriately.

Q: And why do you think the pieces that were selected were appropriate, was it their technical standard or was it their conceptual level?

F: It was their conceptual level and the energy that had gone into the thinking. Most of the pieces selected had a lot of work by other people's hands making it, but it was much more to do with the thought going into it. Most of them weren't by visual arts students, as the project was for visual and performing arts students. Most of the work selected was by performing arts students and I think they didn't have any preconceptions about technique or skill or what it should be.

Q: I think that's really interesting because the project report says that it enabled the staff and students to move outside the curriculum. Do you think that's true?

F: I do think that's true. I like an atmosphere where people can say or do whatever they want and we enjoyed ourselves. So we were talking about things which were really serious but laughing as well, so the whole

atmosphere was really strong. There was a lot of discussion as well. We sat and spoke about things, and especially when Semba was there because Semba has much more experience of working in this kind of way than me, I'm much more used to teaching on a one-to-one basis.

Q: Did you find that a challenge?

F: Yes, it was a challenge and it was interesting when Semba and I were both there together, because of the different approaches we had. I'm interested in text and I liked the way that Semba got them thinking a lot through words and then we tried that back onto fabric. I really liked that kind of cross fertilisation. But I found it a quite different way of teaching from the kind they do at The Royal College and quite confusing at times.

Q: Could you say a bit more about that?

F: It's quite difficult trying to do my own practice and then going to the Royal College and thinking on the post-graduate level and then thinking at the level of the students at Hereward – which is at foundation level in their actual practice ability, but degree level in their conceptual ability. So I just found it quite difficult to quickly move onto different levels like that.

Q: Is that because the nature of the experience is very much based on dialogue, so what you're responding to is what that student in any given situation is giving you?

F: Yes, I think that is a lot of it and the kind of advice and information you pass on, you have to picture the right level of peoples' understanding and experience.

Q: Can you give me an example of that kind of situation?

F: I suppose it is things like visual references. A student might be going along with an idea and if I was teaching at post-graduate level I might suggest an artist or an exhibition that I think is really relevant for them to look at. And for a student at the Hereward level, I'm not so sure that it actually is so relevant for them to look at that, because it's not in the rest of their experience at all. Everything at Hereward was coming from within and when I'm teaching on post-graduate level things start from a kernel within, but you have to go outside and research and bring it back.

Q: Do you think it's because the project enabled the students to explore those ideas about the body and society's perceptions for the first time?

F: Yes, because for a lot of students it was the first time but I really noticed that students were so much more mature. You would get an 18-year-old

student who one minute was like an 18-year-old, but then the next minute was talking about experiences and understandings that I'd be shocked to find in someone that was 25 or 26. They think about things way ahead of themselves because they've actually experienced them.

Q: And do you think that your role was to enable them to articulate their feelings and thoughts in a different medium?

F: Yes, I think it was. For most people it was the first time they'd actually had a real chance to explore their feelings and talk about life in their work.

Q: I find that very interesting because it always makes me think about how I relate life and my practice and given the nature of your work, would you say that that did kind of resonate with you?

F: Yes it did resonate with me, but we took a very different approach to how I make work myself. When I make my garments, lots of the ways I distort them are to do with how knitted garments are made and I use detailing techniques which are used in traditional garment making so that when the viewer looks at them they look like a real garment. But we couldn't do that in this project because it's just way too technical, and in some cases we were incredibly crude about skills.

Q: So do you think you were there to teach them the technical skills?

F: I think it's much more to do with talking about ideas and helping find solutions that were appropriate for them. I don't feel I taught any particular set skills. I mean to individuals, I talked about how you might do this and that, so if someone did do some screen printing I went through with them a bit on how to do screen printing, but it was more about the skill that was appropriate to what they wanted to make. It was about dealing in ideas and dealing with different solutions, because they only knew a few, so we talked about many more. It was about widening their knowledge of the different ways you can do things.

Q: And do you think they looked at you as an artist? Did you talk about what you do as an artist?

F: We did talk about that in a very broad sense, but I'm not sure how interested they were in that.

Q: Do you think it helped having Semba, since he's a wheelchair user?
F: It was very helpful. When we first started the project I showed my work and the response was phenomenal, they all asked masses of questions or they

just go, 'I like that, I like that' and you're like 'oh, like massive'. And then when Semba spoke about his work they were just blown away because he's in a wheelchair like a lot of them. They were really inspired by that. 'Here he is, he's in a wheelchair and he's a successful poet and he's out there doing it.'

Q: Which I imagine was definitely one of the aims of the project, having good positive role models. Had you ever worked with group with disabilities before?

F: I've worked with people with quite severe learning difficulties, people who've got severe autism and people with severe behavioural problems at a craft workshop in Finsbury Park, Ormond Road.

Q: Had you any training?

F: No, not at all. It's all just me really. I just enjoyed mixing with the students so much. I did it for about two or three years, but by the time I stopped doing it I just felt this isn't going anywhere for me. The students' work wasn't going to improve because of their disabilities; we were just going to move around different areas. And the only way that I could get more out of it would be to train in it, but I didn't want to, so I stopped doing it. I felt I needed to understand much more about the students and to develop things that would push them forward.

Q: Do you think that's partly because you want to be building on their skills rather than just doing one-offs, with everything that you're doing?

F: I like the relationship I build with the students and I enjoy the journey and I think that at Ormond Road the journey wasn't that kind of development, I couldn't go forward with it.

Q: Do you think the satisfaction is partly because it has parallels to developing one's own practice where there's a sense that you've never arrived, you're always pushing it, always on a journey – and when I was doing this kind of work that's exactly how I felt, was that it was only interesting to me – if it was a different kind of journey but it had distinct parallels?

F: Yes it's definitely got to be moving somewhere. To me, it's got to have an aim, which could be like learning a skill. With my teaching at college I love the fact that I feel with my students we're all on the same path. It's just I'm ahead of them at the moment, but that's only through experience. I enjoy the idea that we're all in it together and that I can feed back my experience and I can try and make the journey a little bit easier and demystify things. That's one of the things I'm really enjoying, the passing back of knowledge. I mean at Hereward the knowledge I got was the knowledge of people's lives in that kind of way.

Q: So it's the conversation, the dialogue?

F: Yes, I find that teaching at the level I do on degree and post-graduate level, that does feed into my work quite directly in many ways because there are people who work in similar skills or similar thought processes or thought patterns, or they've been and seen something and they tell you, 'I really enjoy that'. When you're in your studio making work it is quite isolating and I really enjoy going into the college. I get a really big buzz from the students developing and a really big buzz from their achievement.

Q: Would you say that you are wedded to a particular technical process in your own work?

F: In my own work yes, but most of what I teach is nothing to do with my technical process at all. It's much more about the development of ideas, use of materials, putting what they're doing into context, relating it to the outside world, how it might function in the outside world; other people that they might look at, other designers, artists, architects, other sources of inspiration and just feeding back my experience.

Q: Do you think when you were going into Hereward it's the same but on a different level?

F: On a much, much lesser level. Hereward was much more about getting on with things.

Q: It was an incredibly short project actually.

F: Yes, there was a hell of a lot to get through.

Q: And was that a problem?

F: At the end of the day it wasn't a problem. It was just something I had to really get to grips with and really push through.

Q: And if you look back, what do you think was left behind?

F: I think it opened up possibilities to students, that they might not necessarily have known about, to do with ways of working.

Q: You've talked about how much you like teaching, but where do you think that comes from? Is it from your training?

F: Yes, I think it's because I really like people, and my work is very much informed by my feelings of me within society and within groups of other people. I do enjoy the passing on of knowledge. I do really believe in

education. I think it's fantastic. I think without education your opportunities are so limited. I just like to encourage people to go out there and enjoy themselves and to see stuff and do stuff and really make life what it can be, because life can be awful. I do think it's really up you, especially if you're given great educational opportunities. You have so much choice about how good you make your life and some people don't have that choice, so I do enjoy that.

Q: And where does art fit into that?

F: Well I think art gives you the most choice of all really, because it gives you the ability to express yourself, the ability to use your body in a physical way, which I think is really great. To me it gives you the ability to do lots of different things even if you don't want to operate as an artist, the kind of skills that you pick up.

Q: How would you define those skills?

F: Well I think it is about being able to express yourself, so being either eloquent verbally or through what you make and show, and about sharing things in the wider community. It gives you a different way of thinking about the world which you can put into any kind of context. A way of thinking beyond your own life experiences.

Q: Given the life experiences of the people you were teaching at Hereward, what do you think art could do?

F: One of the things that does give me a little concern is that when people have any kind of disability people always wheel art in, it's something to do, and I hope that it isn't still seen like that. Because I think that art can be a way to frame and discuss your experiences. I do think it offers many more opportunities.

Q: Did you feel that Hereward was your project?

F: No, I didn't feel it was my project; I felt very much that it was a real massive group thing – Mine and Semba's and Karen the photographer and also all the staff at the college, like the head of art. What we did right at the end was the students presented their work so other students from the college came and then we had a sharing event and it was really great. So the students who were interested in performance were able to perform much more and then other students that were studying film recorded the events, so it involved other people too. I would have liked to continue the relationship with the college, but realistically it's too far away. But at Hereward the staff are so lucky to have their art teacher, Karen Johnson, and she and I worked quite closely together. And the project would have a good legacy because it fed the staff as much as it fed the students, so in that sense it will carry on.

Q: In the context of community projects, are artists teaching what people assume they're teaching?

F: I don't think they are at all.

Q: In what way?

F: Because I think people find it difficult to evaluate or understand this thing about ideas or problem-solving or thinking broader. I think a lot of people think 'oh, you taught them to screen print, you taught them knit' and those things are important but that's not necessarily what students are coming away with; it's not necessarily important for everyone.

Q: Do you think it's tied up with what peoples' perception of art is?

F: Yeah, artists or crafts people, designers. They always see the physical thing, they don't see what goes on behind it, the process and thought.

Q: I'm always interested in how people got to the thing.

F: And also because you're spending a lot of time in your process it must be a process you enjoy. That's what you spend most of your time doing, is the process. I feel the process has to give you something too, some kind of pleasure or challenge, which is one of the problems I have with ideas of craft when you're just manufacturing. You just do that all the time, day in, day out. You just become a kind of machine. Also, having said all this about education, I would have hated to be a teacher. It would be my bottom job. I would rather join the army than be a teacher.

Q: Why?

F: I think because of this thing about working within schools; they have such set curriculum, such set processes, which I'm not interested in and I don't believe in and I just am terrified of all the discipline and all that structure. Although I like a structure in my life I don't like someone else to tell me how that structure is. I like to try and define it for myself and work it out.

Q: Even if you would say your role in it is to challenge the curriculum?

F: I think that's too big a challenge because I think it's such a big thing. You've got to have a life and have to cling on to your practice sometimes. I think you have to have a practice that you'd be happy to share with the students and if you feel embarrassed or you don't want the students to know what you do then I think there's serious problems going on there.

Esther Sayers

E: I do think it's interesting – putting artists in different situations and getting them to question it all. 'Artists in sites for learning' is quite specific, in the sense that it's much more based on your ideas as the individual artist. But the term 'sites for learning', I've had to really think about. What does it mean?

Q: I think it is a key thing, trying to think about 'what is a site for learning?' and 'what is the learning that's going on there?', in terms of teaching and learning about specific art skills or the idea that art can empower and give people a voice to articulate their own issues and concerns.

E: Or is it to do with the audience that then gets to see it, which is what we've done with our project, because we've put it into a public library? The site for the installation, is it already a site of learning? But because you've put this art work in there, a different kind of learning or a different kind of exchange takes place that wouldn't normally happen in a library. The space that we put it in becomes charged and more significant, particularly as it happened to be in the teenage lending library section which wasn't used as much as the library would have liked. So we cleared out all the books and installed the work.

Q: Was it your choice to put it in there?

E: Yes, myself and Anthony.

Q: Will you talk a bit about the project. How did you get involved?

E: I was education assistant at Camden Arts Centre at the time and also, as an artist, doing quite a lot of education projects with other places, Anthony O'Flaherty contacted the Centre because he had an idea about working with a deaf group.

Q: And he signs doesn't he?

E: Yes. He mainly makes video work and had finished at St Martin's a year previously and was teaching in a deaf school. I was asked whether I'd like to work with Anthony because a lot of the ideas about communication and the way that people understand knowledge was significant in both in our practices. I was involved in collaboration at the time with an art historian and someone who was doing a practice philosophy-based PhD. The three of us collaborated for about three years, on something called 'Materialisations', where we tried to develop a shared practice between three people. We were looking at ways of not holding our own practice as sacred and private,

but looking at ways we could share that and therefore start to share knowledge and make new knowledges based on that. So that was an exciting process happening at the same time. Then, talking to Anthony about the way knowledge is exchanged between a hearing person and a deaf person, the deaf person and hearing person, there seemed to be connections.

Q: Is he deaf himself?

E: No he's not.

Q: He just has an interest in it?

S; Yes. I don't know how and why or where it came from, but it's a really profound interest and a long way down that road. But the other important thing about my role I think, was that I was working as an education assistant here. People kept saying to me 'don't you feel schizophrenic going between these two different roles?' but I was anyway sort of an artist and an education assistant all the time.

Q: I think that's certainly something I've always felt, having straddled the two, that you don't stop being an artist when you in some sense go over onto the other side. I still think I'm an artist.

S; It's just that some projects give you the opportunity to be more of an artist than otherwise.

Q: Yes, I think it's to do with the approach you have as an artist – the way an artist approaches solving a problem. A lot of artistic practice is about solving problems visually and making the connection between art and life, which is an incredibly valuable knowledge and approach to things and that's what artists tend to draw on in my experience. That's what they're drawing on when they're teaching for want of a better word. But there isn't a body of knowledge validating that. It's not there because artists don't articulate it. They just do it.

E: Yes, and having knowledge based on experience is lower down the hierarchy than knowledge which is based on predetermined things, pre-written texts because it's considered to be too personal, too subjective. You're right. It's to do with that thing about knowledge through experience, something that we did a hell of a lot of during the project.

Q: By drawing on and validating people's knowledge?

E: No it was more because we were bringing in new skills and opportunities to work with video and printmaking, and storyboarding ways of constructing

a narrative that didn't have to start on the left and finish on the right. Also working with different possibilities and seeing things visually as a circular thing. We're trying to give that group of people the experience of those new processes, or processes that they've done before but seen in a different way and we felt that was really one of the most active ways in which we were teaching. We were giving the opportunity to everybody in the group, which ranged from a four year old to a 44 year old. They had never used video before and certainly the four year old was just amazed with the idea that we were just giving her the video. The learning how to hold it so she didn't drop it, was as much an important part of the process as turning on the camera and filming something. It was about the opportunity to get confidence, using it more freely rather than in a structured school-type setting. I think that was better than just standing up and saying 'this is how you turn it on', we did almost the opposite of that. We just gave them the cameras and let them figure it out for themselves. It seemed like a much better way, particularly for a deaf group, to get to grips with that technology, because too much speaking, too much explaining is incredibly difficult, particularly for a group with that range of ages and abilities, to take in information they were given.

Q: And did you notice that they then shared the knowledge and information and skills between themselves? Was there peer learning?

E: There was certainly peer learning between the adult and some of the children. But it extended out to other members of the group. Yes, there was a group of four teenage kids who started to say 'try this, try this'. But that's quite an interesting thing again, because if you're deaf and you're filming, your hands are tied in, so you're not doing what other teenagers, hearing teenagers, might do in chatting about it. You're engaged in that process wholly, fully until you stop and put down the video.

Q: Were they signing? Is that how they communicated?

E: Yes, all the group was signing.

Q: Can you sign?

E: No.

Q: And was that a problem or a challenge?

E: It was a challenge. We had a fabulous interpreter who worked with us in the workshop sessions which was when I really needed to transmit that information. I would liked to have been able to sign but it was my first experience of working in a deaf group. But the fact that I was working very

closely with Anthony and he was speaking and signing meant that it worked very well. But he was working very hard, because apart from there being sort of language differences in terms of how you communicate it, there were differences in terms of how you understand and what you understand. The way that I would be speaking and creating sentences and the way the interpreter would interpret it (and his job was not to change what I said) made it quite difficult for some of the group to understand what I was saying. Whereas Anthony could listen to what I said and turn it around and make it clear. And having gone through that process it allowed me to have a big input at the end when we made the installation. The project was very much about the way a deaf group can communicate with a hearing audience and if I hadn't been through that quite difficult bit at the beginning it wouldn't have been possible to see all the potential problems we had that might arise from the way in which we said that we would install the work in the library. So there were definitely quite a lot of deaf awareness issues. I think in our evaluation we both talk about how much we learned from working together really and that for me was one of the best forms of collaboration.

Q: Going back to the idea that you collaborate to make knowledge that could not exist unless the collaboration had happened, which to me is what true collaboration is about, I wonder in relation to this whether you think that happened?

E: Yes, it definitely did because Anthony had no experience of workshop teaching. He had done classroom teaching but not within workshops, where you take an idea out on a journey and explore it conceptually first, before making a finished work. This was new to him and he found that very valuable and I had no experience of deaf awareness issues and really learnt a lot from the way he went about it.

Q: And how do you think the collaboration between the participants in the project and you as artists worked, in terms of where the power resided? Because there are power issues when you've got artists working with a group and I think it's mentioned in the proposal about the importance of the power shifting.

E: Yes one of the key things was subverting and altering the normal power relations.

Q: Why was that important?

E: Partly because we didn't want to use a traditional model of teaching. We wanted to show the creation of that piece of work. It was important in the 'Journeys' project because there is a hierarchy, or a perceived hierarchy, between a hearing audience and a deaf audience. They are not equal. We really wanted to challenge that and, in terms of the installation at the end, put

this piece of work in a situation where anybody could come and see it and be able to access it, but that the access route would be primarily for a deaf audience, rather than a hearing audience. So each of the eight made their video and then signed a story that went alongside the narrative. We thought of all sorts of ways of transporting that narrative to a non sign-language audience and thought of written text or voiceover. We rejected written text as we had a four year old involved and a written text would be no good to a hearing or deaf four year old. Also written text is difficult for some deaf people to read so we would be creating something that would create problems for people. And in the end we decided to do a voiceover, but we made it by asking people to put headphones on when they watched the piece and it meant that the hearing audience had to enter another world to be able to access it.

Q: And also to make that conscious decision.

E: Yes, make that a very visible visual thing, which is often something that we are aware of with signing because it is a very visible and obvious way of communicating. In a way we wanted to do the same.

Q: So in that sense a part of the learning was the learning for the broader public, that the project had a social remit? Did it have that right from the start?

E: I don't remember it being as important as it was by the end of it and certainly one of the things that contributed to that was Anthony's very astute deaf awareness and commitment to deaf awareness. So he was bringing to it lots of quite political arguments about the way that we should or shouldn't do things, but they were to do with the process of the workshops and the process of the experience to begin with and then as we got towards the end they became more intrinsic. Originally the piece was going to be on monitors in the library on bookshelves, but we realised we could say much more by projecting it, by making it into more of an art work rather than if we'd just left it, rather like information screens on monitors in the library. It was only at the end that we got to grips with the context.

Q: Was that decision taken collaboratively with the group?

E: No, that was the point at which we took it back and I think that's one of the things that we were clear about from the start, we weren't trying to make something where we said we're all artists in that universal sense. We were coming into it saying we're professionals. We want to work with you but it's not going to automatically make you into an artist. It seemed sort of wrong somehow to pretend that was the case and that we were all going to be equal after that but it made it even more important to try and get rid of

some of those hierarchies that were happening. But in terms of the installation in the space, we were incredibly conscious that we wanted it to be viewed by an art audience and to do that it had to conform to some of the conventions of an artwork in order to be looked at seriously in that way. So I think we listened quite carefully to what people were saying when they were making it, but we did take it back off the group and we had the final decision.

Q: It is interesting because I think one of the issues around projects like this is whether what the artist is teaching is teaching people to be artists and I think it's perhaps a misconception because I don't think that is what's happening. It's much more complicated than that.

E: Maybe it is but you're not an artist because you've gone to six workshops. It might start you off on the artist you might become, but it doesn't make you a whole artist.

Q: But then what makes you the artist? Is it your training, experience, professional position?

E: It's an interesting question, not least because each artist takes a decision at some point to be 'an artist', which is a hard one because you don't start saying I am an artist by degree. You start saying I am an artist and what shall I do and that's a very significant time, but I can't quite remember what gets you to that point. It's something about 'I do this better than I do anything else' or 'this informs all the other things that I do'.

Q: I think for me it's the latter.

E: So if I teach I teach with these artist's shoes on.

Q: One of the things on this sheet is: how does your own creative practice inform your education practice? and clearly it does. I don't know your practice, are you a sculptor?

E: I did 3/D design for my degree which was ceramics and plastics which I still use to some degree, but I mainly make videos and photographs but they always start with some sort of made object. But the made objects are very rarely seen, they are like props in the photographs and videos.

Q: Do you think the same degree of thinking informs the education work that you do? Do you see a difference between the two forms of practice that you engage in?

E: I think I interpret the world in a particular way, which informs the art works that I make. But I think it's more to do with the way of thinking, a way of starting out and moving through and finding out on the way. There is a particular set of processes that I refer to, to inform myself about a particular

subject. I usually don't just make a cast but I make a cast and a photograph and a print and then I take it back and draw it and might photograph that and project that. But there isn't a giant leap, there are loads of tiny steps, so that I can have another way of looking at something and thinking about it. Certainly I did that with 'Journeys', putting them through lots of different processes. We would start with something and explore it and one day we did a great big group drawing of words, with any word that might relate to the idea of 'journey'. We were just putting out ideas but also thinking about how they can work together. We revisited it the following week and did a painting and that was quite important to have a sense of coming back to something that we'd done, so we'd remember it, but also changing it by putting transparent inks on it. What we were doing was transforming everything that we made.

Q: Do you think they were aware of issues of quality in terms of wanting to make something that was good and did you think they had ideas about what they perceived as good?

E: Some. What I was trying to do with the print making, after it came through the press, was to stop and look at it and start to make qualitative judgements about that print. Do you like the fact that that's white and that's very dark and you could try it this way? So really trying to find out from them what they didn't like or did like about their own work and trying to develop that.

Q: So it's kind of working with their aesthetic decision-making?

E: And also what they were trying to achieve. If it was meant to be a picture of a bus moving quickly, did they want it to look streaky or still? Each engagement was like an individual tutorial. But I think it was useful to have all these different practical processes before we made the video. By the time we got to the videos they had explored all these different ways of making the journey. So that it was easier for us to talk to them about their individual bits of video in terms of the language that was brought up. What do you want it to look like and what do you want to say to me? What story do you want to tell?

Q: So in a sense that's teaching, because what you are giving them are the skills to be able to articulate an idea in a different format.

E: Yes, but you're asking them to transfer stuff between different materials and it's a massive road. So you're not teaching somebody to make the perfect print.

Q: It's interesting, almost all the artists I've spoken to have been very clear that you're not there to teach perfect technical skills, you're there to equip people with sufficient skills to be able to realise their ideas.

E: Yeah. And confidence, and that includes confidence in you as well as in themselves, because to actually make their video we each went to a few different houses and I went to Jakar's house and when I got there I took an interpreter with me. We talked to him a bit about what his ideas were and he wanted to make a journey around his sister. So his sister sat and he literally did a journey from the top of her head, round her ear and it was the most intimate and beautiful portrait of another family member. The sister and brother were very close in age so you could imagine there was all sorts of other dynamics in their relationship but this was really good. There were three generations of family in the house and his grandmother sat on the couch the whole time and she doesn't sign and the only one who really signs is the sister. The fact that I had gone into the house with an interpreter meant that they could talk to him in a way that they couldn't normally. It was an extraordinary relationship to break in on and bring something else to. But absolutely beautiful for him to be so precise about the journey that he wanted to make and I felt that that wouldn't have happened if we hadn't had the opportunity to get to know each other during the previous session.

Q: That involves an enormous amount of trust and extraordinary to be in a position to be able to make a piece of work that is so intimate. Perhaps he didn't think of it as being so intimate?

E: Looking at the video I would say yes perhaps he didn't realise, but being there in the room with him filming it, he had to be so close to get some of those shots and she had to keep so still and he had to concentrate so much for about five minutes. That is an incredible closeness.

Q: A fantastic piece of work.

E: Beautiful.

Q: Just as a kind of idea. Very conceptual. Do you think if your own practice wasn't involving those technologies and methodologies, it would be more difficult for you to do this?

E: I think it would be very difficult to do video based work, because you don't know what you need to know in advance to make a video, you also don't know what that person will be preoccupied by when they're trying to do it unless you do it yourself all the time. Then you're more aware of the things that are going to crop up or be intimidating. It's much easier to help someone if you have been through that.

Q: How do you see yourself as an artist operating in relation to the so-called art world and how important do you perceive it to be to have an artistic profile which is perhaps to do with showing in galleries in relation to the projects that we're talking about here?

E: For me it's important because I need to push my practice forward outside educational projects and I need to do those projects because they help me think through things, but I will then go back to the studio and develop some things just on my own and get back and remember what it feels like to be staring at a blank sheet of paper and all those kinds of things.

Q: But what do you think prompts your involvement in education? Some people have said they've got political convictions and they are concerned with the role that art plays within society. Other people have talked about it much more personal terms.

E: Tricky one to answer because I don't really think I ever had the choice. Both my parents are teachers but my father's an artist and my mother was a textiles person. When I'd just left my degree course my parents had just had another child and they were both doing a month long workshop in a local school and I went up to look after my sister when this was going on. I got integrated into what they were doing, and the energy they were generating through the work they were doing was really fascinating. And so gradually I got involved pragmatically because I needed to earn some money and so started doing some workshops at my dad's studio which was in Shropshire and that was with a local school. And I think those were much more about transferring skills, but what I was still interested in was the energy created, which is how addictive that work actually can be. To get those kids that seem closed and tense at the start and they're not going to have anything to do with you and by the end of the day they're going out saying, 'hey that was great'. I really enjoyed that a lot. And then I started to work at the Tate, but I had a very different reason for wanting to be involved in that as I'd had this problem of not being able to speak about artwork on my degree course. I felt like I was just missing this whole load of stuff and that everybody else could do it, but I cracked it when I walked round a show at the Tate with all the rest of the people on my MA and somebody came up to me and said, 'well I don't know what to make of it' and somebody else 'neither do I', so between us we deconstructed this picture and that was a really important experience because I realised I did bring something to that and between us as a group we managed to make sense of it. So when I started doing the teaching at Tate Liverpool that's exactly what I was doing, helping kids who'd had the same experience that I'd had. Standing in the gallery looking at an artwork and being more inclined to check your hair in the reflection of the glass than actually looking at the pieces. You just don't know what to make of them, where to start and I thought if I could work backwards from where I am now and figure out what questions they might bring, that would be good.

TAG

Q: When did you three come together?

M: Five years ago.

Q: Were you all at college together?

M: We were all at the same university, but we didn't meet there.

M: We met through a group of other artists.

Q: And was it because you all shared similar concerns about working within the community?

M: That's how TAG evolved. It wasn't necessarily how that group worked. We found that we were working together in a communal way. We were the most pro-active of the group and it developed from there.

Q: Do you project fundraise for what you do?

M: We do. Although if we get a commission we work for organisations and we fundraise ourselves. We spend a lot of time trying to cultivate relationships with certain organisations in the City and get to know everybody and fundraise ourselves.

Q: Is that community organisations or arts organisations or both?

M: All of them. With community organisations and arts organisations and with others. We have a relationship with a housing organisation, for example, which has commissioned us to work with their tenants.

Q: Do you still retain your own individual practice or would you say this was your practice now?

W1: This is our practice but we try to retain our individual practice although it's not always as much as you would probably want to, by the very nature of what we do. We also do other work. We do a bit of teaching and some arts administration.

Q: What was your original practice? Was it photography?

M: We were all kind of photography-based and we all have to a certain extent an interest in it, in the background. I think we agreed that it was a

quite a democratic medium and we first began including it as an element of our projects and that expanded as we explored it more.

W1: The first time we were working on training workshops, we included photography and it was very, very popular, so we all got more interested in it and it took off and we turned it into projects.

M: What we always try and do is develop ourselves and what we said at the beginning is that every time we approach a new project we need to see how can it move us on.

Q: You as artists?

M: Yes, we always try to develop ourselves.

Q: It was very interesting reading in both the evaluation report and the application that this project developed out of your own practice. But would you take on projects with say techniques and media that you were very unfamiliar with, thinking this will stretch us or would you think this is alien to our practice?

W1: We can do most things.

W2: It's like with video, we are not experts at it, but we can do it. Between us we have learnt a lot.

W1: I think we can do it so far and then maybe at the end we would have to work with somebody else to help us and train us as well.

Q: Because one of the things that is interesting is the idea that artists can turn their hands to anything, don't need to be defined in terms of a specific practice and instead what they bring is an approach to working. Is that what you are talking about?

W1: Absolutely, I think it's the whole approach that you bring to certain projects.

Q: And how would you describe that approach?

M: Well, I would describe it in terms of using some issue or concern and enabling people to take a different view of it. We try to break down all the barriers that we can and allow people to have a broader view.

Q: And by barriers what do you mean?

M: Preconceived ideas and lack of confidence within themselves. I think one of

the first things we do is try and show everybody that they can be creative and that they have got that in them and once they have got that it frees them up.

Q: In that respect do you see yourselves as facilitators and enablers rather than as teachers?

W1: We don't see ourselves as teachers, as educators in the teaching sense in schools not at all.

Q: Why not?

W1: It's more about partnership with the participants, working alongside them. You are enabling them. Everything is valued that they make, all their creative things are valued so there's no right or wrong way in what we are trying to tell people. People have preconceived ideas about not being able to draw, well that's not what art's about is it? It is a great deal, but it's not the main thing. Art can be anything.

Q: How would you describe what you see as a teacher in a school sense? And why are you different from that?

W1: It's the structure, the curriculum.

M: I am not saying that we do not have a specific aim to achieve within our projects, but what we focus on is that everyone is an individual and is inquisitive to work, exploring and mapping for themselves. What we do is enable them to make that mark and get to that point.

Q: In terms of giving facts and information, which is one thing that every teachers do, do you think there is an element of that in what you are doing?

M: We do want them to ask questions, we do say 'what do you think about this and what do you think of that', so in a sense that's almost like you are encouraging them to think. In that sense it's a teaching method, encouraging them to examine what they have done, evaluate what they have done.

W1: We always use handouts as regards photography, just to reinforce what we say because there is a lot to take in to do with darkroom processes. But when we are doing painting or whatever we don't produce a handout at the end of the session like you would in a teaching situation. In a workshop it's more the doing and the discussing, encouraging them to verbalise their work and articulate what they think about it.

Q: What value do you place on the conversations that you have with people?

W2: It's very important. We were doing this project with younger people and we were just chatting, drinking tea. That was as important.

Q: Why do you think it is so important?

W1: I think it puts them at their ease and they get to know you and you are getting to know what their views are.

M: And it is also important as you need to gradually involve them and get a sense of their ideas, build their confidence. One example is the 'Talismans' project. We had this woman and to start with she said this is not for me and by the end of the project she understood that it was all about creativity and composition and balance and making decisions and she had a way into art, just a small way. At the beginning she definitely saw contemporary art as a barrier she couldn't get past.

Q: Where do you see that balance between creativity and art?

W1: I would say that art is something completely different.

M: It might be that first of all you have got creativity and you can make some art and start defining what is art. That is what you start to do, because a lot of participants have got preconceptions about what art might be, but suddenly they are making art and they are the artist and being creative. That is where you start to make that link. You start to define what art is, but it is still a massive, massive leap to go down to the galleries and start to critique a painting. But the idea that you might then enable them to feel that they could go and look at things and talk about what you have discussed with them, like balance and composition. That's where their own creativity links into what their definitions of art might be.

Q: I think that is really interesting. To what extent do you talk about art history in projects or critical theory? You refer to it in the documentation, particularly in relation to photography and theories around representation and I wondered how easy or relevant it is to introduce those concepts into a project?

W1: I think you have to do that. There are some artists that you can introduce, in a casual way. I mean, to give a for instance I have just been working with young children in a school and they are making 3-D structures and one of the children was wrapping his object so I introduced the concept of wrapping as a contemporary theme and the artist Christo. They will go away and think about him and maybe they will look it up. We always try and introduce discussion and some theory.

M: Most recently we have been working with patients that have moved on from the YRU. Again we were looking at the idea of the self and the world we live in and a lot of contemporary art is about the self and that informs what we do. We might not get the chance to discuss this with the participants, but if they respond we can say this is why we are doing it, this is what we mean by this and this is what has informed us. We will always do that. If the participants are very responsive to that we will take it as far as we can.

Q: So do you think it depends on the dialogue and if you get a response from the participants which clearly indicates that they want more you respond and give them more and it is a two-way process?

M & W1: Yes, absolutely.

M: You always have to know the need. We will have an evaluation session and discuss how have people responded and whether they need more of this or want more of that. You would never go in and say this is entirely it.

Q: Do you think it helps that you are a partnership rather than an artist working on your own?

W1: Yes I think it does. We work well together and we bounce ideas of each other.

Q: Do you do similar community teaching projects independently as well. You were saying you were teaching in a school?

W1: Yes that is separate from TAG.

Q: Is the experience very different working on your own?

W1: Absolutely. I have done some on my own with special needs schools, which was a big learning curve for me because TAG has done very little in schools. It was completely different, very hectic. Go in and produce x amount of artwork in a very limited amount of hours and it is all going to be exhibited at the end of the day. Whereas with our projects we work with smaller groups. We give ourselves a little bit more room to develop the work.

Q: Did you come across a situation where you felt you were serving some purpose for the school in terms of their curriculum?

W1: Absolutely. On their curriculum it was about containers and the teacher had to do it in that art period. We fulfilled all that for them in one short period.

Q: How did you feel about that?

W1: Well it's ok, but I would rather have longer to develop the artwork.

M: Obviously artists in schools work in a completely different way to the teachers.

Q; How would you say?

M: In fairness to the teachers we are only in there for a short period and we can grab those kids' attention, but we do work in a very, very different way. It could be that our approach is to always try to see everyone as a human being with a brain and that is what you are no matter how old you are. So we have this very relaxed attitude and we find that people respond to us.

W1: I found the response is to you as a professional artist. That's how you build up your position, as an artist coming in to work with them.

Q: What do you think it is about the fact that you are a professional artist?

W1: They see you as a real artist and that is your main thing. You are not classed as a teacher or whatever, you are classed as an artist and therefore you do your own work and are coming in to do a workshop with them. The approach is usually to say this is how an artist works, you have the idea, you design it usually on paper or whatever and then it leads on to the main thing. You're making decisions and solving problems about visual art. I always say this is how artists work, it's problem solving, if you like, of an idea to visualise it. I think that is a different approach from a teacher.

Q: What do you think the teachers were doing?

M: Just thinking about it, they have got lots of other stuff to deal with all the time. It may be difficult to keep away from that so they don't allow, or maybe they cannot allow the freedom. They can be very restrictive in allowing experimentation.

W1: Of course they have a curriculum and also they are teachers, not artists sometimes, as a primary school teacher does everything. Some of them might have specialised in art when they were teacher training but not all of them, but they have to deliver this art curriculum. It must be difficult for them.

Q: Do you think that you are there as much to assist the teacher, to try and change the teacher or work with them?

W1: Not change the teacher but they get a lot out of being there as well because they are part of the experience. They get inspiration and ideas.

Q: I am also interested in the nature of collaboration and, not only the collaboration between you as artists, but also the collaboration between you and the participants. Do you see it as a complete collaboration, that you are all equal within the project?

M: I think it depends on the participants if there is more instruction given. I think we have to pull away from being a teacher with younger people. Maybe that's where it is a bit more difficult to have collaboration, but we still do always try.

Q: In terms of the finished work do you see it as your work or their work?

M: Big bone of contention.

Q: Oh really, why?

M: We do feel that it's not our work. It's a difficult one for us to come to terms with.

W1: Especially if we have finished work off.

W2: We would like it to be our work so that we are working with the community, but it's our work.

W2: And artists do work like that.

Q: Yes, particularly artists like Anna Best perhaps, who sees her practice as facilitating projects with people but that it is her work.

M: We started looking at this a few years back and we tried to develop some work that we were happy to say was a collaboration, but was definitely our work. We found that quite difficult, especially with funders, because a lot of funding is for public benefit …

W1: In all the funding applications we have ever been successful with the emphasis is on the participants' work and you are just there to enable really. We need to be commissioned by someone to produce work in collaboration with X community, but it's our work.

W2: Even with the photography project where we were working as artists with the group, the work on show in the centre is theirs.

M: The physical work's theirs but what may be significant is maybe that the actual copyright of the work itself might be ours. We have got the means to the copyright because of not wanting it to be reproduced without permission.

Q: Yes, it's a big issue.

M: We have got advice on this for copyright, because we felt this wasn't fair to artists. Often you are commissioned and you devise the whole project, everything, the whole idea, you finish the work off and then you just say goodbye to the work. You are severed from the work that you have worked on and it is no longer anything to do with you.

W2: And you should be able to put it in your portfolio.

Q: It seems to come back to this issue of defining what your practice is and if this is your practice then there are issues around ownership. It's a very complex area.

W1: Yes it is

M: And people are not admitting it.

Q: But where are you going to go with it, are you going to take it project by project and try and negotiate?

M: We have decided to give it all some exposure, as much work as we can that we have produced over the last four years. We have got in touch with organisations all the way back to have a TAG exhibition, so it isn't participants' work, it's the work that we have facilitated. This is an opportunity for us to evaluate what we have been doing and for people to see what we can do and for us to have a look and see where we go next.

Q: And was it a conscious decision to call yourself TAG rather than your names as individuals?

M: We were always called 'The artists group' or even 'the artists' and so that's how it happened. It does fit with what we do, in that TAG are a group that have certain skills and abilities and work in certain ways.

Q: You have a kind of working practice as a group that is clear and defined, involving the three of you. You have talked about finishing people's work off and I wondered how you see the relationship between process and product because from my experience there is quite often pressure to produce something at the end. How do you think that impacts on the project as a whole?

W1: With the finishing off thing it's because we set out to make high quality in terms of the artwork.

M: A lot of it comes about because we don't have the time to take it to that level of standard of finish within the project. We don't do projects where it's open, where it's process based, where we may or may not get work out of it. Generally we aim to produce finished work.

Q: That is interesting as some of the other artists that I have spoken to say they will do process based projects where if something comes out of it at the end, so be it, but what they are interested in is the process. There is no right and wrong, but I am interested in why do you think that it is important for you to have a product at the end?

M: I think that partly it may be influenced by our funding applications and our potential partners and participants who want something at the end.

W1: Although with the 'Talisman's' project we wrote it, got the money and then thought we will go and find the group.

Q: That's interesting again because if you are able to dictate who you are working with, the power resides much more with you.

M: Yes it was one of our most successful projects.

Q: Why do you think?

M: It could be that we're better at it, but I think it's also that we are better at developing the project with the group and we didn't have the pressure. We weren't meeting anybody else's needs and we were in an enviable position of being able to go out and say we've got some money would you like to work with us? We said this is how long the project is and this is when we want to come, this is the medium that we will do and we had a terrific response.

Q: And do you think that the participants could feel ownership of the project even though it did not originate from them?

M: I have to say that in a positive way a lot of participants didn't know what they were going to get, but they were so enthusiastic because every day was a new day for them. So it worked to their benefit rather than them having preconceived ideas of what they thought they were going to get.

Q: What do you draw on in terms of your own personal experience and how much do you draw on the way you were trained at art school when you're working in situations like this?

W1: The discipline of working methods and evaluating the work, researching the design, the way it's done through discussion. The way you are not taught skills, it's more that you just do it and then you discuss your ideas. Yes, that is how you work as an artist

Q: And what do you give and bring as an artist that a non-artist couldn't bring to a project?

M: First I would say we try not to have any barriers and no no-go areas, so everything is fair game in a way and that is something that we definitely have.

W1: And working on projects that we are learning ourselves.

Q: Are there artists whose practice you look to in this area or artists whose practice you admire?

M: When we are devising projects we do research at the library and, for instance, if we are making work in plaster we will talk about Rachel Whiteread and artists like that. So it depends on what we are doing and the medium we are using but there will always be artists that we relate to.

Q: And do you think you have role models?

W1: Certainly other artists, but role models of artists working in the community?

Q: Or anyone that you think, for instance I always think of Joseph Beuys and how his philosophy informed the way I thought about art.

W1: Artists like Rachel Whiteread and Eva Hesse I have always looked at them a lot. It's their practice of sculpture that inspired me to be an individual artist. But yes, you come out of art school and you think you are going to be the artist, have your studio, make your own work, exhibit … But the reality is not like that and you have to make a living, do a bit of teaching and the best way is to collaborate as artists and carry on with the practice of being an artist.

Q: Do you think you have any overtly political agendas? You have stated in the documentation that you want to give people their voice and that you want to empower them and you have talked about working with disadvantaged groups.

W1: It's not a flag-waving agenda. But it is certainly giving them a certain amount of freedom.

M: The thing about giving them their voice is about equality, and philosophically there are a lot of influences. Because it's not that you can't

define art, because you can, but you want the participants to all be able to reach those decisions about art for themselves. We have always found that very rewarding and very frustrating as well.

Q: I suppose it is part of this broader question of what you think art is for and for some people I know art was very much about their own process of creation whereas for others art did have or could have a social agenda as well in terms of enabling people as well. It was a vehicle to enable people to articulate their concerns. What is your perception?

W1: We have often said that we don't want to be known as community artists, because of that taint, but that we want to be known as artists who work in the community and I think it's this preconceived idea that community artists have produced in the past not very good work.

W2: It has that reputation of being very crafts based and more about process and not much very good work that comes out of it. Whereas we have set ourselves out to produce much higher quality work, with a very contemporary approach, using non-traditional methods. We are trying to raise the standard I suppose of what people think of as community art.

Humberto Velez and Alessio Antoniolli

Q: How would you describe your own creative practice?

H: I'm very much interested in emotions and how to relate, how to bring about a piece of work that can produce a certain amount of emotion. I work with different media, and have a concept, an idea, and I know, because of experience, that the idea can work in a different media. I started with video and, because I met other artists who were filming, they worked with installations, it gave me confidence and interest to get involved in installation art, so I started doing that as well. Installation and as well digital art, so I've just been moving to different kind of genres, but always in terms of I get an idea, I know that it can work out in a different way and that mainly is to produce certain emotions.

Q: Do you have an awareness of your audience when you are making a piece of work?

H: Always I know that. I have awareness of the space, of the milieu and the different kinds of people who are going to visit or see the work as well as the people I'm going to work with.

Q: When you say work with, do you mean as collaborators?

H; Collaborators definitely.

Q: How would you describe that relationship with a collaborator?

H; Well it's all got to be creative because my first training was as a film-maker. I'm trained technically in certain things, not in everything, so I know that I have a lack of experience in certain milieus or craft. So I look for people who can give me a hand and try to bring out the best of my idea.

Q: And have you collaborated in terms of the conceptual side of the work?

H: Well yes, in general I know what I want, I research a lot and I make up my mind after a lot of conceptual work, but practically as well, I know this could be possible, this cannot be possible. I develop a lot of that work and then I talk to people before having a final decision. Afterwards I talk with friends, collaborators, people from Gasworks like Alessio, because that's the only way to build up the project. What I know is I have learnt to accept good ideas and discard the ones that will not follow what I want.

Q: So do you always see yourself as the final author of a piece of work?

H: I like to think so, in terms of having the main control of everything. Sometimes it's quite difficult because I don't believe completely in that concept of control of a piece of art. There have been projects and I've been working with some people and even though I am the author in the end I have, because of the nature of the project, to accept proposals from people who are participants and not collaborators, just participants of it, so it's about respect as well. So the thing about last control or not control depends on what the project is. And sometimes I've found it's okay in a painter, but if you were a conceptual artist, it's absolutely impossible. You've got an idea and you just have to take it to the end with so much help from other people, but in the end yes and no, it's quite difficult.

Q: Alessio, when you were putting the project together did you put the proposal together with Humberto or did you do it knowing that Humberto was coming?

A: The proposal came out of a discussion between Humberto and I. We wanted to do the residency and because of his practice he was very interested in linking with a community, so we were trying to find a way in which this was possible. And Humberto had already made a piece that was a piñata and it is a symbol that interested him a lot. So we thought that it would have been good to go to the community with that one which was part of his practice, but also a good way of engaging really.

Q: So do you see this project as coming from your practice?

A: Oh definitely.

Q: It's not a separate activity?

H: Not at all. I have exhibited piñatas before and I am showing one in the church nearby now. So I'm just following the same path at the moment with that. And the interesting thing is, even though it could be very personal as a piece of art, it could be very community wide, because of the way it's shown there in the church and I know that there's a mass every week as well. So the community and the people are going to see it in one way or another.

Q: And with the piñata project that you did in the school what did you think you were teaching the children? Do you think you were there to teach skills or were you teaching them how to approach the making of it, the ideas or both or something different?

H: Well, I think you teach both. You always have to teach a certain level of skills, that is fine. Make it in a very entertaining way. I suppose that what's more important is to develop creativity, imagination and the possibilities of different kinds of objects and milieu and look into meanings in what they are

doing. So that was the main aim. A little bit of sharing as well. But it's much more about setting up the basis of creativity and self-confidence. That's very important. They made it because they wanted to do something beautiful, because they wanted to share in a party and they were very open as well because there was a very interesting difference of background between all of them and that means they are open to carry on seeing or getting involved with new things and languages as well. I mean, when we introduced ourselves, Alessio spoke Italian, I speak Spanish, so everybody was saying 'oh well I speak Portuguese' or 'I speak Spanish or French' and nobody was afraid and nobody said, what does he mean? And sometimes we find that even children feel a little bit afraid of trying to speak another language but they were very keen to learn words. So that was just a beginning, but it's fine.

A: But it's also because we set up that kind of project where they were actually encouraged to bring something new. I think the project was about bringing out all these various aspects of the community rather than flattening it, and to say okay let's find a common language. The common language was through the creativity, through making the piñatas, through finding a way of speaking that we all understand, but it was also saying let's bring something that only you can bring or only I can bring and let's put it all together. So the sharing with the gifts of the piñata, the sharing of the party, but also the sharing of the making because there were six piñata for 25 children. They were divided in groups with five or six kids and they all took a role, so that was also part of learning, of sharing the production of one item and I thought that was really important.

Q: And do you think it was significant for them that you were not from England? To what extent do you think you acted as a role model?

H: I think they were less afraid to talk to a non-English person. I mean I may look British in a certain way but I have an accent and English is not my first language. I felt very happy with all these mixed race kids, just having a very good time with them because, I don't know why, they thought they could talk to me loads and I felt very happy with them because I've got a very mixed background. So yes, they saw me possibly like somebody who they can share with.

Q: And did they ask you questions about being an artist?

H: They did. I remember some of them said, 'how did you become an artist?' And I started talking about it, but that was really nice, I didn't expect it.

A: One of the things I found really interesting about working with visiting artists in schools is that some of the kids who feel they don't particularly

want to take part in certain things, the minute they see there's somebody who speaks a different language or their own language, I think it's about bringing something that's normally private, [a language] that they only talk about at home with their mum and dad, into the open. All of a sudden this is a public thing and, not only is it public, but it's actually in a school where everybody talks English in an institutional way. So all of a sudden there were Spanish speaking kids who were in a situation where the teacher spoke Spanish and they were like wow, I can speak this outside my flat with other people that aren't my parents or relatives and that's a very interesting thing.

Q: I think it's a really good point because I think it's to do with that broader question about building up a level of trust, and also it gives them, perhaps, a sense of freedom that the school curriculum and institutions can act to deny them. Other artists have talked about the freedom they're given to do something different and that the children really respond to that. Did you get a sense of that?

H: Yes. For me it's quite interesting because I never studied at university here, but for me in one way I found it fantastic. You can't limit children's behaviour too much because it affects them in the rest of their life. I'm telling you because I studied in very strict Catholic schools and I just remember they were really limited, everything's got to be done this way, that way. It was good that the kids chose what they wanted to do with the piñatas and they were just absolutely happy doing it, making it. And I was enjoying it as well. A fiesta means everybody's relaxed, so I felt that they were really longing for some space and freedom.

Q: And did you ever have a sense that there was a right way that they should be doing this and that you had to guide them or that they could do whatever they liked and you would just be there to support them?

H: Well, there are some practical elements to do with the number of the children and the process of making the piñatas well. So we had some ideas, but when we got there it was like exploring how we're going to work. So in the second one I think we got it very good. With the first one it was just about 28 children going crazy. Making a piñata is not a simple thing, even though it seems like a toy, but it's complicated in terms of so many steps. That's why for instance we decided to give them a hand and we worked as well at the piñatas a little bit in the studio and they worked a little bit in the class.

Q: Do you think they felt that they were theirs, they had the ownership of that piece?

H; Yeah.

Q: And did you feel they were theirs?

H: Yes, they personalised their piñata.

A: They were encouraged to own them but when we went there the first time it was kind of difficult to control them, because we were also going there with this bunch of possibilities which they're not always offered, they're normally just told what to do. All of a sudden they've got someone going there, saying, 'well we can do something together but we'll do whatever you want to do,' and they got freaked out.

H: Something that was fantastic in working with children is most of them have got nothing to do with the culture of the piñata, but at a certain point they were making them just like they are professionals.

A: They really got the spirit of it.

H: Quite quickly.

Q: Do you think you would have liked to have been there to teach them about the whole culture beyond the making aspect, the cultural aspect of it?

H: We talked a little bit about that in the beginning. It's quite a difficult thing to do for one workshop with the limit that I have in terms of time in London. Talking about this kind of culture to a very different culture you just have to pick up a few things and that's enough. So they know what is a piñata, about Latin America, that's important. The language that we speak.

Q: Do you think there was any pressure from the school to cover those areas as well? Did the school have an agenda?

A: Quite luckily no. They were very open – we just presented them with a brief of what we wanted to do, the areas that we wanted to cover and they just gave us this slot of time and they were quite happy for us to do what we wanted. In fact I found that quite refreshing, even the teacher she stood back.

H: She was fantastic. She was very 'do what ever you want', she never interfered at all.

A: I quite like that she allowed the class to get into a mess as I'm sure that if you're teaching in that kind of environment it's really important to them to really control it. But while we were there she very cleverly let it go wherever it was going and it did get out of control at one point but in a way that was good, that it needed to get to that stage where everybody was covered in paint

and there was paint everywhere and then, when it came to cleaning up she became the teacher again. But while it was happening she let it happen and she allowed us to form this bond with the kids that wasn't mediated by her.

Q: Do you think she took on board the ideas as well, what do you think the legacy for her might be?

H: She was like, 'well let's see this as, maybe I can bring new people from outside to come back and produce something not the same but similar, and get involved with different people'.

A: I think at St Anne's, which is where we worked, it was a very new thing. But as a new thing, it was welcomed and they gave us the space and all those things. So I think that's something we can build on with the teachers. It's a lot more difficult to engage with a teacher than it is to engage with the kids. It is a doubly successful project if the teachers engage in a way that they can take something with them.

H: And we always wanted the parents visit to the party, so there were some parents and that was great because that's what you were supposed to do, engage everybody.

Q: Why do you have the interest of working with children?

H: I found it's not easy but what I know about England I thought it would be easier to work with children in the very beginning and I know that children from eight to ten, they're just perfect and I have a large family and I was brought up as the oldest so I just always took care of my younger siblings.

Q: A lot of the artists I've spoken to say their interest comes from their families.

H: It's personal but it's got to do with my background in Panama as well and I suppose I don't consider myself a teacher as that's quite difficult, but I've always been working like teaching seminars in Panama or other countries, it's a different kind of thing and different kind of audience. And specifically talking about this one, I'm a visitor to London, and I wanted to engage with people from London and in this area. I do the same in Panama, that's one of my professional aims, to get involved with where I live. So I suppose I like to do that.

Q: Would you describe the piñatas as sculpture or installation?

H: I would say installation.

Q: Do you think that also has an influence on how you relate to your audience?

H: Yes, that's my main aim of the work, always. It's not about being too conceptual, or trying to create an enigma. Just get involved with people, that's my area of art.

Q: How do you see your relationship with the art world as represented by commercial galleries? Is there any difficulty in engaging in both?

H: The majority of my [work] is not objects that could be sellable, although I do that sometimes. I have no problem with that but that's not my work, that's a different kind of contemporary art practice that exists. So I think nowadays it's a mixture. There are artists in residence programmes where you can do that thing and be an artist as well and produce things and there are galleries. So you can work for different people and make a living more or less.

Q: And you don't see any conflict between them?

H: Not as long as nobody wants to impose on me and if I feel that I will simply not accept it.

Q: Are the artists who come on the programme obliged to do some kind of community activity?

A: They're not obliged because some artists have no interest in doing education and there's no way that we're doing to push them into doing it. It only happens if that's part of the process of being on a residency.

Q: So it always comes from the artist's own practice?

A: Absolutely. The interesting thing about the residencies, because they are about process and about experiencing and meeting and exchanging and sharing all these things, they can push at the boundaries of what education is. They're not education in the sense that not all of them go into a school and do a workshop, but they're education in a sense that all of them have this kind of element of learning of process which is very much part of education, so in a way they do push at this idea of what education means and what does it stand for, what does it cover and what does it not cover? I'm inclined to say that these are very educational experiences that we go through, but not just for the visiting artist but with artists that work here or that we come in contact with and for those like myself who coordinates these things, that they're very much part of a learning experience.

Q: Did the children on the piñata project know right from the start that the work was going to be destroyed, did they ever have a problem with that?

H: Well just like, 'oh no' for a day because they had been working on it, but they get through that quite quickly. But this was very different, because usually in a workshop, you don't destroy your artwork. You keep it and hang it and put it in a nice corner, but in this case it got destroyed, but that was good, that's a new experience.

A: But it's also interesting because it's about the process. It's about the making but it's not about the keeping. The idea of constructing but then breaking it because of something else.

H: I think that's why it's quite liberating. I can destroy things as well and that is fine and I can remake it so there's no problem. If something is wrong you can make it again.

Q: I think that relationship between process and product is a key one. This addresses that issue really well because it's getting them to think about the process and it's good for children to think about that, because they can become obsessed with having this thing at the end rather than learning what it's like to make it.

H: And if you want to relate it with art – I mean that's why we have this problem about art, keeping things, then when you create something like our work you destroy and it's not going to be forever – people just get shocked.

Q: Do you draw on any particular theory when you're doing this work, like art history or critical theory or other artists whose practice you admire?

H: In educational stuff it's quite difficult to tell because I haven't read too much about education for years, but yes. We're talking education but I read a lot and I write sometimes about art so at the same time I know that the practice gives you new ideas. I try to understand and think about what I do all the time. Obviously you can't be completely certain because that's impossible, but I try to be very, very clear about all that I'm doing, but learning from other people's experience as well.

Mervin Jarman (Email response)

Q: How would you describe your own artistic/creative practice? What is your understanding of the ideas around 'post-media' practice in relation to projects of this kind?

M: My creative practice is Life it's my whole being, my life is my art and my creativity, post-modern, renaissance, contemporary and futuristic. In order for the media to be post, it had to be present, manifesting itself in the way people were living. The way in which we do things never really change it just matures, it evolves to accommodate, the practice is how refined we make these translations. Shocked you there! You see I am not a student of art, not in your usual sense, wasn't schooled or corrupted by the so called established art world with their various acronyms, hence I have no media related position. I take no particular artistic stance insofar as practice is concerned. My projects evolve out of my life, that is, all my life and they that dwell therein.

Q: What does the term 'education practice' mean to you?

M: A method of learning that is being subscribed to.

Q: In what ways does your own creative practice inform your education/community-based work?

M: I guess by showing that things are achievable, that I have achieved and accomplished beyond my wildest imaginations. I would hope that through me, my work will tell a tale, a story of applied life and demeanours.

Q: How did you become involved in this type of education/community-based work?

M: I got tired of self, I wanted to become a participator in life instead of just sitting and watching. It was revolutionary because I was among people at that time who felt the same way. Some who were just awakening to the realisation and others who were already in the game. This was an opportunity that presented itself to me partially from my own making and mostly by chance. This is why I am doing what I do, trying to recreate that opportunity, that fluke of chance, that maybe in the right place at the right time among the right set of people can inspire changes.

Q: What would you say were the major influences on your undertaking this type of work? For example, art school training, other education/training, political/social commitments, financial considerations?

M: Revenge, anger and disappointment at a system that failed me, a system that condemned me to the curbs of every city, every ghetto, every mongrel street that I've been in. And no, I am not an angry little person because I have emancipated myself from that form of mental slavery and I hope you pick up on the art/influences in my choice of words and how they are strung together. You see, this is the plight of being poor and mis-educated, this is my rebellion, this is what influences, drives and invigorates me.

Q: Do you draw on any particular theories when doing this work? for example, learning theory, art history, critical theory, other artists' practice?

M: I draw on the bank of life, life past, life present and life to come. We look at history, mystery aka his story and my story, we become voyeurs and players alike seeking and experimenting. It is never the same. First, we look around us identifying where we are, determine where we want to go and then offer up possibilities on how to get there. It is sometimes a complex scenario but it is also very simple sometimes.

Q: How would you describe your relationship with the participants in a project of this kind? In what ways can it be a collaborative process?

M: I would say grounded, you see we mostly hail from the same side of the street, speak the same language and roll in the same tub. In the street we have always been tight, there must exist a mutual relationship of trust and humility as we say 'nuh man nuh bigga zan nuh man'. Hence it could only be collaborative. You see, I can't just give and not receive, that would inevitably cause an imbalance and that just don't hack if you get my drift. So each participant must feel like they have something to offer and I must assume a desire to give and receive.

Q: What educational roles do you think you play during projects? for example, teacher/instructor, mentor/role model, social activist, catalyst for inspiration and change, co-learner?

M: I try to appropriate myself as an instructor, since I have created a set of tools to facilitate the learning process. These tools also encourage changes and greater participation in this thing called life, you would also be correct to say I am a co-learner as each encounter has its own enlightenment. I love social activism which as a mongrel I respond to as art-hactivism and for the thugs out there on the street, thugs like I was and in some way still are, I hope my work can have some meaning.

Q: What, broadly, are your aims and objectives for projects of this kind? For example, to inform the participants about art and art history, to develop the participants' own creativity and creative skills, to enable the participants to better articulate their concerns about issues relevant to them, to empower participants, to have fun, to deliver the curriculum, to create dialogue and develop your own creativity?

M: The workshops/projects that I engage in, have always at its core been a space where participants can be empowered, plus all of the above which develops as soon as one gets a feel of oneself. It is then that the creative dialogue and discourses become apparent in abundance. This is not something that I can teach or instil into participants. I simply provide the tools and the facilities/atmosphere to encourage emancipated thinking enabling liberation of oneself.

Q: How do you see yourself operating in relation to the 'art world' and how important is it for you to protect your artistic profile during these projects?

M: I often question myself on this motif. What does it mean to be in the art world, to be 'an artist' or not to be me. To be me has always won. You see I don't see the art world as being a world at all. At least not in the sense where it is a separate space. Indeed the world is just the world and being an artist is simply what qualifies you to be in this world. So in essence we are all having this relationship with the art world. As a liver, I see life as art, what we do, how we do it, it's all art. Some people however, choose to merely exist in it, while others participate. I am a fully paid up member and a hard core participant. I have nothing to protect, no profile to proprieties, as the only thing you can copy is my life, the only thing you can take from me is my life. That is my art and my relationship to the world.

Forms of engagement – understanding the artists' role

The focus of the research has been to explore the various roles that artists play and to investigate the forms of engagement between artists, participants and others that which occur within AiSfL projects. The research was also keen to uncover what informs the approach the artists take (ranging from theoretical knowledge to their own individual training and life experiences) and to understand what the artists aimed to achieve during these projects.

The following analysis draws on the perceptions of all the artists interviewed. As is clear from reading the interviews, the artists engage with the participants in complex and interrelated ways. Each of the interviewees is extremely articulate, providing useful insights into how and why they operate during AiSfL and other similar projects, which this relatively brief analysis can only explore to a certain extent. Certain key themes, however, can be identified and these are detailed below.

The artist as educator

As the title 'Artists in Sites for Learning' suggests, the artists are understood to be engaged in some form of educational activity. Indeed, the application guidelines for the scheme state that for a project to be given priority, there must be clear evidence that:

> 'The project is conceptually and educationally innovative. Innovation is something that cannot be neatly defined, but we hope to expand the traditional notion of an 'artist residency', where an artist is placed in an institution to teach techniques or to decorate the building or improve its grounds.'

Artists are invited to question and articulate what it is they 'teach' during these projects. From the responses given by the artists during the interviews it is clear they have considered in some depth how they engage with participants.

They are aware especially of the difference between teaching specific techniques and enabling the development of the participants' creative or critical skills:

> 'What's more important is to develop creativity, imagination and the possibilities of different kinds of objects and milieu and to look into meanings in what they are doing.'
>
> *(Humberto Velez)*

'It's more about partnership with the participants, working alongside them. You are enabling them.'

(TAG)

'I think it's much more about talking about ideas and helping find solutions that were appropriate for them. I don't feel I taught any particular set skills.'

(Freddie Robins)

These artists see their responsibility as developing the participants' individual ideas, encouraging them to engage more critically with the process of making art. Where specific skills are demonstrated or explained it is so that the participants can better realise their ideas in visual form.

'Q: So in a sense that's teaching, because what you are giving them are the skills to be able to articulate an idea in a different format.

A: Yes, but you are asking them to transfer stuff between different materials and it's a massive road … you're not teaching somebody to make the perfect print.'

(Esther Sayers)

The critical skills and conceptual approach to making art is what the artists perceive they are 'teaching' participants. These skills are considered by the interviewees to be what they possess uniquely, as artists.

'How we work is to say this is how an artist works; you have the idea, you design it usually on paper or whatever and then it leads onto the main thing. You're making decisions and solving problems about visual art … It's problem solving, if you like, of an idea to visualise it.'

(TAG)

'I think it's about being able to express yourself, so being either eloquent verbally or through what you make and show and about sharing things in the wider community. (Art) gives you a different way of thinking about the world which you can put into any kind of context.'

(Freddie Robins)

The interviewees give various explanations of how they acquired these skills and knowledge. For some, their own education at art school provided a key pedagogic model:

'Q: What do you draw on in terms of your own personal experience and how much do you draw on the way you were trained at art school when you're working in situations like this?

A: The discipline of working methods and evaluating the work, researching the design the way it's done through discussion. The way you are not taught skills, it's more that you just do it and then you discuss your ideas.'

(TAG)

Others stress the importance of the work of other artists whose practice they relate to, as well as their own educational experiences:

'And so it was about critically looking at things. And certainly that comes from my own training and study, but also the artists I look at.'

(Liz Ellis)

However it would appear that for some artists who were trained in design, their art school experience was not useful in informing their subsequent community-based activities. Instead they articulate the importance of challenging that training and engaging in an ongoing process, which develops their individual creative practice and, in turn, informs what is it they 'teach' to others:

'I trained as a glassmaker. I went to Farnham and I had a very formal training but I was always trying to break free of that … If I had to describe it, it's all in that process of having a studio, just doing bits and bobs for different people, all the different things, the information, the things you learn, the whole way that you work, that is what has informed me working in the way I do now.'

(Maria Amidu)

The artists are also clear about how they are engaging with participants during the projects. The emphasis within the projects is on a non-didactic, dialogic approach. Comments such as 'there was a lot of discussion.' (*Freddie Robins*), 'it's about dialogue and talking to the kids and seeing what they say' (*Maria Amidu*) and 'in a workshop it's more the doing and the discussing' (*TAG*), demonstrate the artists' commitment to co-constructive learning, where knowledge is gained and meanings reached through dialogue and, in some cases, the mutual sharing of experience (*Carnell & Lodge, 2002*). In this model the emphasis is on exchanging ideas and generating shared knowledge that individuals could not have attained alone.

The last quotation from TAG also highlights the stress the artists place on experiential learning; 'it's more the doing', as they say. Other interviewees

describe the importance of giving participants the opportunity to take risks and experiment through engaging in activities new to them without fear of censure or criticism:

'We were trying to give that group of people the experience of those new processes or processes that they've done before but seen in a different way, and we felt it was one of the most active ways in which we were teaching … It was about the opportunity to get confidence, using (the video) more freely, rather than in a structured school-type setting. I think that was better than just standing up and saying this is how you turn it on, we did almost the opposite of that. We just gave them the cameras and let them figure it out for themselves.'

(Esther Sayers)

The artists do not position themselves as infallible experts within projects of this nature. Rather, they acknowledge what the limits of their knowledge are, but seek to work creatively to expand them:

'I thought if I am very straightforward with the students about what I don't know and the skills that I do have to share with them, then that's quite an interesting way of working.'

(Liz Ellis)

Although clearly having respect for the profession of teaching and individual teachers, the artists do not see themselves as 'teachers' and, without exception, do not wish to become one. This is mainly due to the restrictions of the curriculum and the limitations that they perceive this brings to creativity:

'Working within schools they have such set curriculum, such set processes, which I'm not interested in and I don't believe in and I am just terrified of all the discipline and all that structure.'

(Freddie Robins)

'They (teachers) have got lots of other stuff to deal with all the time. It may be difficult to keep away from that so they don't allow, or maybe they cannot allow the freedom. They can be very restrictive in allowing experimentation.'

(TAG)

Instead, for these artists, projects such as the AiSfL ones present opportunities to develop and to a certain extent question their own practice. They are clear that they are not there to provide fixed answers or solutions, but to share their skills and experiences and learn from others' participation. In this respect the artist acts as co-learner:

'What we always try and do is develop ourselves and what we said at the beginning is that every time we approach a new project we need to see how it can move us on …. Working on projects, we are learning ourselves.'

(TAG)

The extent to which the artist functions as co-learner depends in part on the nature of the collaboration between themselves and the participants. This is explored in greater detail below.

The artist as collaborator

A key aspect of the research was the different perceptions of the nature of collaboration and how the artist operates within so-called collaborative projects. The application guidelines for the AiSfL scheme make it clear that to be successful projects must be 'participant centred':

'This means that the outcomes have not been completely fixed in advance, but the project is flexible enough to allow participants to have some input and control in the process, and to feel ownership of the project.'

Artists are expected to engage with the participants, therefore, and work collaboratively, sharing control and authorship of a project's processes and products.

The artists are aware of the difficulties of successfully involving the participants in meaningful ways while developing and managing a project that has value and merit, but are particularly articulate about what they consider a true collaboration to be. For one artist, Esther Sayers, a successful collaboration involves the sharing of practice and the creation of knowledge that could not exist unless that sharing had taken place. Similarly, Richard Neville, a storyteller who works collaboratively with two visual artists, describes the concept of 'Emergence', which is found in 'Folkloristics':

'You don't know what something means, particularly what a story means, until you begin to tell it with that particular audience and then the meanings emerge collaboratively through the interactions that go on.'

(Richard Neville)

The theory of 'co-construction', as described earlier, is clearly relevant here. In other cases, it is the extent to which the artists can engage with the participants as equals which determines the degree of collaboration:

'I think it depends on the participants if there is more instruction given. I think we have to pull away from being a teacher with younger people. Maybe that's where it's a bit more difficult to have a collaboration.'

(TAG)

It is also clear, however, that there are points during a project when it ceases to be a collaboration altogether and instead the power and control are assumed by the artist totally:

'That was the point at which we took it back and I think that's one of the things that we were clear about from the start. We weren't trying to make something where we said we are all artists in that universal sense. We were coming into it saying we're professionals. We want to work with you, but it's not automatically going to make you into an artist.'

(Esther Sayers).

Esther Sayers goes on to say that the reason why, after 'listening carefully to what people were saying when they were making it' they 'took it back' was:

'We were incredibly conscious that we wanted it to be viewed by an art audience and to do that it had to conform to some of the conventions of an artwork in order for it to be looked at seriously in that way.'

This highlights a number of recurrent dilemmas within these projects, which include the value placed on the process versus the finished outcome of a project (which is explored later in this analysis) and the question of who 'owns' a piece of finished work produced during a 'collaborative' project. This latter issue is particularly contentious for some artists, who feel strongly that the work 'belongs' to them, although the process of production has been shared:

'We have got advice on this for copyright, because we felt this wasn't fair to artists. Often you are commissioned and you devise the whole project, everything, the whole idea, you finish the work off and then you just say goodbye to the work. You are severed from the work that you have worked on and it's no longer anything to do with you.'

(TAG)

TAG go on to discuss the work of artists such as Anna Best, who, although working alongside a number of participants, produce individually authored work. This touches on the key issue of how and whether work produced during projects such as the AiSfL ones (where there is a recognised 'educational' remit) is valued in terms of the artists' own creative practice.

Where production is not shared and the artist is making a piece of work alongside the participants, the issue does not appear to arise:

'Q: Do you see it as a collaborative piece of work?

A: No I don't, I see it as my piece of work based on an experience that we shared as a group.'

(Liz Ellis)

The issue of 'collaborative practice' is complex and it would be inappropriate and unrealistic to conclude that projects such as the AiSfL ones are wholly collaborative. It would appear that the key factor to be considered in relation to 'collaboration' is the extent to which the artist retains control over the process and the final products. These artists, while recognising what collaboration entails, also acknowledge its limitations and appear to be aiming for a pragmatic balance between claiming a place for their own practice whilst enabling the participants to develop their own knowledge and capabilities.

The artist as social activist

In some AiSfL projects, particularly those that took place outside of formal education settings, the role of the artist as social activist is apparent. In cases where the agenda for the project is motivated by social exclusion issues, the artists perceive they have a responsibility to 'empower' the participants:

'For us it was a vision of an integration of craft practices with narrative practices, which could potentially connect with the traditions that the refugees were bringing with them and to work with ideas of identity and personal empowerment.'

(Richard Neville)

This is manifested within the projects in an attempt to give the participants a 'voice' and enable them to articulate issues and concerns that have significance or relevance to individuals in creative and innovative ways:

'Q: And do you think that your role was to enable them to articulate their feelings and thoughts in a different medium?

A: Yes, I think it was. For most people it was the first time they'd actually had a real chance to explore their feelings and talk about life in their work.'

(Freddie Robins)

Other artists describe how they developed this process, by encouraging the participants to question and critically reflect on their actions, activities which the artists see as essential in a wider context than art making:

'It's about trying to enable them to be decisive about looking at something that they've photographed or chosen, rather than drifting into something because that is what they have seen an advert look like. It's certainly about developing critical skills and they are fantastic life skills.'

(Liz Ellis)

In the case of projects that are dealing with specific and political issues, there is evidence that the projects themselves are seen by the artists as a way of challenging existing ideas and 're-educating' a wider public:

'There is a hierarchy, or a perceived hierarchy, between a hearing audience and a deaf audience. They are not equal. We really wanted to challenge that and, in terms of the installation at the end, put this piece of work in a situation where anybody could come and see it and be able to access it, but that the access route would be primarily for a deaf audience, rather than a hearing audience.'

(Esther Sayers)

However, because of the short-term nature of projects of this kind, the artists are realistic about what they can expect to achieve and what the legacies of the projects are likely to have been:

'We were there such a short time. You can't feel too bad about the fact that you can't do follow-up work because then you become something else, an arts support worker perhaps, and I think the legacy has been quite strong. People still talk about it and we did stir things up.'

(Richard Neville)

Because of the short-term nature of the artists' involvement with a group, they recognise the importance of the contribution made by collaborators on the projects, such as teachers or careworkers, for example, since it is these people who are in a position to develop and build on the ideas and processes that the artists have introduced:

'At Hereward the staff are so lucky to have their art teacher, Karen Johnson, and she and I worked quite closely together and the project would have a good legacy because it fed the staff as much as the students.'

(Freddie Robins)

An awareness of the legacies left behind also emphasises the need for longer-term and sustained evaluation of these projects. There is a sense too that the process of evaluation can, in itself, serve to empower the participants. Maria Amidu's project was styled as an evaluation of a number of artists' residences in a school, but because the project developed from the pupils' responses, the resultant web-based work moved away from a 'traditional' evaluation:

> *'It's not about having a definitive answer or coming up with lots of solutions or saying we think the schools programme's fantastic, even though I think it was; it's not about any of those things. It's actually a real review and an opportunity to give the kids a voice, so that their views are not overshadowed by broader or wider issues, or what is perceived as a more important concern.'*
>
> *(Maria Amidu)*

These artists consider that they have a broad responsibility to address social and political issues and that by working with the participants they are enabling and supporting them, rather than 'teaching' them disassociated skills and knowledge. The model the artists appear to be striving for is similar to that advocated by Paulo Friere (1993), where the teacher works to enable the disempowered to break out from a 'culture of silence' ito act on and transform their world. At the same time, the interviewees recognise the limitations of their situations and suggest that what they can effectively do is stimulate change, provoke discussion and raise awareness, rather than engage in long-term 'education'.

The artist as role model

There appear to be several ways in which the artist performs as mentor or role model. In the first instance, the interviewees describe how, by demonstrating a profound level of engagement with their own practice, they provide a positive example to the participants they are working with:

> *'I think in a way you're being a model in terms of you're concentrated and you're engaged with what you are doing. I think you're trying to teach those skills as well.'*
>
> *(Richard Neville)*

On a more detailed level, the artists describe how they make visible their own working practices, critical approaches and methods of problem solving, so as to demonstrate a model of good practice:

'I tried to be very overt about the way I made work so we got sketchbooks and I kept my sketchbook alongside theirs and I showed them what I thought was working and what wasn't working. I showed them ideas I'd had in between or where I'd got stuck, so I tried to be very concrete about what I was doing.'

(Liz Ellis)

The provision of models of good practice also extends to the work of other artists. Interviewees describe how they reference and show the work of other artists to broaden the range of the project and to place their own practice within context. As Liz Ellis goes on to say, she introduced the work of Martha Rosler and Cleo Broder during her project; 'so there's a sense of ongoing practice, not just my individual wacky ideas.'

The third way the artists act as role models is by embodying the concept of 'a successful artist'. This is particularly significant in the case of women, disabled people and non-white artists. The artists interviewed are conscious that they are in a position of authority as project leaders, while at the same time presenting an approach to working (and to the participants themselves), which the latter can relate to culturally or in terms of gender or disability:

'I think in terms of being a role model, that's something that's always really key for me because I know that especially when I went to Clapham Technology College, a sort of girl's school, very culturally mixed, as soon as I walked into the classroom they thought I'm in a position of authority, but the thing is I look like them and I dress like them as well. You've broken down that barrier.'

(Maria Amidu)

'When Semba spoke about his work they were just blown away because he is in a wheelchair like a lot of them. They were really inspired by that. Here he is, he's in a wheelchair and he's a successful poet and he's out there doing it.'

(Freddie Robins)

There is a sense that, as Maria Amidu acknowledges above, certain barriers can be overcome quickly. This can encourage the participants to be more open, engaging with the artists relatively easily:

'I think they were less afraid to talk to a non-English person. I felt very happy with all these mixed race kids, just having a good time with them because, I don't know why, they thought they could talk to me loads.'

(Humberto Velez)

How the artist acts as mentor/role model to the participants is more complex than would at first appear. By presenting themselves, their ideas and their working methods as models of good practice, the implication is that the pedagogic model being adopted resembles apprenticeship in some ways. The artist becomes the 'master practitioner', who does not 'teach, they embody practice at its fullest' (*Lave and Wenger, 1999*) with the learners, or participants, engaging in activities and gaining understanding through experience.

The artist as researcher/enquirer

The relationship between an artist's individual creative practice and the participatory or 'educational' community-based work they do has been referred to earlier in this paper. For these interviewees the relationship between the two was never straightforward. For some, such as Freddie Robins and Liz Ellis, the two activities were separate, but constantly informed and enriched one another, whereas for others, such as Maria Amidu and Richard Neville, the two forms of practice are indivisible and collaborative. As Richard Neville articulates:

> *'I don't see any difference between the work I do on my own and my work anywhere else, it's all one practice. And I don't begin with an idea of what it should mean, even to myself. I just begin and move from moment to moment, merely trying to make each moment a satisfying one for me and that group and not worrying about where that ends up.'*
>
> *(Richard Neville)*

Despite the variations in how the artists see this relationship, they all appear to agree that both forms of practice constitute a process of enquiry. Even if their individual practice remains separate, the artists bring the same level of critical enquiry to the participatory projects:

> *'I like the relationship I build with the students and I enjoy the journey ... It has parallels to developing one's own practice, where there is a sense that you've never arrived, you're always pushing it, always on a journey.'*
>
> *(Freddie Robins)*

The model of 'the artist as enquirer' who 'actively seeks knowledge, truth and personal growth' (*Parks, 1992*) would appear relevant here. The process of enquiry and creative engagement is clearly what the majority of these artists are interested in within projects such as the AiSfL ones. In these cases, the products that are the result of that process are less significant. As Richard Neville states 'it's the honesty of the search that made the work'.

Some artists go so far as to identify this process as a form of research that they are keen to share with the participants:

> 'The whole process of asking various questions, deciding which questions are more important and the process of research, where you start in a particular place, and then as you progress through your research you end up going over there somewhere. I wanted them to see that as a kind of practice.'
>
> (Maria Amidu)

This clearly echoes other artists' earlier comments about the importance of 'teaching' critical skills and creative enquiry.

However, for those artists, such as TAG, who are keen to identify this practice as 'theirs', the quality of the finished product is important:

> 'It (community art) has that reputation of being very crafts-based and more about process and not very good work comes out of it. Whereas we have set ourselves out to produce much higher quality work, with a very contemporary approach ... We are trying to raise the standard, I suppose, of what people think of as community art.'
>
> (TAG)

As the earlier quotation from Esther Sayers identifies, the reception given to this work is relevant here. It is understandable that the artists are aware that if the intention is for the work to be judged in terms of 'quality' by an art audience, the relationship between the process, the collaboration between the artists and the participants, and the presentation of the final 'product' will inevitably alter. This is turn has a bearing on who projects such as AiSfL are ultimately for. If the aim of the project is to 'extend educational practice and promote access, enjoyment, learning in the visual arts to identified participants', the value given to the process that the participants go through is critical, albeit difficult to assess 'under the established conditions of art's distribution, dissemination and reception' (*Buchler, 1999*). Instead, the 'quality' of the project rests, perhaps, on the forms of engagement with the artists and the activities as much as with the artistic merit of the finished product.

Conclusions

A reading of the interviews in full gives an indication of the complexity of the issues that have been briefly considered here. From this analysis the following conclusions can be drawn:

◆ Within the AiSfL projects, the artists work with the participants to develop their individual creativity and encourage them to critically reflect on their activities. The teaching of specific techniques or craft skills is perceived as secondary and necessary, mainly to enable the participants to better realise their ideas in visual form.

◆ The artists themselves embody this critical and conceptual, 'problem - solving' approach to making art and this is how and why they perceive they are able to engage with participants in this way. The artists see the restrictions of the curriculum and timetable as prohibiting teachers from working in this way in schools.

◆ The artists have acquired their skills and knowledge through their own education, but also through their individual creative and life experiences. There is no set career path that these artists have followed. Equally, the relationship between the artists' individual creative practice and their collaborative, community-based work is complex, with some keeping the two activities separate and others combining them. In each form of creative/educational practice, however, the artists are engaged in a process of 'enquiry'.

◆ The artists engage with participants primarily through discussion and the exchanging of ideas and experiences. There is evidence of 'co-constructive' learning taking place, where shared knowledge is generated and the artist functions as co-learner, rather than knowledge being transmitted from the artist (positioned as infallible expert) to the participants. The artists also promote experiential learning, with an emphasis on giving participants the opportunity to experiment in a supportive environment.

◆ The artist engages with the participants as a mentor or role model in three interrelated ways: first, by exemplifying a profound level of engagement with their own practice; second, by demonstrating their own particular working methods and critical and creative approaches; and third, by embodying the concept of 'the successful artist'. The pedagogic model of apprenticeship is relevant here.

◆ The artists consider they have a responsibility to address social and political issues and to enable the participants to articulate issues that are important to the latter group. The artists seek to give 'a voice' to the participants and encourage their broader critical and reflective thinking.

◆ The artists recognise the value and importance of collaboration within projects of this nature, but are aware that this is not always possible or desirable. Key issues include the extent to which the artist retains control over the process and the final products, and the final ownership of a work that is produced collaboratively. This in turn is affected by how and whether projects such as AiSfL ones are assessed according to purely artistic criteria.

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