



PSYCHOSOCIAL RESEARCH UNIT

New Model Visual Arts Organisations & Social Engagement

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

This study of socially engaged arts practice in new model visual arts institutions addressed the question:

How do these organisations and the art they commission and produce bring about change in individuals and communities?

AIMS OF THE STUDY

- Characterise the socially engaged practices of these organisations and investigate how they might facilitate change for individuals and communities.
- Examine the ways in which these arts practices and change processes might be researched by developing a methodology sensitive to arts practice to account for their impact and influence.

Four leading arts institution took part in this in-depth, ethnographic study, ensuring contrasts between urban and rural locations, from the North and South of England and Scotland: *Artangel* (London), *FACT* (Liverpool)¹, *Grizedale Arts* (Coniston, Cumbria), *CCA*² (Glasgow)

FINDINGS

Findings reflect comparison of key dimensions of socially engaged practice for the four organisations that took part in the study. These dimensions emerged after thematic analysis of the data, followed by a range of interpretive strategies designed to achieve depth and inform theoretical development. The data on each organisation is organised in accordance with the thematic headings as detailed below. The following summary includes policy and funding implications.

Experimentation and diversity

The practices within the New Model Visual Arts Institutions in this study are experimental, diverse and break new ground. Between them the four organisations demonstrate the considerable potential of socially engaged practice and have produced audacious, original work, characterised by attentiveness to process and informed by a social agenda. In commissioning such work, they have positioned social engagement at the centre of their practices. Arts policy should support such experimental, risk taking organisations in order to meet the objectives set out in the Arts Council England (ACE) 10 year plan.

¹ The organisation is known as FACT but stands for Foundation for Arts and Creative Technology

² CCA is the Centre for Contemporary Arts

Modes of Engagement

Socially engaged practices have been developed and delivered through collaboration, participation, dialogue, provocation and immersive experiences. The organisation's focus on process and seek to embed themselves within the communities among whom they work. This puts them in a position to respond to the specific needs and agendas of communities and hence to widen audience participation.

Socially Engaged Practice & Personalisation

Personalisation – or the tailoring of goods and services to personal preference - is a key policy driver across the public sector. Socially engaged arts practices build links through temporary or permanent communities of place, interest or practice. They can contribute to personalisation by engaging with people as *social* beings rather than by producing cultural commodities for *individualised* consumers. In doing so they stimulate new forms of connectivity.

The Aesthetics of Engagement

The organisations in this study insert art into everyday situations and develop relational practices which build on the everyday concerns of individuals and communities. They demonstrate that socially engaged art has considerable potential to revitalise the public role of art and to include culturally marginalised audiences.

The Local & the Global

Localism is a major issue in cross-party policy agendas in the UK and a key element in communitarian politics and 'The Big Society'. These organisations place local issues and concerns in the context of global developments, creating opportunities for cultural exchange, hybridity and connectivity. They ensure cultural cross-fertilisation for a range of local, regional, national audiences, and have a role to play in profiling cultural activity in the UK internationally

Philosophy, Civic Mission & Politics

Successful social engagement strategies are driven by strong social or civic missions and are built on coherent philosophies of engagement. These strategies demonstrate both openness and clarity of purpose. The arts organisations in this study have demonstrated that socially engaged practice has a key role to play in placing the arts at the centre of civil society.

Intensity & Duration

Projects which produce sustainable change are often intensive and take time. The impacts emerge slowly and are diffuse, complex and difficult to measure. However funding priorities should include such work as it has the potential to generate considerable value in the long-term

Partnerships & Collaboration

Socially engaged practice involves a commitment to building collaborations and sustaining partnerships with other agencies. Some of the most financially and artistically viable work emerges from embedding arts practice in the work of other agencies, and from the reciprocal influences which emerge from partnership working. Partnerships can create productive and destructive forms of friction; they require enhanced commitment mutual to understanding across professional fields and benefit from a proactive and supportive policy and funding framework.

Innovation & Ethical Practice

Some socially engaged practice poses sharp ethical dilemmas. It is important that innovation and experimentation can continue and be ethically defended. Work that makes a sustained impact negotiates the tensions between ethical practice and aesthetic outcome and actively maintains an environment receptive to the work.

Authoring & Participation

In collaborative social engagement projects the boundaries between artists, curators and publics are transgressed and the locus of artistic control can shift between any of those involved. Authorship is often contested and negotiated. Socially engaged projects can advance participatory policy agendas beyond attendance and towards active forms of involvement and co-production.

Transformative Practice

This research has offered insights into the ways in which transformation takes place in socially engaged practice. It does this by creating new, shared forms for the expression of individual and collective feeling, while sustaining a critical consciousness. Based on the empirical data, the report identifies and illustrates dimensions of transformative practice.

There are a number of ways in which socially engaged arts practice enable people to envisage how things might be different. These depend on the function of the artwork or artistic process as an 'aesthetic third'. The aesthetic third is conceptualised in the report. In summary it enables:

- a point of symbolisation and communication between those who engage with the artwork
- articulation of 'inner' individual experience with a shared culture
- alternation between embeddedness and critical distance which supports the thinking needed to conceive of change
- the creative illusion needed to see *how* things can be different
- the quality of attention needed to sustain emergence, ambiguity and complexity
- the development of new visual and performative languages needed to experience and represent the world from a different point of view

Implications for cultural Inclusion

The transformative dimensions of socially arts engaged practice have an important part to play in promoting agendas around cultural inclusion, in reaching new audiences and in strengthening both social criticism and social bonds.

Implications for cultural value

Arts organisations have to prove their worth within civil society and the sector must justify its allocation of public funding. It is difficult to quantify the value of socially engaged practices. However, these have sometimes been described in terms of the different forms of value that arts deliver: intrinsic, instrumental and institutional. These distinctions are to some extent over-drawn in that the different forms of value are interdependent. The new model arts organisations in this study deliver all three forms of value. However, the findings of our study suggest that instrumental and institutional value are only realised when intrinsic value is already present. The organisations in this study are offering new ways to overcome the policy tensions between 'excellence' and 'usefulness', showing that there is no necessary opposition between the two.

Implications for future research

It is vital that the value of socially engaged practice is not assessed simply through reductionist conceptions of 'impact'. Impacts need to be understood not only in terms of immediate measurable effects (footfall, critical acclaim, widening direct participation) but also in terms of complex effects that take time to diffuse, for example: influence on professional practice in other fields; cross-fertilisation with other areas of economic and social activity; long-term sustainable effects on communities; processes of personal change over time. Such impacts need to be characterised in terms of their mechanisms as well as their outcomes. A complex and longitudinal view of impact and value is essential.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review locates the practice of these organisations in the context of other research which has addressed the following issues:

- social engagement and the arts, the rationale for investment in the arts and how they should be valued
- '*personalisation*' (the tailoring of the arts to personal preferences) and public engagement with the arts
- who participates in the arts, why they do so and what inhibits some people from taking part
- the potential to increase participation in the arts through digital media
- evaluation of arts practice

METHODOLOGY

The brief for the study included developing a methodology which could do justice to the particularity of socially engaged arts practice and lead to conceptual development. The study adopted both 'experience near' and 'experience distant' methods.

Experience Near Methods aimed to study the work of the organisations, and the artwork they produced in naturally occurring situations. Methods used were minimally intrusive such as ethnographic observation, researcher diaries, ad hoc interviews and conversations, pen portraits or scenic compositions and narrative or biographical interviewing. Such methods are always tailored to the activity being investigated and its specific context. They are highly reflexive (subjective researcher response to the situation is problematized and must be accounted for). The detailed data produced was analysed by interpretation groups and synthesis aimed at the understanding of complex wholes, such as artworks, in both their spatial and temporal dimensions. The experience near methods used in this study aimed to be responsive to process and to aesthetic, relational, contextual and emergent dimensions of arts practice.

Experience Distant Methods included those that attempted to preserve a relatively dispassionate researcher distance in relation to the object of study. Such methods included network analysis to examine diffusion of the impact of artwork into communities; semi-structured interviewing to elicit information, evaluation and opinion; and analysis of documentary and web-based material. Experience distant methods aimed at the accurate capture of information relating to participation, organisational mission and strategy, impact and influence.

In the final analysis the results of experience near and distant data collection were triangulated. A conceptual analysis of artistic processes identified a number of dimensions of 'Transformative Practice', which are explained and illustrated by the data. Other thematic findings emerged from a systematisation and comparison of the data from all sources.

1 INTRODUCTION

The study focussed in depth on four organisations: Artangel in London, the Foundation for Art and Creative Technology (FACT) in Liverpool, Grizedale Arts in Cumbria and the Centre for Contemporary Arts (CCA) in Glasgow. It has had two main aims:

- 1 Characterise the socially engaged practices of these organisations and investigate how they might facilitate change for individuals and communities.
- 2 Examine the ways in which these arts practices and change processes might be researched by developing an 'arts-sensitive' methodology to account for their impact and influence.

The methodology was predominantly ethnographic, and made use of 'experience near' methods, thick description and reflexive interpretation within a mixed method design. A symposium with over 100 participants from the arts sector was convened to discuss the findings and identify which were most relevant and useful for practice and policy development.

STRUCTURE OF THE REPORT

Ethnographic research produces long reports because of its reliance on immersive methods, attention to detail and conceptual and theoretical development from rich data. This section aims to help readers to find different routes through this document according to their priorities.

An executive summary of the research findings and key themes is placed at the beginning on page 4. The literature review which provides an overview of the research context of the study begins on page 13. This is followed on page 21 by the methodology chapter which explains the approach adopted and includes a rationale for the choice of methods and their objectives, separately and in combination. The detail on the four organisations that took part in this study follows in Chapter 4 which begins on Page 35. This long chapter is divided into four substantial sections, one for each organisation. It provides the material from which the findings were drawn and sections appear in the following order: Artangel page 35, FACT page 50, Grizedale page 64 and CCA page 78. Each section can be read as a 'stand-alone' account of the organisation, but the sub-headings are consistent across the organisations and therefore can be read comparatively across the chapters.

They define a number of 'axes' along which the arts practice of each organisation can be understood and they have been drawn from a first stage thematic analysis of the data:

- Socially engaged arts practice, experimentation and diversity
- Philosophy, Civic Mission, Politics and personalisation
- Modes of Engagement
- The Aesthetics of Engagement
- The Local & the Global
- Intensity & Duration
- Partnerships & Collaboration
- Innovation & Ethical Practice
- Authoring & Participation

The key area of conceptual development concerns transformative practice. This is also a major finding of the study and begins on page 91. The dimensions of transformative practice have been conceptualised following fine-grained analysis and interpretation of data, using methods explained and illustrated in the methodology chapter as forms of 'scenic', 'syncretistic' and 'analytic' understanding. Each dimension of transformative practice is illustrated through a single case example of socially engaged practice drawn from data. The dimensions are:

- Finding Forms for Feeling
- The Aesthetic Third
- Psyche meets society
- The Power of Illusion
- Emergence and Attentiveness
- Inside-out/outside-in presence
- Visual and performative languages
- Policy Relevance

An explanatory account of the other main findings begins on page 99 and its organisation reflects the thematic sub-headings which have organised the sections on each of the four participating organisations.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

This literature review aims to set the study within a wider research and policy context. It covers a number of subject areas: debates about different forms of value arising from engagement with the arts; the nature of socially engaged arts practice; some implications of the *Taking Part* survey; the personalisation and excellence agendas; key evaluation issues; and what is meant by new media arts.

2.2 INSTRUMENTAL, INTRINSIC AND INSTITUTIONAL VALUE OF ENGAGEMENT WITH THE ARTS

There is animated debate over the benefits of engaging with the arts and how the value of publicly funded arts projects can be assessed (Angus, 2002; Bakhshi, Freeman & Hitchen, 2009; Belfiore & Bennett, 2008; Kilroy, *et al.*, 2007; Mirza, 2006; White, 2006). Whilst different forms of benefit are often intertwined, there are continuing tensions over the emphasis that should be placed on the instrumental, intrinsic and institutional value of arts engagement.

Holden (2006) identifies three interest groups and associates these three groups with different types of value. He suggests instrumental value is primarily of interest to policy makers and derives from the ancillary effects of culture, "...often, but not always, expressed as figures" (Holden, 2006). Some policy has supported the idea that the arts should improve the circumstances of disadvantaged groups. Emphasis has been laid on measurable improvement and expenditure on the arts justified accordingly (PAT, 1999). More recently, Bakhshi, Freeman & Hitchen (2009) have proposed that economic assessment of the benefits of art have come of age. They argue that it is crucial the arts articulate their full range of values, such as existence value (appreciation that the arts exist), option value (people knowing they can engage if they want to) and bequest value (knowing something is being left to future generations). It is suggested that this will enable the arts to compete on a level playing field with other demands for funding. Bakhshi et al (2009) contest any special pleading that the arts are 'different', explaining that defence is 'different' to education, but both have to demonstrate their value economically. Belfiore (2004) argues that a reliance on instrumentalism to validate spending on the arts means other notions of culture are being neglected and points out that the logic of instrumentalism would negate the need for cultural policy, as everything could be reduced to rational choice.

Some years ago Tessa Jowell called for a move beyond targets in assessing the value of culture (Jowell, 2004). This implied the need for a more complex understanding of arts engagement which addresses the intrinsic value of the experience and relates it to the subjective experience of culture. Intrinsic values enable the attribution of meaning, and

account for personal enjoyment and the existential significance of artworks. In addition, Holden (2006) identifies institutional value. He suggests that institutions (libraries, hospitals, schools, colleges, community facilities) provide a cultural and social context for the work of many artists. Hence institutional value refers to the benefit of art to institutions as a whole, to the staff and to volunteers and community members, who make up these agencies.

Holden's framework attributes *equal* importance to the different types of value and accommodates their interdependence. All three forms may contribute to high quality experiences (Martin *et al.* 2010) that are implicated in 'excellence' (ACE, 2010). Examining *how* intrinsic value is intertwined with institutional and instrumental value enhances understanding of the meeting point between individual cultural preferences and the collective goods that the arts can provide (Belfiore & Bennett, 2007). This implies the need for a psychosocial understanding of the value of the arts and reflects the concerns addressed by socially engaged arts practice.

ACE has clearly sought to move beyond an opposition of instrumentalism and excellence: social utility and aesthetic enjoyment can arguably strengthen each other. Some authors have questioned this optimistic view (Belfiore & Bennett, 2008; Brighton, 2002; Mirza, 2006) which they see as integral to Western identity (Belfiore & Bennett, 2008; Koch & Smith, 2006). In their historical analysis, Belfiore & Bennett (2008) sustain that the seemingly unquestioned assumption that the arts will generate positive outcomes is the result of the context specific Western or Eurocentric philosophical position of liberal humanism. However, this view de-contextualises both artist and audience:

A crucial element of the liberal humanist ideal is the belief that art can speak to every human being, whatever his/her social and educational background, if only given the chance

IBID. P.20

Bigger Thinking for Smaller Cities (ACE, 2010b) addresses the issue of providing art in specific urban contexts and argues that current concerns with reductions in public expenditure carry the risk of measuring everything by its cost and nothing by its value. It suggests that arts and culture can be used to maximise economic, social and democratic returns and have been integral to regeneration over the past decade, helping to arrest the decline of large, post-industrial cities like Manchester, Liverpool and Newcastle. The report cites examples of how arts and culture drive economic vitality, build identity and attract investment.

2.3 SOCIALLY ENGAGED PRACTICE

Whilst the debate on value is well advanced, the issue of cultural inclusion for those who do not access the arts remains pressing.

It is a great pity that the record sums of public investment we have made in the arts have not led to a higher profile for the arts in the public's mind

LAMMY, 2006, p.3

Achieving great art for everyone: a strategic framework for the arts (2010), sets out the Arts Council's ten year strategy for championing, developing and investing in artistic experiences that will enrich people's lives. The report provides the rationale for future investment and funding of the arts. The vision is one of collaborative action and partnership to create the conditions in which art can be made and appreciated by as many people as possible. The document sets out a series of five strategic goals:

- Talent and artistic excellence are thriving and celebrated.
- More people experience and are inspired by the arts.
- The arts are sustainable, resilient and innovative.
- The arts leadership and workforce are diverse and highly skilled.
- Every child and young person has the opportunity to experience the richness of the arts.

The report also renews a commitment to research in order to enhance the evidence base for policy and demonstrate public value.

Participation in the arts takes a variety of forms which involve engaging in creative activities, attending events and visiting exhibitions (Clements, 2011). As one community worker said in this research "art is a great leveller and an artistic process seems to offer people ways into relating ideas that other modes of engagement don't do so well". A similar argument is developed within *Bigger Thinking for Smaller Cities* (ACE 2010b) which suggests that arts and culture can engage marginalised groups to take part in collective action and help them to achieve their potential. The report sets out four policy measures, abbreviated as follows:

- Local authorities, Arts Council England and the cultural sector can develop area-based programmes of co-investment that focus resources on key assets, organisations and high impact interventions.
- Local authorities should pool resources into shared Cultural Services teams to ensure collaboration and to maximise resources and impact.
- Creative public engagement should be built on partnership which strengthens communities and enables cohesion and citizenship.
- Arts leaders should play significant roles as civic leaders, collaborating with local authorities to shape priorities, advocating for the value and the contribution of arts and culture to future well-being and prosperity.

The argument developed by Bakhshi *et al.* (2009), that the arts sector should compete with other demands on public funds, reflects the language of expected social and economic benefits which has grown up around the arts over the last decade (Cowling, 2004; DCMS, 2005; Jermyn, 2004; Keaney, 2006; Reeves, 2002). Bennett (2002) highlights the extraordinary combination of expectations placed on the arts which include: building trust amongst communities; nourishing civic renewal (Keaney, 2006); generating economic improvements and job creation (Reeves, 2002); improving mental health and increasing self-esteem (Geddes, 2004); raising 'intergenerational' contact and reducing levels of crime (Matarasso, 1997). Madden (2005) argues that many of the

indicators developed to track benefits, such as those described by Matarasso, are better described as 'wish lists'. Mirza (2006) highlights that many indicators of benefit repackage socio-political problems, such as poor housing or unemployment, as individual problems reflected in low self-esteem, arguing that this focus on the individual shifts attention from more complex issues such as social inequalities.

These debates clearly set out a significant set of issues for socially engaged arts practice and Bishop (2006) problematises what she sees as the ameliorative focus of much of the work in this area. There is a risk that the arts underwrite the individualising effects of consumer societies rather than encouraging collective forms of engagement and the regeneration of civil society as a means of tackling social exclusion (Bennett and Silva, 2006). Bishop (in Roche, 2006) advances four contentious arguments in relation to socially engaged arts practice:

- In many socially engaged practices, aesthetic judgements have been overtaken by ethical criteria and a focus on ameliorative processes.
- Good socially engaged arts practice should question the terms of the ameliorative assumptions which guide them.
- Collaboration is not sufficient to give work significance - it is important to observe how the work addresses or intervenes in the dominant conventions and relations of its time.
- Socially engaged practices must question the notion that a reduced authorial status for the artist is necessarily desirable.

2.4 TAKING PART

Since 2005 the Arts Council has undertaken a large-scale survey, *Taking Part*. Annual reports show attempts to increase access to the arts have been complicated by a variety of factors and Bunting *et al.* (2007; 2008) have concluded that there is considerable scope for increasing public engagement. The survey found that even amongst those most likely to attend arts events (highly educated, high status) a significant proportion 'self-exclude'. The majority of those asked are 'not really interested' in the arts (Keaney, 2008) and those who engage are primarily in the 55-64 age group (Keaney & Osaka, 2007). Significantly, 84% fell into the 'little if anything' and 'now and then' categories when discussing their levels of participation, with arts engagement being generally restricted to mainstream events, such as cinema.

There are still some activities – for instance contemporary dance, opera, ballet and jazz – that those in the lowest attender groups are extremely unlikely to attend ... We must therefore conclude that those who interact regularly with the outputs of public funding for the arts are a small minority...we must question the extent to which current arts provision is relevant to peoples' lives.

BUNTING ET AL., 2008, P.62

In the 2008/09 survey (DCMS, 2010) levels of engagement with the arts continued to be affected by a range of demographic and socio-economic factors also associated with engagement with other aspects of public and civic life. Women are significantly more likely to access the arts than men and those with disabilities or from Black and minority ethnic backgrounds are significantly less likely to engage, as are lower socio-economic status groups or those with lower educational attainment. However, a childhood experience of the arts increases subsequent engagement across demographic groups. Of relevance to this study, the data suggest two things:

- a high-quality arts experience is likely to result in increased engagement, and/or
- increased engagement with the arts makes a high-quality experience more likely.

It appears that once people have been motivated to attend or participate in the arts, their personal background has less effect on their experience.

Both practical and psychological barriers continue to be important in determining levels of arts engagement and these affect population groups differently. Previous qualitative research (Keaney 2008) has found that although people may cite practical barriers as their main reason for not engaging, psychological barriers, such as the fear of not feeling welcome or of not understanding the artwork, are the most influential factors. Finally, some people simply choose not to engage with the arts, despite being aware of the opportunities.

2.5 PERSONALISATION AND EXCELLENCE AGENDAS

The issue of ‘relevance’ of the arts to peoples’ lives is central to ‘personalisation’. The personalisation agenda (Knell, 2006) reflects the individualisation of public and third sector delivery and has also been driving policy in the cultural sector. The underpinning assumption here is that cultural shifts towards personal choice and performativity, combined with advances in digital technology, facilitate personally tailored cultural consumption. There is a further implicit assumption that this is what the public actually want and this opens up an interesting field of tensions between personal consumption and common goods, civil society and community solidarities. Debates on public value and personalisation have implications for how the benefits of the arts are assessed.

John Knell observes that if public value is determined by citizens’ preferences (Knell, 2006), there is a potential tension between personalisation and the excellence agenda (McMaster, ACE, 2008). This is another instance of perceived tension between intrinsic and instrumental value. On occasion, ACE reports (for example 2008; 2010) seem to conflate excellence with relevance although there is no reason to assume that the consumer will choose ‘excellent’ art, especially where it is challenging and unsettling. Nevertheless there is a broad assumption that increasing the population’s access to the arts will benefit the country as a whole in social and economic terms. This has been explicit in the Arts Council’s policies throughout the last decade (ACE, 2006, 2006a; Martin *et al.*, 2010). The same assumption informs the most recent strategy, the guiding principle of which is commissioning work which has the potential to change the way people see the world.

2.6 NEW MEDIA ARTS

New media art has been heralded as providing the technology which makes personalisation a practical reality and an unstoppable trend. As is observed in *Digital audiences: engagement with arts and culture online*:

Every day millions of Britons engage with the arts and cultural sector through digital media. This engagement comes in many forms and is in a constant state of evolution, driven by technological change. Five years ago, mobile phones were for texts and calls and Facebook barely existed. Today, a quarter of us have a smartphone through which we can listen to a song, or watch a trailer for an artistic performance. Over 40,000 people track the Royal Opera House, and over 58,000 the British Museum, through Facebook; while FACT in Liverpool has 7,000 Twitter followers.

ACE, 2010, p.1

Gere (2006) observes that museums and galleries are profoundly affected by technological changes. He sets out some of the challenges: how to take advantage of the new means of dissemination and communication; how to compete in an increasingly media-saturated world; and how to engage with new artistic practices made possible by technologies which demand new means of acquisition, curating, and interpretation.

Other challenges ... concern the status of institutions such as art galleries in a world where such technologies radically bring into question not just the way in which art galleries and museums operate, but the very notions of history, heritage, and even time itself upon which they are predicated.

IBID. P.16

Digital audiences: engagement with arts and culture online (ACE, 2010c) also suggests that engaging with the arts through digital media is now a mainstream activity, although it tends to be used to augment rather than replace the live experience. Over half of the online population (53%) had used the internet to engage with the arts and cultural sector in the previous 12 months, searching for information about a live event or artist/performer (33%), ticketing (20%), watching or listening to a clip of an arts performance or exhibition (16%) or a full arts performance (8%). Only six per cent said they had used the internet to create something artistic.

In the report, interaction with arts and cultural content in digital environments is classified into five main categories:

Access	discovering what's on, filtering opportunities and planning attendance or participation.
Learn	acquiring new skills and knowledge
Experience	experiencing the full creative or artistic work online.
Share	using the internet to share content, experiences and opinions.
Create	use of the internet to assist with the creative process itself.

People fall into five distinct segments based on their behaviour and attitudes to the arts and digital media. Three of these segments are of particular interest to arts and cultural organisations:

- Confident core (29%)** comfortable performing a range of tasks online, including purchasing tickets and using social and rich media. They have an active interest in the arts and culture and see the internet as a primary channel for discovering, filtering, planning and buying tickets to live events
- Late adopters (21%)** relatively low confidence, may book tickets online, but social media and the mobile internet remain a mystery. This segment claims an active interest in the arts and culture although in practice they attend once in a while
- Leading edge (11%)** technophiles, passionate about arts and culture and very participative; avid users of social media to arrange or share/comment. High expectations can limit their satisfaction with current online arts and cultural experiences.

The findings from this report clearly show that the internet is changing the way we consume, share and create arts and cultural content and experiences. As a result of these changes, arts and cultural organisations are faced with a dizzying array of opportunities for broadening and deepening their engagement with their audiences.

2.7 EVALUATION

It is currently difficult to gauge whether personalisation will produce the hoped for 'unprecedented opportunity' (Koch & Smith, 2006) for more tailored and satisfying engagement with different cultural forms, and it remains unclear how progress towards the five goals in ACE's 2010 strategy will be assessed. It seems likely that future evaluation of the benefits of the arts will accommodate both intrinsic and instrumental forms of value. It is crucial that any research should address the complex issues that underpin engagement. In *Taking Part*, audience members were asked to rate their experience, with the assumption that an experience rated 'high quality' would result in audience members wanting to engage again (Martin *et al.*, 2010). Whilst initial analysis has hinted at some demographic differences, the authors acknowledge that quantitative analysis is limited in terms of capturing the subjective, personal and emotional experience of engaging with the arts. They indicate that qualitative research would help identify the components of a high-quality arts experience.

The findings of *Taking Part* demonstrate that many of those who are *expected* to engage with arts and cultural activities choose not to (Bunting *et al.*, 2008), indicating that engaging with the arts, and in particular the fine or 'high' arts, is a minority pursuit. Qualitative methods could shed further light on motivation and behaviour but need to be sufficiently sophisticated to access the tacit and performative dimensions of

engagement which demand ethnographic observation and interpretive methods. Belfiore & Bennett (2007) describe the need to capture complexity in ways that prefigure the psychosocial approach taken in this study.

The 'determinants of impact' identified are distinguished into three groups: those that are inherent to the individual who interacts with the artwork; those that are inherent to the artwork; and 'environmental factors', which are extrinsic to both the individual and the artwork ... any meaningful attempt to assess the impact of the arts would need to take these 'determinants of impact' into account, in order to capture the multidimensional and subjective nature of the aesthetic experience.

p. 235

Adult participatory arts: thinking it through (ACE, 2010a) calls for an appropriate evidence base in relation to participatory work which requires a shared approach to evaluation and the inclusion of appropriate conceptual and theoretical tools. Belfiore & Bennett sustain that engagement with art involves a complex interaction between social history and personal history and question whether useful generalisations about the effects of engagement with the arts can be made. Smith (2003) advocates getting alongside people, while White (2005) found that testimony from participants is increasingly regarded as a valid source of evidence. However, testimony raises further methodological issues: much contemporary art aims to unsettle taken-for-granted everyday responses to the world and shift perspectives. 'Unsettling' may occasionally take the form of an epiphany, but it is more often the result of sustained interaction. This implies the importance of protracted and immersive methods in research which can respond to the complex and often ambiguous processes that accompany changes in individuals and communities.

3 METHODOLOGY

3.1 RESEARCH QUESTION

The aim has been to characterise socially engaged visual arts practice through in-depth comparative case studies of four new model visual arts organisations in the UK which are at the forefront of developing new forms of participation, collaboration and engagement. The overall research question was:

How do these organisations and the art they commission and produce bring about change in individuals and communities?

3.2 AIMS

- conduct a comparative study of three contrasting visual arts institutions with differing implicit 'models' of public engagement, with particular reference to their internal cultures of creativity, the processes whereby they involve individuals and communities, and the impact of that involvement
- identify which individuals and groups were reached by the organisations; what they contributed to pleasure and enjoyment, individual patterns of engagement with visual arts biographical change processes, community diffusion, cultural capital and cultural inclusion – to achieve a complex rather than a reductionist view of 'impact'
- characterise these impacts in terms of contribution to public value and cultural value

3.3 OBJECTIVES

- characterise each of the three models in terms of principles of operation, community of artistic practice, relationships with participants and audiences and local and global environment
- compare practices between organisations in terms of interaction between artistic community, engaged individuals and publics.
- identify implicit and explicit strategies for engaging individuals and the communities of which they are a part
- track the initiation and evolution of key areas of strategic development, and commissioning and implementation of selected projects
- track the engagement and development of individuals within these projects
- Identify sustainable transformational processes within communities involved in socially engaged arts practices.

3.4 PARTICIPATING ORGANISATIONS

The original study design included three contrasting organisations. Initially funding was granted by Arts Council England, North West, and Northern Rock Foundation to cover the study of two organisations: Artangel (London) and Grizedale Arts (Coniston, Cumbria). Eventually with the support of the Gulbenkian Foundation it proved possible to incorporate FACT (Liverpool) as a third in-depth case study. In the interests of further diversity, and also in order to examine a programme of transition from a gallery-based fine arts organisation to outreach and open source, a decision was made to include the Centre for Contemporary Arts (CCA) in Glasgow. Within the time-frame and resources available it was not practicable to study the CCA in the same depth as the other three institutions. Nevertheless the opportunity to consider the key issues facing an organisation in the midst of a step change to socially engaged practice considerably enriched the study.

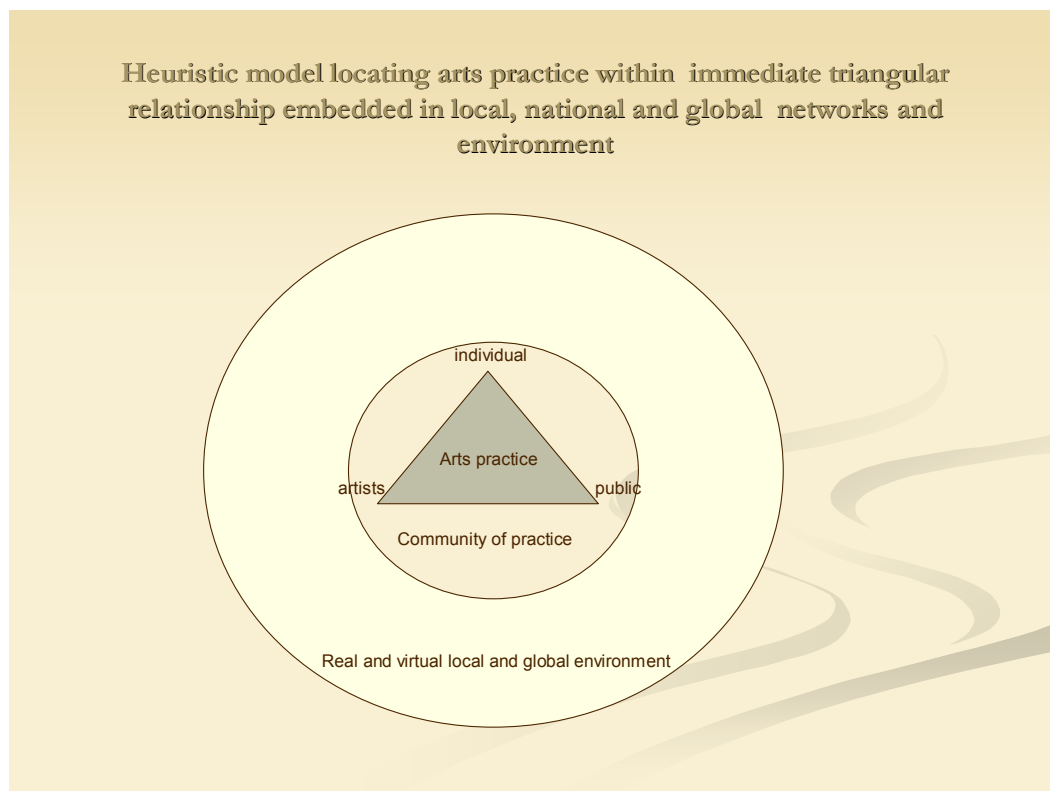
Each of the four organisations had evolved a distinctive underpinning philosophy of contemporary visual arts practice and their inclusion in the study brought into the mix a good geographical spread across the UK and a wide range of contrasting practices in participation, collaboration and engagement. Between them they afforded contrasts between rural Cumbria, London, Liverpool and Glasgow. They included a ‘without walls’ institution (Artangel); a rurally based ‘total environment’ including residential facilities and an organic farm (Grizedale); two organisations with gallery space (FACT and CCA); a predominantly new media organisation (FACT); one that worked exclusively in situation specific contexts (Artangel); extensive residency and intern programmes (Grizedale and CCA); open sourcing of facilities and resources (CCA and FACT); a varied array of partnerships with health, social care, education, cultural agencies and civic institutions (all); outreach programmes directed at people with a range of cultural needs and issues including mental and physical health problems (FACT, CCA), homelessness, regeneration, disability, parenting, race and ethnicity, cultural hybridity and social exclusion.

Each organisation had developed socially engaged practice in distinctive ways and bore the characteristic imprint of its leadership and the particular skills and talents of its staff. The CCA was undergoing re-structuring in the wake of a financial crisis, while the other three had evolved their current models of practice through a number of phases, over a longer term and in constant interaction with communities of place and practice and civic institutions.

3.5 CAPTURING COMPLEXITY

The research aimed to generate a detailed and contextualised understanding of differing models of engagement by tracking and analysing the processes whereby individuals and communities became involved with the organisations and the artwork they commissioned. It then sought to understand the means whereby this involvement induced personal and social change. Change processes are particular to individuals and communities whilst occurring within a shared cultural context. However, individuals can rarely summon up for an interviewer an account of how interacting with an artwork

changes them. Art invokes cognitive, affective and aesthetic faculties, and mobilises unconscious and conscious fantasies, some of which are personal and some of which bear on collective cultural experience. Socially engaged arts practice is also concerned with the relational potentials of collective or group-based work and the closely intertwined dynamics of reception and production. It problematises the relationship between activity and passivity, and dependence and autonomy on the part of the audience, and also the relation of any one part to the whole. The situation specificity of socially engaged arts practice poses the problem of the interdependence of the artwork and the context, where the context itself must be understood, on the one hand, as contingent and produced by the art-work itself; on the other, as reflecting the socio-political environment. In addition, the researcher brings to the research scene his or her own biographically induced, perceptions, perspectives, prejudices, dispositions and emotions and these must be accounted for in any data interpretation.

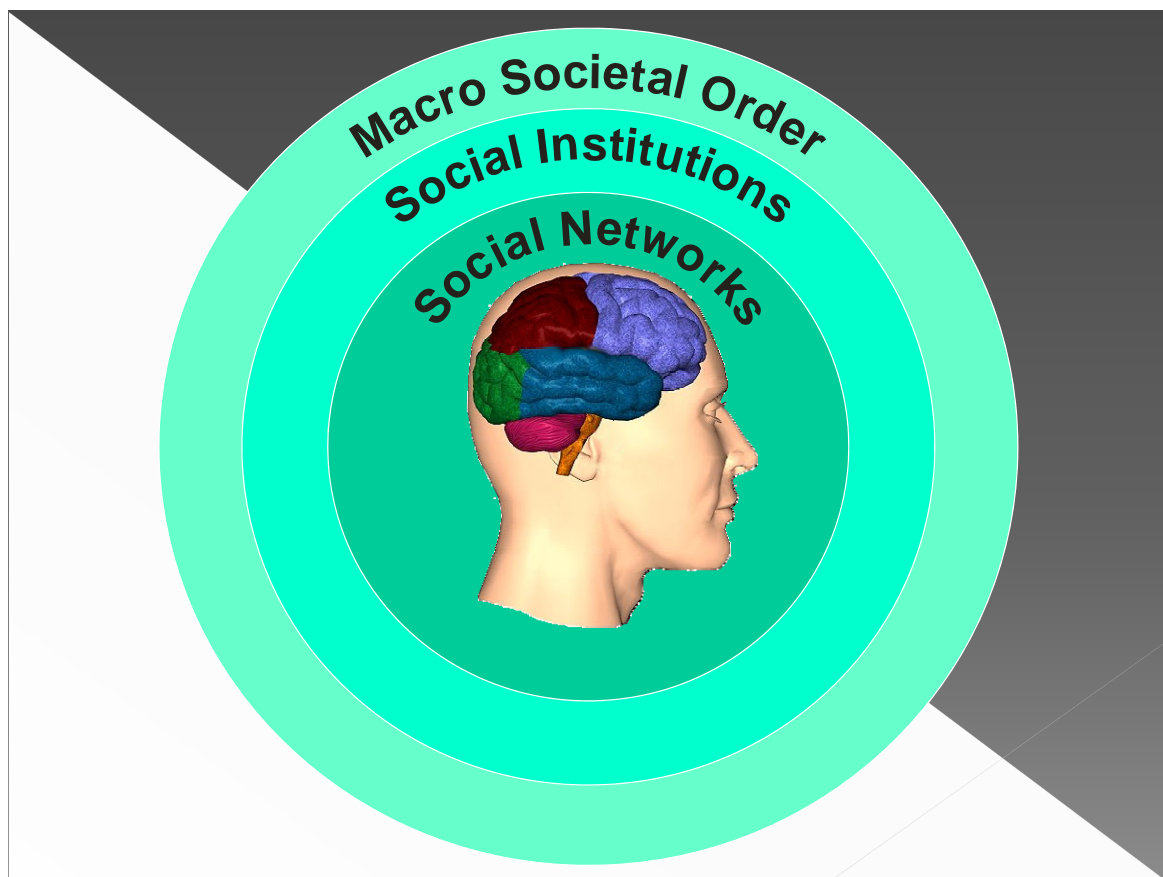


The Research Field

3.6 PSYCHOSOCIAL APPROACH

The intensive in-depth case-studies in this research have captured both individual and collective dimensions of experience, and overt and tacit aspects of engagement. They have taken a psychosocial perspective which locates the individual within groups, communities, networks and institutions while attempting to grasp the irreducible particularity of experience. The research has taken as its focal point of enquiry the interfaces between the organisations, artists and publics.

A psychosocial approach has also enabled a focus on relationships generated in imagination and in the course of action (Clarke & Hoggett, 2009). This was clearly essential in a study of how people engaged with art. It has aimed to understand individual and community engagement in terms of intra- and inter-subjective processes, relationships with arts institutions and their members, and societal processes such as personalisation and globalisation (Figure 2). All of these domains of experience are implicated in the perception, experience, use and enjoyment of visual art and the field-work was designed to acquire data for all of them. The analytic and interpretive strategies designed to understanding their interrelation are described after the data collection methods.



The Psychosocial Model

3.7 DATA COLLECTION METHODS

The range of methods used in the study and their specific objectives are detailed below. The precise combination used was organisation or project specific. The data sources for each organisation are tabulated in the appendix on page 115.

3.7.1 Literature Review

The literature review is the subject of a separate chapter which has contextualised the study in terms of audience research especially with regard to participation and

demographics. Key policy areas relating to the Arts and Cultural Sector have been highlighted. Relevant literature relating to art and aesthetics has been incorporated in to the four key chapters concerning the four organisations in the study.

3.7.2 Observation, Participant Observation and Observant Participation

Method

Observational strategies can be located along a continuum with a minimally participatory stance of external observer at one end (Hinshelwood and Sköglstad, 2000), and at the other the observational eye of ordinary participants. Ethnographic participant observation (Spradley, 1980) lies somewhere in-between. Given the diversity of the organisations and activities it was important to determine observational technique according to compatibility with the practices under observation and acceptability to artists and other participants. For example, during the nine month 'gestation' of *Smother* (Artangel, Sarah Cole), a participant observer engaged in an immersive and experience- near form of research in which she joined in the group-work, minded the children, made tea, de-briefed with the artist and producer and generally took part in the life of the project. A more detached form of observation was used in the case of meetings and institutional processes.

Researchers trained in ethnographic observation and visual methods spent periods ranging between one hour, intensive 2 or 3 day periods and weekly half-day attendances over nine months (depending on the timescales of specific activities and projects). They observed arts practice, participating in activities where appropriate, and interacting with artists and individuals who were similarly engaged. Detailed self-reflexive ethnographic diaries (Sanjek, 1990) and visual data (Pink, 2006) were kept or obtained, including records of artistic output, photo and video records and digital recordings .

Objective

- to gain a detailed understanding of the day-to-day operational process of the organisation as a cultural milieu, the project work commissioned and produced and the engagement of individuals in its arts practice
- to record observational data by whatever means appropriate (observational notes, photographs, digital recordings) for subsequent interpretive panel analysis, with the purpose of identifying the significance of the output and/or the process of its production, with particular attention to the interactions of participants with each other and with the artwork

3.7.3 Social Network Analysis

Method

The diffusion and community penetration of particular arts initiatives need to be understood in terms of their spatial dissemination if their reach is to be accurately

characterised. Social network analysis offers a number of techniques for registering clusters of activity and influence, and the pathways whereby new activities arise and new impacts are felt. Network 'maps' of arts engagement were used to identify approximate numbers and demographic characteristics of groups who became involved with arts based activities and who thereby constituted particular real or virtual communities. This data was analysed in conjunction with interview-based data to show how the artwork resonated and disseminated. Network analysis is particularly suitable for relational data and for characterising the structure of social action (Scott, 1991)

Objective

to construct, where possible, 'maps' of community engagement showing pathways, webs, densities and demographics of engagement

3.7.4 Biographical Narrative Interviews

Method

In-depth case studies were conducted within each organisation using a form of the biographical narrative interview method (BNIM) (Wengraf, 2000) which has been adapted by the Psychosocial Research Unit to use a mix of observational and interview based data. BNIM combines a focus on narrative-pointed questioning on the life course with an analysis of performative dimensions of the interview. The three stage interview progresses from an initial open life-story question which elicits the narrative of the interviewee, and on the basis of this derives a scheme of questioning which respects his or her system of relevance. These interviews were primarily used in their full form with members of staff in the organisations. However the specific techniques of narrative pointed questioning were used with many individuals who engaged with the projects. Analysis was conducted by the panel in accordance with a set of protocols designed to extract the underlying gestalt and idiom of the interviewee in relation to the focal point of research interest. This method is particularly well-suited to the study of psychosocial processes and has been successfully adapted in previous studies to examine the impact on the individual life-course of involvement in an arts based organisations and activities (for example: Froggett et al, 2005; Froggett and Chamberlayne, 2004; Froggett and Wengraf, 2004; Froggett, 2007; Froggett, Farrier & Poursanidou 2007).

Objectives

- to identify the impact on the individual's life-course of engagement in the arts activities of the designated organisation
- to identify a distinctive cultural gestalt in the case of staff within the organisations which can then be compared with the organisation's gestalt, enable cross-case comparisons with other individuals taking part in the study, and triangulate with observational data.

3.7.5 Semi-structured and open-ended interviews with key respondents

Method

Whilst the biographical narrative accounts were restricted to the individuals whose case studies were being compiled, and narrative techniques were used with many project participants, topic-specific semi-structured and open-ended interviews were conducted with the artists and other key stakeholders. Some of these were impromptu, opportunistic, occasioned by specific experiences and recorded in note form, while others were oriented to wider institutional functions such as strategic policy and planning.

Objectives

- to clarify areas of organisational/project functioning and the roles and views of individuals located differently within them
- to clarify responses to specific forms of arts practice as they arose

3.7.6 Documentary Sources

Method

A range of documentary sources were accessed for each organisation. These included policy and strategic planning documents, books, articles, photographic material, video, reviews, discussions and debates, web-based material.

Objective

To understand key issues in the organisation's evolution, self-representation and external accounts

3.8 ETHICS

The research proposal was subject to full ethical review by the Faculty of Health Ethics Committee at the University of Central Lancashire. It was conducted in accordance with the principles of non-maleficence and fully informed consent. Individuals were informed they were free to withdraw from the study at any time without explanation, and without compromising their on-going participation in the arts project in which they were involved. Consent forms were administered in person in the context of one-to-one discussion as the field researchers introduced themselves, and the issue of confidentiality - and its limits - was explained, in particular in relation to the use of quotations and the possibility that (anonymisation notwithstanding) certain quotations and accounts of participation could lead to individuals being recognised by those who knew them, or were familiar with the artwork.

Observation sites and times were selected in order to be as non-intrusive as possible in relation to artistic process and sensitive to participants where difficult material was being handled. Observers remained in regular consultation with the supervisor (principal investigator) in order to discuss role and perceptions, and critically assess the observational process. Field notes and digitally recorded material were subsequently transcribed and subjected to panel analysis to avoid the unwarranted imposition of researcher perspectives upon the text. All data with named informants has been kept on a password protected computer.

3.9 STEERING GROUP

An external steering group of three independent advisors from the arts sector was invited to oversee the project: Claire Doherty (Situations and University of the West of England), Francis Mackee (CCA Glasgow) and Marco Daniel (Tate Modern). This group offered guidance on all aspects of the research project. Francis Mackee was invited to join the steering group a full year before we decided to include CCA in the project. His advice was therefore disinterested during the period in which we were studying Grizedale Arts and FACT. Once it was realised that the inclusion of CCA would greatly strengthen the study, his advisory role was confined to the relationship between New Model Arts Institutions and the wider arts sector.

3.10 KEY ANALYTIC AND INTERPRETIVE STRATEGIES

3.10.1 Psychosocial research and scenic understanding

‘Scenic understanding’ (Lorenzer, 1977, 1986, see Bereswill et al, 2010 for English language discussion) is a particularly useful strategy within a psychosocial approach in that the artwork, its process of production, the people involved in it, their interactions with one another and with the artwork itself, and the participating consciousness of the researcher are all understood as mutually influencing and related to one another. The

experience of engaging with art must be grasped as simultaneously intensely personal, intimate, idiosyncratic *and* relational, social and collective. The idea of 'scene' (the theatrical metaphor is apt) is useful because it invokes visual and performative experience (Froggett and Hollway, 2010). In everyday life we apprehend something as a scene of which we are a part, before we isolate and analyse its components. A scene also contains 'presentational' as well as 'discursive' symbols (Langer 1942, 1990) – or to put it plainly, things which cannot be said and can only be shown.

An example from the present study should clarify: the participant observer who attended the *Smother* sessions (described in detail in the Artangel chapter) was emotionally and cognitively immersed in the experience. In retiring after each session to write her field notes in a naturalistic style, she was encouraged to do so 'as it came' - which is to say using associative thinking. This process allowed her to compose verbal 'pictures' of successive scenes as they occurred during a session, evoking not only the interactions and events that occurred in the sessions, but also their 'quality of feeling'. This quality of feeling emerged through the aesthetic of her writing in which the scenes before her were described in her own idiom. The 'scene' on the page confronting the research analyst or panel was thus understood as meeting point between the participant observer and the *Smother* workshop, necessarily apprehended through her subjective experience. Instead of attempting to 'bracket off' the subjectivity of the researcher (as happens in all quantitative and most qualitative analysis) her field notes, available for interpretation by the research team, allowed an active understanding of how she had used herself as an instrument of knowing within a shared cultural context. Although the issue of 'relative objectivity' is a vexed question in interpretive research and beyond the scope of the discussion in this report (see Hollway, 2008), the procedure documented here allows for some transparency in that the view of the observer can itself be interpreted and challenged.

In short, the researcher's perspective is examined through the use of procedures which question her disposition to construe a scene in particular ways (Froggett and Hollway 2010). This offers a vital counter-balance to the necessary 'subjectivism' of immersive research methods.

Where scenic understanding was required, the interpretation process in this study took place in panels where research analysts could challenge one another's interpretations. It followed the steps identified in what has come to be known as the Dubrovnic Interpretation Group method, in this case sometimes adapted to work with visual data³. The text or visual data was examined as a whole, criteria of selection were established and extracts selected for in-depth analysis. These extracts were examined line-by-line (in the case of text) or clip-by-clip (in the case of digital recording) and the panel asked: What is being said, or done? How is it being said, or done? Why is it being said or done in this particular way? The material was synthesised for the final analysis.

³ This method has been refined in the annual symposium of the International Research group for Psychosocietal Analysis has been developed in numerous studies conducted at participant universities, in primarily in Germany (Bremen), Denmark (Roskilde) and the UK (Open University and Central Lancashire).

3.10.2 Experience nearness and symbolisation

The study attempted to understand as closely as possible to the experience of engaging with art through the use of 'experience near' methods (Geertz, 1974), which grasp the ways in which people perceive and respond to artworks (whether as process or product). These responses have both unconscious and conscious dimensions and can only be partly articulated. Again, panel is indicated in making sense of the data.

Experience near methods are oriented to understanding the 'forms of life' of a community or society: their language, artefacts, ceremonies, rituals, habits, greetings and everyday interactive order. Experience nearness does not imply thinking someone's thoughts or getting under their skin (Geertz, 1974) – it means understanding symbolic systems as an expression of a community's experience of being who they are and communicating it to one another. Artwork and particularly processual, durational or participative artworks such as many of those that featured in this study create a community of interest with a micro-culture and a specific symbolic system which may be composed of insider jokes, extended metaphors, story-telling, habitual gestures, forms of dress, visual codes and so on. These symbols give form to feeling by virtue of a distinctive aesthetic that 'holds' the quality of that feeling.

Of particular interest in relation to artists (whose objectives are always to find new forms for feeling) is the fact that experience near concepts such as 'being in love' lose their 'nearness' – their ability to affect us – when they become clichés. In Lorenzer's terms this means they have become de-sensualised and de-symbolised (see Froggett and Hollway, 2010, Hollway and Froggett 2011, forthcoming). A particular problem in arts practice or social scientific research, is the use of de-sensualised or 'clichéd' concepts which have lost their resonance with lived experience by over-use or manipulation (Froggett and Hollway, 2010) - 'empowerment' and 'participative' would be examples in the field of socially engaged practice. We have tried to avoid using such concepts in the data analysis and in this report wherever we were aiming at experience nearness. However, there is a trade off between vitality and the clarity that emerges through a common discourse.

3.10.3 Experience near and distant data collection and analysis

Experience-near data collection methods in this study have included narrative accounts, biographical interviews, participant observation and use of film, video and photography. Experience distant methods have included the use of documentary and web-based sources, some purely informational interviews, discussions and network analysis. However, a judicious tacking back and forth between experience nearness and experience distance is vital within the research analytic process. Geertz was clear that both perspectives are needed: experience distance consigns us to jargonistic abstraction whilst experience nearness leaves us 'awash in immediacies'. Hence in the interpretation panels we used to analyse much of our data, we first read texts aloud (experience near) to see how they 'felt'. We then proceeded to a line-by-line dissection of meaning (involving both experience near imaginative identifications and experience distant societal hypotheses), allowing opposing interpretations from different panel

members to challenge one another. Within short extracts we considered the significance of changes in speech styles from narration (experience near) to evaluation (experience distant).

By way of example, we offer the following extract from an interview with a project worker speaking of a young woman:

We inflated balloons with helium inside a babygrow on a balloon and tried to make it float by attaching more balloons to it so it was almost like a little baby floating away. We took it outside and started flying it and it unfortunately immediately got stuck in a tree so (2) she spent a long time trying to yank it down. Eventually all the other balloons popped and just the little babygrow balloon fell back down (1.5) She was being filmed on camera so started doing a bit of narrative about how all the other balloons had left her and stuff like that and how she didn't want it any more (1) And I thought it actually (2) had some relevance to other issues in her life. And although she was addressing them in a funny showman like way, it was definitely (2) - she was trying to say something...(Numerals indicate length of pause)

The change of speech style first occurs in line 6 after a 1.5 second pause as the interviewee changes from narration to description and then in line 8 after a 1 second pause which leads to evaluation. In the process there is a progressive distancing from the position of the mother by the young project worker who first recalls the playful experiential immediacy of the scene, then registers the emotional conflict being expressed by the young woman, follows with a sympathetic but professionalised assessment ('had some relevance to other issues in her life') – and then trails off, enacting the confusion and uncertainty of the young woman herself.

3.10.4 Synthesis and Syncretism

The presentation of synthesised research accounts is generally the outcome of a laborious process of analysis and contextualisation whereby they are related to the relevant literature and other studies in the field. As such they are presented in a 'finished', experience distant form which bears a certain stamp of authority. The living presence of the researcher with his or her own anxieties, blind spots and dispositions is written out of the account. We have found it useful to re-introduce his or her presence by re-producing synthesised scenes which attempt to capture the gestalt of the organisation or event through the researcher's perceptions. This is a strategy for apprehending complex wholes by grasping their key organising principles as filtered through the researcher's consciousness.

It is important that such scenic compositions are compiled after immersion in the data, which is then put aside so that the scene can be written as it presents itself to the 'mind's eye'. The aesthetic of the writing – in the author's own idiom (Bollas 1989, 1992) - should capture the aesthetic of the scene. The following is a scenic composition on FACT written by Alastair Roy.

FACT PEN PORTRAIT

Acceptable In The 80s

The first time I visit FACT for a meeting, I stand in front of the mirror at home wondering what I should wear to visit a new media arts centre. I worry that my phone and my laptop will all be laughably out of date; I am concerned that my age, my hairline, my propensity for corduroy trousers and my non-membership of Facebook and Twitter will not help either. These fears subside over time but not entirely. A lot of those working for FACT are young, cool and virtually everyone I meet uses 'Apple' products. I fantasize that there is a room in the building filled with computers and equipment, a shrine to techno kit.

One day I go to help some volunteers working with high tech Dutch designers 'Blendid'. They are creating a Wixel Cloud which is a light installation for a health centre. On the way out of the office someone hands me a brand new sealed Apple Mac to give to the Dutch designers; perhaps I'm right. A few weeks later I'm in the office at FACT making some notes about an interview. Sat opposite me is the system administrator, Chris. A young woman who has been working on the front desk answering the phones comes into the office to speak to him. She is clearly a little irritated and the following conversation takes place:

- Woman:** There's something wrong with the bloody phone system.
- Chris:** Why? What's the problem?
- Woman:** Whenever I try to put someone through to someone's answerphone the system is just getting stuck. What am I supposed to do?
- Chris:** Let me have a look. [Chris taps his computer and brings up the phone system - 30 seconds of silence ensue]. Yes, you're right, the system is down at the minute.
- Woman:** Well, what am I supposed to do when someone rings up?
- Chris:** Well, I suppose when someone rings up you could always take a message and put it on a post-it note and leave it on the person's desk.
- Woman:** Bloody hell! What is this, 1982 or something? [The young woman walks back to the front desk].

The reference to 1982 plays to my fantasies and projections about the organisation; I was a teenager in 1982 and about half of those in the office weren't even born. The reference is also interesting in terms of the availability of new technology; 1982 saw the launch of the Commodore 64 which brought personal computing to the masses becoming the best selling PC of all time; it also saw the release of Sony's first CD player.

The 1980s were a dark period for Liverpool and Alan Bleasdale's *Boys from the Blackstuff*, also released in 1982, used Liverpool's post-industrial decline and position in relation to the wider Thatcherite project as its material. The main character was Yosser Hughes and I wonder if his catch phrase 'gissa job' tells us something of the challenge taken on in creating a new media arts centre outside of London. Certainly the FACT building speaks more of the organisation's ambition and its alliances with a global new media arts world than of its long history in socially engaged practice through projects like *TenantSpin*. The building is tall, dark and shiny, deliberately sleek and technocentric and beyond the light filled atrium are a multitude of remote offices and gallery spaces. The world of new media, along with the wider art world, can seem similarly remote and inaccessible to the uninitiated. The building provides ammunition for those who say that FACT is led by the technology, positioning it as *Tron*-like, abducting participants to play in its new media games. There seems to be a tension here with its avowed mission of humanising technology.

This short piece has been shared with key staff at FACT who enjoyed the humour and recognised themselves as possible participants within the scene depicted. It captures the organisation's aspirations, the ironies of its self-image, the 'taken-for-grantedness' of 'kit', some of its internal tensions, its communicational style, the ambiguities of its mission and its setting, its civic and societal context, its generational consciousness, elements of historical evolution, and its determination to humanise the technological imagination. Seen through the acknowledged projections and style-anxiety of the researcher, it says something about what the organisation signifies to different potential publics, and the discomforts it can arouse.

In one page the researcher has condensed most of the key themes of a much more extended analysis. Following analysis and synthesis (de-construction followed by re-combination) he has brought to bear a syncretistic faculty oriented to perception of the whole - (including an emblematic scene). Syncretism which demands a form of embodied aesthetic attention (Ehrenzweig 1967) and captures the organising principles or gestalt of a scene, rather than focussing on analytic detail. Scenic compositions like this are themselves subject to panel analysis by the research team and are almost invariably found to have captured the dimensions of experience identified in figure 2 in a pattern which is characteristic of the 'whole' unit of analysis (in this case the organisation). The whole must then be compared with a deconstructive analysis of the parts, and the way they fit together, before the hypothesised gestalt is considered to be supported by the data.

Syncretism and analysis are closely related to experience nearness and experience distance in research methodology in that they describe alternative modes of attention implicated in the creative understanding of complex wholes and their parts (see for example: Froggett, 2006a, 2006b and Froggett and Hollway, 2010, for more extended methodological discussion). The implications of this distinction are clarified by drawing on the work of art historian and psychoanalyst Anton Ehrenzweig (1967).

Anton Ehrenzweig (1967) considered alternating moments of psychological merger and separation in the creative process in the light of Piaget's work on the syncretistic and analytic faculties. It is the syncretistic faculty which informs holistic thinking and the creative arts. Syncretistic perception is relatively undifferentiated, taking in complex structures in a single sweep. It involves the scanning of whole objects and their interrelated parts without focussing in on a particular detail or dominant pattern. Whereas analysis breaks up the object into component parts syncretism takes a global view or perceives the background matrix in a gestalt that produces the figure.

When an artist who has been working on the detail of a composition stands back and scans the whole picture a relaxation of focus and a wide-angled vision takes over which is less interested in particulars and more concerned with the object in its entirety. The syncretistic faculty enables perception of the relations between components of a complex structure. It is not only a function of visual perception, but also evident in absorption by the overall shape or flow of a story, music or poem which at that moment is more important for its meaning than any part. In Ehrenzweig's view this is an embodied and creative form of perception - in that suspending the deconstructive movement of analysis unconscious associations are allowed free play in apprehending the object. As the psychological boundaries of the observer relax, the otherness of the object attenuates and

empathic identification can be momentarily established. The analytic phase must then re-establish distance in order to allow the re-assertion of a sceptical consciousness which reflexively interrogates both the relationship to the object and the object itself.

Pen portraits or scenic compositions have been used in this study as a device for apprehending the whole through the imaginative and embodied syncretistic perception of the researchers, while formal analytic protocols have produced synthesised accounts of the same structures. Comparison of the two is particularly useful in depicting complex processual art projects and the organisations themselves.

3.11 SUMMARY

Rich data amenable to interpretation is essential to a study such as this. It includes 'thick' descriptions and data such as people's narratives, enactments and life stories as well as observational data on social situations and visual and performative data arising out of artwork. This information must then be contextualised in relation to societal contexts (for example commodification, globalisation) and political and cultural institutional agendas (audience demographics and participation patterns, personalisation, and public value) - hence the importance of the literature review with which we commenced the research, as well as the identification of societal influences within the socially engaged practices we studied. The data allowed us to develop an understanding of the ways in which people understand their own relation to the art they engage with - but it also gave scope for the research team to identify tacit dimensions of this relation, which may, for example, be revealed in the performative dimensions of their interviews or interactions; in the selections, omissions or patterns they impose on their narrative; in the gestalt which expresses their personal aesthetic idiom, and their disposition to respond to artworks in characteristic ways. In sum, in combination the data collected enabled the multi-dimensional view of contextualised experience depicted in the psychosocial model in figure 2.

To generate useful knowledge data collection methods need to be suitable for their object. In the case of information relating to the historical development of the organisations - the background of their staff, their social outlook, their organisational structures and networks - this is relatively straightforward and can be collected by interview and documentation. In the case of modes and aesthetics of engagement, it requires the use of syncretistic as well as analytic attention, and experience near and distant methods as described above. The elements that account for the nature of the experience of engaging with art are:

- The biographically personal and idiomatic response of the individual
- The social relations/community involved in the production and reception of the artwork
- The artwork itself (process/product) as a third object in which these personal and social relations are expressed in aesthetic form.

Data collection and analysis varied in this study in order to produce a tailored methodology for each organisation. Data sources are detailed in the appendix on page 115.

4 THE FOUR ORGANISATIONS

4.1 ARTANGEL

4.1.1 Socially engaged arts practice, experiment and diversity

Artangel was founded by Roger Took in 1985 and during this early period it curated relatively small scale, politically oriented work. The organisation seemed unsure of its future direction when Michael Morris and James Lingwood were invited to become co-directors in 1991. Their challenge was to develop a viable model for Artangel as a commissioning organisation in the socio-economic climate generated by the Thatcher government.

Both of the new directors had previously worked at the Institute of Contemporary Arts (ICA), James Lingwood primarily in the Gallery and Michael Morris in the theatre. The work they have produced whilst at Artangel can be seen as a continuation of the direction they began taking whilst working at the ICA.

My work in relation to non-cultural spaces and non-institutional spaces began then as well, because the space we worked in was a small 166 seat black box - and after about three years of producing and programming in that space, it became rather constrained. So even in the early 80's I was seeking to expand the ICA's performing arts programme into other locations - even then, there was a sense of wanting to play with space and location.

INTERVIEW WITH JAMES LINGWOOD

In the early phase of their directorship Lingwood and Morris had no long-term plan for the organisation and were focused on obtaining funding for their first commissions which included the sculpture *Head of a Man /Figure on a Buoy* (1992) by Stephan Balkenhol and a dance piece *Mmm...*, by the choreographer Michael Clarke, which made full use of the architectural potentials of a Kings Cross Depot. The first years saw critical acclaim for a number of commissions: these included Rachel Whiteread's hugely controversial Turner Prize winning *House*, and Laurie Anderson and Brian Eno's *Self-storage*, (1995) installed in 42 rooms of a Wembley warehouse.

Artangel operates out of a modest, functional office in London and sees huge advantages in not having to support a gallery space, instead producing works which depend for their character on their specific physical and cultural situations. A prime example, requiring fidelity to the original events, has been Jeremy Deller's reconstruction of the *Battle of Orgreave* (2001), filmed by Mike Figgis, which took place at the peak of the 1984 miner's strike. There is a strong spatial or temporal dimension to most Artangel projects whose location is 'out there' among the people who need it, seek it, love it, live alongside it, or just happen by.

Towards the end of the 1990's Artangel began responding to the opportunities that were being offered by the National Lottery while continuing to raise money for commissions from Arts Council England. The present finance director, Cressida Hubbard, affirms that the Arts Council has been a 'model funder', affording scope to produce long-term projects without predetermined timescales. This latitude has been essential to the ground-up, artist-led model that Artangel has developed. James Lingwood described the next phase as occurring with significant increases in Lottery funding, generating international commissions and programming with both Channel Four and the BBC. During this period private patronage and sponsorship were also established to ensure a more diverse funding base. This has had the effect of consolidating a community of supporters in the 'Company of Angels' and 'Special Angels'. Corporate funding has been limited which is perhaps hardly surprising given Artangel's distinctly non-commercial output. In 2002 Artangel celebrated ten years of commissions and the Interaction programme was developed.

CASE EXAMPLE

Break Down, Micheal Landy (2001)



Break Down was a single-minded act of artistic anti-consumerism and an exemplar of socially engaged practice as 'spectacle' – confronting consumers in the heart London's shopping mecca with an open question: What does the relentless accumulation of consumer goods signify? In the back of what had been an Oxford Street C&A store, Landy installed a conveyer belt and this carried his personal possessions one by one to destruction. It was visited by some 85,000 people – many of them in the area to shop for new commodities, similar to those destined for the shredder. Landy described the project in terms of the ultimate consumer choice: to divest himself of his self-defining possessions – enabling him to turn, if only for a time, from the imperative of consumption. The possessions, including his CD archive, gifts, love-letters and sentimental memorabilia disappeared over the course of a two-week period with the most personally precious saved to last. The destruction of the final object – his father's sheepskin coat – took place in a sombre silence since his CD collection – soundtrack to the proceedings had just gone.



CASE EXAMPLE

Towards A Promised Land (Wendy Ewald, 2005)

Wendy Ewald worked in Margate with the children of asylum seekers bringing them into contact with children from the UK who had also left their birthplaces because their families had had to move. She based herself within a local hotel, a place with something of a 'siege mentality' that housed asylum seeking families awaiting re-location. From here, she collected the children's stories and made photographic portraits of them and the few significant belongings they had brought with them. She also taught the children how to make their own photographs. Huge portrait banners of the children were mounted on public buildings and the sea wall. Margate has a history of organised political opposition to asylum seekers and also of locals resisting right wing exploitation of the public anxiety that asylum seekers can arouse.

One of the reasons we decided to put the pictures up in phases is because we didn't know what would happen. We were aware of the tension that the presence of the asylum seekers caused. On one of my first nights in Margate, when Lucy and I were walking home to the Nayland Rock Hotel, we were egged from a passing car. But for the most part, the comments have been positive. When the exhibition was at the Outfitters Gallery, people could read the kids' stories and look at more of their pictures. Some people stayed for hours looking at everything and discussing the project, the banners and the issues of asylum. They were especially impressed by how well the kids presented themselves, how brave they were to present themselves in such an honest and sensitive way. Invariably, they sympathized with their life changes, although there have been incidents.

WENDY EWALD

The banners became a talking point in the town for months arousing a variety of responses from sympathetic recognition of the harshness of the children's lives to outright hostility directed at Muslim children, especially after the July 7th London bombings. They exposed the many shades of opinion in the town, showing it to be an unsettled place of transition and bringing to the surface the ways in which Englishness is defined by the otherness in its midst.



4.1.2 Philosophy, Civic Mission, Politics and Personalisation - Artists and Curators as Social Critics

Artangel's work is powered by the belief that 'artists are capable of creating visionary works which impact upon the way we view our world, our times and ourselves in unusual and enduring ways' (Artangel, 2010). It has continued to commission implicitly or explicitly political art, reflecting a variety of critical perspectives: post-colonialism and cultural hybridisation, industrial relations, displacement and identity struggles, consumerism, eco-sustainability, parenting and sexuality. The issues that have inspired Artangel commissions reflect the preoccupations of the artists although projects are realised in collaboration.

The Interaction programme has explored political ideas relating to situation-specific art: notably Hakim Bey's (1991) conceptualisation of the temporary autonomous zone (TAZ) as a territory of the moment or 'free enclave' which can be fostered in the 'cracks' between the cultural hegemony of the state and the spectacle. The TAZ was a seminal idea behind the *Pirate Utopias*, a series of five commissions from Lawrence Abu Hamden, Sarah Cole, Ceri Buck, Lucille Power and Charlotte Prodger. These works were concerned with the production of imaginative spaces temporarily freed from the logic of commodification. Bey's notion of the TAZ was used in an inspirational rather than programmatic sense.

Other compatible ideas have come from play theory. Artangel Interaction hosted a conference: *There's an artist in the Playground* in 2009 and the play theme is evident in its own version of the TAZ, conceived as a site of illusion:⁴

... a moment when an idea or a need temporarily occupies the primary function of space. A kitchen table that serves the primary function of being a table, at which people sit to eat, is spontaneously transformed, through child's play, into a pirate ship sailing hostile waters. For a while (maybe a pirate's lifetime) this table is occupied entirely by its purpose as a ship, when play concludes it returns to its basic table form. But for those who encountered the table in its pirate ship form, it will never be the same again. Something has changed, a potential has been discovered, a feeling experienced, a possibility revealed.

ARTANGEL WEB-SITE⁵

The conference discussed the relationship between collaborative practice, social engagement and play and the potential to create new spaces for interaction outside of what are held to be the routine alienated social relations of contemporary living.

⁴ This 'illusional' quality of TAZ in Artangel's development of the idea retains something of Bay's anarcho-utopianism but in terms of its artistic resonance has more in common with Donald Winnicott's (1972) notion of the location of play as a 'potential space' in which the demands of reality-testing are suspended and the subject imaginatively reconciles their 'inner' conception with the world as s/he finds it. The illusion sustained in the potential space is for Winnicott the basis of creative symbolisation and the psychic condition of participation in the cultural domain. We have linked it in this report to 'the aesthetic third'.

⁵ http://www.artangel.org.uk/projects/2008/taz/about_taz/about_taz

CASE EXAMPLE
Invisible Food (Ceri Buck, 2008 -)



Invisible Food involves the inhabitants of a London housing estate in re-valuing the 'weeds' in the area, and producing a new wild food fusion cuisine. It started with Ceri Buck's invitations to her neighbours to go for walks and focus on the wild plants that would normally have remained unnoticed. Her idea was to transform relationships to a built environment which is seldom seen as a source of culinary and botanical pleasure. During a slow research and development phase Ceri drew on a creative writing background of putting text into unusual places. With fellow walkers she mapped the plant life of the area and compiled packs of Invisible Food post-cards, recipes, poetry and drawings which were delivered to every household on the estate. The work still continues and as many as 40 interested people turn up for walks with 'the nettle lady'. Something of a local movement has grown up sensitised to plant heritage and the pollutants in urban living which threaten it. This has connected with a sustainability agenda and ideas about low-carbon living and has attracted financial support from the council as a model of voluntary environmental action. The next phase is the production of a recipe book and consolidation of links with like-minded ecological networks.



Wild herb garden, Loughborough Estate

4.1.3 Modes of engagement

The success and international influence of Artangel's output over the last 19 years appears to justify their frequent use of the terms 'exceptional' and 'ambitious', and much of the work already cited shows a high degree of political and critical engagement. However their particular contribution to socially engaged arts practice bears further examination. Projects have aimed to create temporary communities around socially significant concerns:

Each project brings its own public as well, there is obviously one group of people who know about Artangel and who follow Artangel and who know what we do, there is another group of people who might be more involuntary, they might just stumble across something...a lot of people, they read the cultural pages of the newspaper, they know about Artangel, but we're not only interested in those people, we're interested in the passer by.

INTERVIEW WITH MICHAEL MORRIS

Many projects are slow and emergent, evolving according to their internal rhythms and dynamics and requiring intensive research and development phases during which key participants are engaged and nurtured. The free mixing of performance and visual art is adapted to the needs of the people who become part of the artwork and inflect it with their own character.

The main lens through which we have viewed Artangel's socially engaged practice has been the Interaction Programme, led by Rachel Anderson, which has specialised in intensive producer support for long-term immersive processes. We placed a participant observer in *Smother* (2009-2010), a nine month project by Sarah Cole. It will be described in detail in the following sections of this chapter. Other contrasting recent commissions that have been a particular focus have included the *Museum of Non-Participation* by Karen Mirza and Brad Butler, and Ceri Buck's *Invisible Food* (described above). Although different methods and media were used in each of these works, there were similarities in the commissioning process and the nature of produce support offered.

The Museum of Non-Participation (see case example below) involved an astonishingly diverse range of people prior to its final month-long installation behind an East End Bangladeshi barber shop. Rachel Andersen initially facilitated a series of seminars to explore the political and conceptual landscape out of which the central idea emerged. Anderson then accompanied Mirza and Butler on a research trip to Karachi. The artists speak highly of her immense commitment and the on-going dialogue which continued throughout the project and which was crucial to the aesthetic outcome. Rachel Andersen's biographical interview revealed the importance in her work of the relationships that art can produce, and the relational conditions of its production.

Despite the singularity of the Interaction Programme, the wider organisation of Artangel has laid the basis for this kind of work, provided the support team, and nourished it through its very considerable experience. Artangel's commissioning model which is 'born from an open-ended conversation with an artist offered the opportunity to imagine

something extraordinary' (Artangel, 2010), allows the Interaction Programme the space to follow the immanent logic of the work as it unfolds; to take it into the places where the process leads; and to engage communities who at first sight might seem unlikely participants. These have varied from small businesses, to African lesbian refugees, hedge fund managers, busking musicians and the unseen workforce of the nocturnal city. For some members of these communities an encounter with an arts project in which they are involved by virtue of both circumstances and imagination, has the potential to be life changing. The conviction that artists can transform the ways in which we see ourselves and the commitment to take art into locations where this transformative possibility is unexpected accounts for Artangel's penetration into audiences who would not normally participate in arts projects of such calibre.

4.1.4 Aesthetics of Engagement

Projects such as *Invisible Food* raise the question of whether this is just an inventive form of participatory social action in which the aesthetic is subordinated to a social agenda (Bishop in interview with Roche, 2006). Ceri Buck acknowledges that she has struggled with the question of where the art is in *Invisible Food*, and in the political and environmentalist circles where she now moves, the art sometimes gets downplayed. She is comfortable with this and has concluded that the art lies at least partly in the conversations, since it is the conversational aesthetic that is essential to the quality of the experience. This is art as a form of creative practice in everyday life - not expert-led, cautious about the claims it makes for itself, yet intensely focussed on its object - a third object produced by artist and participant community. The concept of 'aesthetic third' is elaborated in the conclusions of this report. In this case it inheres in a particular quality of communication around which artist and participants develop a common activity. It takes its character from the artist's desire and the participants' idiom and includes the interactions between participants, the relationships formed, the communication that transpires, activities undertaken together, ideas generated, as well as the production of objects. The third functions as a node around which social relations and imaginative constructs are generated. Once formed it has ripple effects in a developing receptivity which is particular to the artwork in question. In *Invisible Food* this expressed itself in a sensibility to a plant heritage held in common within an urban environment often experienced as isolating and alienating.

Artangel's projects are strongly artist led and the organisation sees this as their strength. The concern to ensure that the work embodies the experience of participants often leads to an aesthetic of the everyday (Johnstone 2008), interpreted through the perspective of the artist. It is the meticulous grounding of the work in the everyday concerns of the temporary communities it brings into being, juxtaposed with an arresting artistic conception that accounts for its impact.

Writing in the Special Issue of *The Daily Jang* which emerged from *The Museum of Non-Participation*, Suzanne Lacey's comment on where the art is could equally well apply to *Invisible Food* or any of the other socially engaged projects that have featured in this study:

The question of art can be located in the visual presentation and its locations, the elegance of the concepts, and/or the relationship to other art, current and past. The shape of massing bodies, the narrative of unscripted conversation, the juxtaposition of differences, and the unexpected poignancy of unscripted conversations – throughout human history human experiences, recorded in art, have proved inspirational beyond the content itself, in ways we can only attribute to aesthetic qualities.

THE DAILY JANG 20-09-2009

4.1.5 The Local and the Global

Karen Mirza and Brad Butler's *Museum of Non-Participation* has already been cited as an example of Artangel Interaction's intensive producer support. It is also of interest because of a concern with the hybridisation of cultures observable in the practice of Grizedale Arts, FACT and the CCA.

CASE EXAMPLE

The Museum of Non-Participation (Karen Mirza and Brad Butler)

We never need to build a museum of non-participation, because it's already there – we just have to appropriate the spaces

BRAD BUTLER

The Museum of Non-Participation announces its enigma in its title – itself a gesture. This on-going body of work has explored and inverted many of the contemporary art world's established assumptions regarding the effectiveness of collaboration, participation and dialogue. Whereas participation has become a taken-for-granted measure of engagement, the classical museum stands in all its transcendent monumental solidity, while its visitors pass, almost incidentally through its galleries. What then if non-participation became the axial principle around which the museum's idea revolved? What would it be for those whose daily lives it touched in a city like Karachi, which is without a museum of contemporary art, or in a language like Urdu where 'museum' can only be translated as 'the house of the unexpected'. The project was born in Pakistan in 2007 in the wake of the lawyers' political protests against presidential interference with the judiciary. However The Museum of Non-Participation has become an extended metaphor on a wider political plane, addressing the complexities of cultural and political participation. In London, it has addressed a public who tend to view Pakistan as a place infected by fundamentalism and violence, where civil society has imploded in the face of state and non-state terrorism. The Museum of Non-Participation unsettles these views by bringing the questions posed in Pakistan back to the hub of post-colonial geo-politics, and showing how the same political currents flow within a 'first-world' metropolitan centre. Non-participation, it seems, is a global facet of daily existence, and as profoundly significant in its consequences as intentional, active engagement.

The work has taken place in Karachi, Islamabad, London and Birmingham through, language classes, salons, text-banners, poetry, readings, newspapers, film, installation and a month long programme of lectures, events and discussions in the back of Yaseen's East End barber's shop. Crossing boundaries, and exploring liminality between art forms, became key threads which related to practices of linguistic and cultural translation and the 'disorganising' central concept of the project. The limitations encountered by the artists – in their own understanding, as much as the social spaces in which they worked - became intellectual and aesthetic opportunities for exploration and the conundrums which drove the process.



Museum of Non-Participation – Yaseen's Barber Shop

Karachi is a city where public space is compromised by speculative construction and ubiquitous flows of traffic - it is hard to walk about, yet its walls function as much to display text - with its openings and invitations - as they delimit and confine. There are places where attempts to photograph or erect text banners meet with the prohibition of armed patrols. Distribution networks are ephemeral: booksellers, tandoor wallahs, a local radio station. In the UK they are material: nine thousand copies of a special supplement of the Daily Jang, and a location which hosted Urdu language classes and became the site of a 'festival' of non-participation, offering platforms, debates, a monitor with performances from Karachi, newspaper clippings, books and Mirza and Butler's film *The Exception and the Rule*. In London, needless to say, the provocation of Museum of Non-Participation unravels differently to Karachi, focussing attention on forces which marginalise and exclude, even though civic participation is assumed to be the foundation of citizenship. It turns out that the same global influences are at work in both contexts, infiltrating their way into the different social fabrics.

4.1.6 Intensity and Duration

Because of the long duration of many Artangel projects and the level of producer support, the organisation undertakes fewer commissions each year than the other three participating in this study, preferring until now to work with indeterminate timescales and focus on quality. Although it has established itself as committed to site-specific or situational, and usually temporary, productions, Artangel has collaborated with the Roundhouse in Camden, helping to re-establish its reputation as a significant cultural

site for London. In 2009 Roundhouse hosted a 1000 minute episode in the life of a 1000 year musical performance, *Longplayer*, which raises complex philosophical questions about creating art over long timescales. The work requires almost unimaginable long-term vision and poses significant practical challenges. As continuity cannot be left to chance, the *Longplayer Trust* was founded to create the conditions of the music's survival into an unknown future where the underlying technology - currently computer generated - will certainly change, and its evolving meaning and resonance for future generations cannot be known. The Roundhouse episode was played on a huge instrument composed of concentric circles of Tibetan singing bowls and accompanied by a continuous twelve hour conversation in relays, initiated by author Jeanette Winterson and psychotherapist Susie Orbach. The list of social and cultural commentators who picked up the baton included neuroscientist Daniel Glaser, poet Ruth Padel, artist Marcus Coates, mathematician Marcus du Sautoy and biologist Stephen Rose. The music will provide a continuous thread connecting the contingent to the seemingly 'eternal' in whatever re-invented guise it appears at the historical moment when an associated event is convened.

Sarah Cole's *Smother* demonstrated ambition of quite a different order – concerned as it was with the intimacies and ambivalences of the mothering process for vulnerable young women. Sited in the Coram Young Parent Project drop-in, it 'gestated' over a period of nine months. It is a prime example of the Interaction Programme's intensively relational approach enacted over a protracted period of time.

The initial phase of *Smother* saw sporadic attendance by a number of young women who came and went, according to their other priorities and did artwork when not too distracted by their children. Without a long timescale nothing might have come from this phase. However, a core group formed and eventually produced an installation in which the material they had generated was interpreted by actors in nightly performances in a strange little house in Kings Cross, serendipitously obtained for the purpose.

CASE EXAMPLE
Smother (Sarah Cole 2009-2010)



In *Smother* the subtle tensions between existence and performance play themselves out against the interior landscape of the triangular house – an improbable story-book house with odd shaped rooms where you lose your bearings between the staircases and fireplaces. The house is a metaphor for motherhood – on a pivot between motion and confinement, it sits over an unseen, underground river and provides a setting for the narratives of loss, love and entrapment enacted within its walls. For the visitor the house may be protective or claustrophobic according to how we allow it to hold us - or how we may have been held. Meanwhile the absent children are everywhere, monstrous, lovable, vulnerable, and all the more pervasive for the understated suggestions of their presence – a small pair of red boots on the stair, sketches on the wall, nappies in the cupboard. The desires and ambivalences that are enacted here belong to the mothers in *Smother*, but they take us to the mothers that have populated our lives – who we have experienced as children, or within ourselves. The everyday aesthetic of the young women's experience, that has found expression in their work over many months, is conveyed with the help of the artist to the actors. The experience passes through the actors and re-emerges in their own art, inflected by the mothers they have had – or that they are.

The performance belongs neither to the mothers nor to the performers, but contains something of them both – an aesthetic third. The mothers performed then pass through the audience; each member meets them through the mother they have known, or have been, or could become. The aesthetic third is none of these particular mothers but connects the lives of them all. The whole scene is framed by the smothering mother paradox. Does she enfold or suffocate? Is she desired or feared? Smothering spoils the object with its own boundless generosity. In the *Smother* house the ambivalence between love and aggression is not resolved. Wishes are realised in visual metaphors and there is no knowing which way fantasy will turn: a cotton wool rabbit hutch; a fag-burned baby-grow; a layer of 'thin ice' in a dimly lit basement where a young woman slides crazily from wall to wall. The tension generates as many states of mind as there are mothers: gentle philosophical perplexity; a confusion that is only this side of bearable; the wonder of loving forbearance in the face of endless frustration; and compassion for teenage mums who love their kids, want a life, and struggle endlessly with the complication of it all.

Who in *Smother* are the active participants – the mothers, the children, the artist, the producer-curator, the actors, the house itself, Coram who hosts the sessions or ‘we’ the audience imaginatively implicated in the layering of mother fantasies as soon as we enter the scene? All have participated to varying degrees in the art-work. Active phases have been interspersed with moments of receptivity and reflection. There were low impact sessions - chatting, sharing food -where relationships were ‘minded’, and the idiom of the group formed. These would be followed by intensive, focussed productivity. The receptive phases - assimilation of work that had been done - were essential to a process whereby a story-line mutated: the woman who lost her cherries, the ice baby, the woman with a birdcage in her chest. The artist and producer used one another to ‘metabolise’ each session – as well as to ‘see’ what was developing.



4.1.7 Partnerships and Collaboration

The partnership between Artangel and Coram will bear more reflection than there is space for in this report and the account would ideally be written, in the spirit of partnership, together with Sarah Cole, Rachel Anderson and Coram itself. However, it has revealed the potential for learning, and some of the pitfalls when artists attempt to work with agencies from very different professional fields. *Smother* was located in an organisation which had a long-standing sympathy for artwork and needed little convincing of its usefulness. The challenge remained of inserting a long-term project into an on-going strand of professional social care practice. A joint interview with project staff and managers after the work had concluded highlighted the ways in which artwork like *Smother* could be used by a third sector organisation like Coram to counterbalance highly procedural and outcome led forms of professional intervention offered by its statutory service partners. *Smother* offered narrativity, visual imagination, a complex appreciation of existential dilemmas, and a holistic approach to their resolution. As a result of the work with Sarah Cole and Artangel, Coram affirmed their intention of embedding artwork securely in their practice, and mainstreaming it

throughout the organisation. The following year, in an admittedly rather different model of arts practice, Greyson Perry was appointed artist-in-residence.

If artwork were to be incorporated on a continuous basis and evolve according to the specific needs of the people who Coram works with, this would imply a continuing diffusion of impact with the potential for socially engaged arts practice to make itself felt – via Coram’s other partnerships - with less receptive agencies. It is important from this perspective that studies of impact move beyond audience participation rates and demographics to take a longitudinal as well as cross-sectional view.

4.1.8 Innovation and Ethical Practice

The current ten year plan for art in the UK has emphasised that ‘excellent’ art is ‘brave’ ‘innovative’ (ACE, 2010). This implies that risks are taken with the potential to upset people. *Smother* actively encouraged the participants to take risks, to experiment and to use familiar objects in new ways. However, the ethical dilemmas of *Smother* raise questions about the licence of art to provoke, especially when dealing with the live emotional material of vulnerable people. To attempt such work outside of a context in which conflicting emotions can be processed would be rash and the professional support offered by Coram afforded a ‘therapeutic’ opportunity for self-reflection.

An example of the tension between innovation and ethical practice involved the artist bringing in a bag of plain babygrows and encouraging the young parents to decorate them in their own way. One of the mothers burnt holes in the babygrow with a cigarette. The researcher observed:

....it looked like leopard print. They had developed a system where Jane burned the hole and Sarah blew the hot rocks out from the other side. They said they had had some funny looks defacing a baby grow outside a parenting centre. (Researcher field notes)⁶

This piece was eventually shown at an exhibition during a Parenting Day at Coram – but the troubling ambiguity and (understated) resonances with child abuse were not lost on the group.

Jane said she had seen a story in the paper this week about a woman who had been convicted for child abuse, who had been putting cigarettes out on her baby. She said she had read it and had thought about what she was doing in terms of burning the holes in a baby grow, which has been a slightly uncomfy experience all along. The woman had got 18 months in prison which they didn’t think was enough.

RESEARCHER FIELD NOTES

The artist who worked closely with the Jane while when she was burning the babygrow noticed how she was both enjoying the process and struggling with the internal tensions which were being generated:

⁶ Jane is not the participant’s real name.

... she was cringing but she really wanted to go for it and carry on doing it, but she didn't want to be thought of as doing anything that would give her a bad name.

SARAH COLE

The burnt babygrow caught the attention of the audience during the exhibition, provoking conflicting emotions related to the vulnerability of babies, the power of troubled parents, mistrust of teenage mothers, and a climate of public anxiety at sadistic child abuse. At the same time there was an invitation to empathise with the strain of a young mother with limited resources raising a small child on her own. Jane said she used cigarettes because as they symbolised her dealing with stress. This is high risk work for young women who are under the scrutiny of child safeguarding services, but the discomfort forced the mother, and in turn the audience, to face up to the complex interaction between maternal love and aggression, and the conditions in which the love can flourish while the aggression is contained.

When we go and do the arts and do all these really random crazy things, it's just nice to be able to express yourself and not be judged, I think...It's enjoyable because it lets out your frustrations or whatever, however you're feeling.

PROJECT PARTICIPANT

This example shows that ethical and aesthetic issues can align when the artwork is adequate to the ethical complexity it takes as its subject matter – that is, when it can contain and make available for reflection, as the burnt babygrow did, the conflicts it reveals. The capacity for self-aware ambivalence developed through the conflict between creative desire and awareness of the social anxiety aroused by the image, is arguably the mature state of mind⁷. To the extent that the art refuses to collapse the tensions and holds them symbolically in relation to one another, it performs a reparative function – compensation, perhaps, for the ‘trouble’ it has brought to the fore.

4.1.9 Authoring and Participation

The core group of *Smother* recognised their contribution to their authorship of after viewing the performances which interpreted their experience:

When we went to see the rehearsal, when we went to see the actors do it. That's when I thought, yeah! It was really interesting to see everyone's ideas come to life and see your own and everyone's ideas in the house. Things that we've spoken about, things that we've done... it made sense in the house. It was like, it made sense the way my work had fitted in with it, how my emotions linked in with the house. Yeah, and I had quite a good contribution in what I wanted to do and how my ideas like with the ice skating rink..., so the downstairs was my idea, so, yeah!

⁷ For example: ambivalence – the ability to tolerate imperfection and preserve the integrity of the object without idealisation or denigration – is regarded as a developmental achievement within the British traditions of Kleinian and Object Relations theory.

It felt like we was actually needed for something. Because I don't go to college anymore and I don't do much, I don't feel like I'm really needed to do anything, but when we went there and she showed us the house and what we could do to it and how like it's basically going to be our ideas in that house, I felt like I was actually going to be involved with something, because I haven't been involved with something for a long time, so I felt like I was actually needed for something...

The recognition that a form had been found for subjective experience rendering it communicable in the external world, enhanced their sense of authorship. Central to this was the artist's capacity to resist imposing her own conception too early, or too assertively, on the creative process, and her ability to tolerate uncertainty in the face of timescales which could not be forced

I've been aware that I'm bringing less stuff every week and I'm being much more light on my feet as a practitioner... But I've been slightly concerned, at the fact that the nature of the way it has to be means that you can never be 100% certain of the right step, because you just don't know. You might say 'Right, this week we've got to do this, but then that person doesn't turn up and you can't do it...I still like the way it's very flexible in terms of how it's going to come together in the end and the direction seems to be changing all the time.

INTERVIEW WITH SARAH COLE

4.1.10 Conclusion

Artangel's ambition extends to its socially engaged practice, where it inheres in the relational dimensions of practice, as much as in the audacity of conception. Such work requires intensive research and development and the space to evolve slowly according to timescales that, at least in part, are determined by the needs of the people who participate in its processes and collaborate in its productions. Most of the work that Artangel commissions has an implicitly or explicitly political dimension – but this is politics with a broad sweep which can range from issues of global significance such as the cross-currents of post-colonial development, to locally sustainable living, or the condition of stigmatised teenage mothers. The intensive producer support offered to the artist-led commissions allows the artist to 'bracket off' the implied political significance of the work as necessary, in order to focus on a strong process-driven aesthetic outcome, and this further enhances the transformative potential and social impact of the work.

Artangel projects can be challenging for those who engage in them and this necessitates the intensive producer care that has become their hallmark. It is not only direct participants who have to be sustained, but also other collaborating agencies. The project workers in Coram, for example, made it clear that they had to overcome their own scepticism and then felt personally quite exposed by the processes. The pay-off for their effort was a potentially lasting legacy of new skills and ideas and a subtle understanding of when their own organisation's agenda could be allowed to fade temporarily into the background in the

interests of creativity. For the young women at the centre of the project, the staff interview summed up the lasting impacts in ways which have a resonance for the role of art in much of the socially engaged work that Artangel undertakes:

The changes have been in terms of, capacity for attunement to their own emotional states and those of others, openness to doing things they had not done before, and eventually performative self-confidence. Also important has been the constant week by week element of the unexpected that helped participants to think differently and more flexibly about what they could expect of themselves. This included encountering what was disturbing, intriguing and moving in their experiences. By the end of the project they recognised the importance of their own creativity and would talk in these terms. While on the one hand they felt pride at the achievement of an acclaimed artwork and a sense ownership of a very significant tangible outcome, they fully understood that the importance had been in the process and the relationships established.

SUMMARY FROM STAFF INTERVIEW: CORAM

4.2 FACT

4.2.1 Socially engaged practice, experiment and diversity

Liverpool became an emblem of post-industrial decline in the 1980s and it was in this context that two students from Liverpool University (Josie Barnard and Lisa Haskel), established Merseyside Moviola as an occasional project for screening independent and experimental film and video. They had decided that there weren't enough cultural and community-based events in the city. Later, with Eddie Berg, a series of temporary mobile cinemas were established around Merseyside. These early activities were highly influential in relation to FACT's later socially engaged practices.

Lisa and Josie are really integral to the organisation's models of engagement because they set up workshops in the community working with youth clubs and social clubs to do animation workshops and the products of these were screened alongside the more established video art which they were screening. So the ethos of participation, interaction, and engagement was writ large at the start of Merseyside Moviola ...

SOURCE: INTERVIEW WITH FACT STAFF MEMBER 2010

Mike Stubbs (current Director) and Alan Dunne (who was central to the development of the community TV initiative: Tenantspin) suggest that the vision was to establish a creative life in Liverpool for the people of Liverpool. FACT emerged at a really difficult time for the city and its interest was in relating to people who lived there.

Merseyside Moviola also sought to develop its technological expertise and the establishment of Moving Image Technology Exhibition Service (MITES) in 1992, designed to support new media work nationally. MITES has worked with TATE galleries, the BBC, the Royal Opera House, the Design Museum, the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic, festivals including Futuresonic/FutureEverything, Liverpool Biennial and a variety of artists.

Moviola re-launched in 1997 as FACT, combining an interest in art and creative technology with a strong focus on regeneration. The new organisation, with its dual focus on creative technology and social inclusion was well positioned to insert itself into the complex civic mix of the city. Being well aligned with New Labour priorities, it could also attract income. FACT continues to situate itself in the new media realm. Its retrospective publication *We are the real time experiment (2009)*, refers to the technologies at the heart of the organisation's practices which position it in the instantaneity of contemporary culture (Gere, 2006). The notion of 'experiment' identifies it as actively involved in questioning and discovery (Doherty, 2006). It supports agendas around regeneration, re-visioning of public spaces and widening participation in health, education, housing and social care. The programmes aim to improve people's access to new media tools, give voice to marginalised groups and embed participatory arts practices in a wide range of agencies.

CASE EXAMPLE

Tenantspin

Tenantspin is rooted in Liverpool's local situation and politics. It uses a community TV channel to focus on issues such as older people's marginalisation and barriers to media use. A Danish artist collective called Superflex developed the channel in partnership with the Housing Action Trust and the High Rise Tenant's Group. Superflex describe their projects as *tools* - proposals that invite people to participate in experimental models that alter prevailing economic production conditions. The projects are assisted by experts and the tools can then be further modified by their users.

Tenantspin is emblematic of FACT's socially engaged arts practice for six main reasons: (i) it is delivered in partnership with other organisations, (ii) it uses new media as a tool of engagement, (iii) it involves education, creativity and performance, (iv) it gives voice to marginalised groups, (v) its authorship and direction has shifted over time and blurred traditional distinctions between artists, statutory organisations and publics, and (vi) it supports FACT's wider ambitions around creating expertise in Liverpool.

Tenantspin was created to give ordinary people in the community a chance to voice an opinion over the air, as much as on the web. So we went all over the world on the shows [via web casts] and had replies from as far afield as America... We had a steady group of Tenantspinners [those who were citizen journalists] but a lot of the audience of Tenantspin were comprised of people who lived in high rise blocks and the others were people who came because it was in the Echo or on the radio and people were interested in the thing we were discussing. I think the thing that really kicked it off well was that there were so many issues in the community that needed addressing that people could go on about... If a big issue came up that affected the public it would end up on our agenda. And we had as many as sixty or seventy people downstairs for the web cast. And the talks were on everything from nostalgia to things that people raised, to news things. We would do a bit of research and then discuss it. (Long-standing Tenantspin member)

As a case example TenantSpin reflects Claire Bishop's description of socially engaged practice, which creates inter-subjective relations that are not ends in themselves, but serve to unfold a more complex knot of concerns about pleasure, visibility, engagement and the conventions of social interaction (Bishop, 2008, in Roche, 2006 p. 2).



FACT's socially engaged practices are wide ranging, and have also included: *Digital Stories* – a programme of digital storytelling with residents in north Liverpool; the *Waiting Programme* – a set of interactive installations in health centres; *Abandon Normal Devices* – a festival of new cinema and digital culture delivered with other organisations including Cornerhouse in Manchester; *Find Your Talent* – a programme offering children and young people the opportunity for regular involvement with arts and culture both in and out of school; *Freehand* – a programme for young people aged 13-19 who want to share their ideas about art, music, film, technology and design; and wider partnership work in primary, secondary and higher education.

All of FACT's programmes explore the nature of links between groups, organisations, ideas and modes of interacting and communicating. Cook and Cubitt (2009) have made the following observations about experimental media practices.

I think it is the approach and work of individual groups that is ground breaking rather than single works that people have produced. The world of non-spectacular media arts – network practices – are much more like social experiments. The mindset of individuals and the way that they communicate how they think about the world and its problems is what has really been important. It is people's thinking and approach, intervening in culture, working in groups, working together. Experimental media practice isn't about pieces of work.

COOK AND CUBITT, 2009 – IN FACT 2009

CASE EXAMPLE

Digital Stories

FACT has used digital storytelling in regeneration zones incorporating a recorded narrative, still image, video and other sounds. They offer a means of exploring people's experience of social change processes by discussing, documenting and preserving ways of life, identities and social structures¹.

I realized years ago that I wouldn't be around forever and I wanted my grandchildren to know what kind of person I was and the things I am interested in. The project seemed like an opportunity to do this and covered a favourite subject of mine [the past]. (Older person)

I've always been interested in media but I am not a computer genius! The project has been a sociable experience. I am glad to have been involved. (Older person)

The subject of Newsham Park which I have spoken about in my story is a pet subject of mine. As a regular user of the park I am often critical of its upkeep. Friends have often told me to do something about it and this digital story seemed like a good opportunity to do so. (Older person)

SOURCE: TENANTSPIN 2010

This example demonstrates again that the aesthetic of socially engaged practice often arises from the everyday and from an ability to engage with issues in ways which resonate with the population concerned. The digital stories are archived online but have also been published in a book. The online archive allows wider access to the material but the book was more important to those who took part as a physical object which they could look at and share with friends and families.

Staff described the FACT building, opened in 2003, as having provided both an opportunity and a cost to the organisation. It has underscored FACT's material presence in the city but has also influenced its use of time and resources in ways that are in seeming contradiction with its social engagement objectives. One artist interviewed for this research described the building as "sleek and beautiful but functionally useless" and some who worked for FACT before the building opened suggest that the building has since become the main focus for FACT's activities. The building includes a cafe, a bar, a shop, two large gallery spaces and an art cinema and certainly appeals to the North West's art-going cognoscenti and cultural tourists. FACT is keen to revise elements of the building's design so that its socially engaged practice can have a more obvious presence. This is part of a wider strategy intended to link up FACT's various strands of work, with other examples including co-created exhibitions (for example *Climate for Change* and the Bold Street Project). In the show *Knowledge Lives Everywhere*, April 2011, Gallery Two was defined as a co-creation space which includes screening facilities, meeting spaces, a fixed webcasting area, a guerrilla exhibition space and an opinion wall.

4.2.2 Philosophy, civic mission, politics and personalisation: artists and curators as social critics

FACT's underpinning philosophy is complicated by the fact that it has two strands. Its exhibition programme, often developed in collaboration with other international arts organisations, has appealed to an established arts-going public. FACT's socially engaged practices, on the other hand, revolve around the Collaborations Programme, which has worked with a range of partners to embed socially engaged arts practice in the wider civic life of Liverpool.

FACT's civic mission is realised through open-sourcing new media - for example through the *Waiting Programme* which brought interactive artworks into health centres; and widening participation - as in education partnerships. Marshall McLuhan's distinction between 'hot' and 'cool' media are relevant here (Frieling et al. 2009). Hot media separate specialists and non-specialists, whereas cool media are equally accessible to both the trained and untrained. For McLuhan hot media leads to social fragmentation while cool media can create global, participatory, interactive spaces and practices. FACT's socially engaged practices could be characterised as providing cooling effects and widening access to new media so that people can use them in pursuit of their own ends, as well as in collaboration with artists and other organisations.

A number of FACT's projects and programmes align with postmodern ideas. Not only do they give voice to marginalised groups they also seek to hybridise and translate practices on a local/global platform. Many of the works produced have unpicked the role of language, symbols and motive in sustaining established orders and identities. Bourriaud's conceptualisation of the altermodern (2009) suggests that multiculturalism and identities of place are being replaced by a planetary movement of creolisation. These ideas seem relevant to FACT's socially engaged practice because many projects have enacted cross-fertilisation between identities of place and a wider globalised culture.

A number of programmes FACT have developed take a distinctive position on politics or the public sphere, demonstrating that the artwork provides a 'object' around which it is possible to experience, play with, symbolise, articulate and contest ideas in ways which might not be possible in conventional discourse.

CASE EXAMPLE

Rehearsal of Memory – Graham Harwood

This interactive artwork was created in association with Ashworth high security hospital to express life experiences of patients and staff. Ashworth's patients are admitted on the authority of the courts, or from other prisons, for crimes which include murder, manslaughter, arson, kidnap, rape and assault. Each participant in the work contributed a part of their body to make a 'composite' person, by pressing parts of themselves against the screen of a scanner. Later Harwood worked with students at London community computing space, Artec, many of whom had experienced long-term unemployment, to produce an interactive CD Rom from this material. The images appear life-size on the computer screen, engaging the viewer in a virtual interaction with the world of the hospital.

In giving space to the voices of those at the extreme end of abnormal behaviour such as serial killers, rapists and those considered to be a danger to themselves and others, the work confronts us with our own unwillingness to recognise the existence of such behaviour in our society. (Karen Newman, FACT, 2009 p.022)



For Stallabrass (2002) the work muddies the self and other schema on which critiques of documentary depend. The work highlights the extreme views and stereotypes of patients in secure hospitals. Harwood questions our investment in distinctions between sanity and insanity, and between those who do violence for the state and those who do it freelance. The work is used as a mirror for 'normal society' suggesting the relationship is one of resemblance, not difference. The claustrophobia of *Rehearsal of Memory* is designed to bring us back to ourselves, to force us into a reflection on the uncanny familiarity of that place, as if a visit there were also a visit home.

4.2.3 Modes of engagement

In the vast majority of programmes FACT retains a commitment to active involvement of communities and groups in defining direction and emphasis. For example, young people have worked with an artist to develop an installation in response to the Nam June Paik exhibition (2011) and a school has worked with an artist to develop a social enterprise around an environmental theme in New York.

Conscious that its 'sleek and technocentric' (FACT 2009) appearance, might imply that technology leads the practice, FACT stresses that new media are used as *tools* rather than *frames*. That is, the practices are intended to allow people to pick them up, and experiment with them.

Tenantspin started hitting quite a lot of democracy and society buttons and we started tapping into a lot of different discussions and debates so we were sort of caught up in the zeitgeist, as it were, which we had not planned. But technology was moving quite fast at the time and we were quite proud of all the mistakes we were making, the kind of fumbling X and Y behind the camera not really knowing what they were doing, that kind of human touch. It was never, I think it was quite an eye opener for FACT because it was never the geeky nerdy project that it might have been; it was a human community project with technology.

INTERVIEW WITH ALAN DUNNE 2010

The project was launched before the World Wide Web, before the launch of YouTube and before the advent of cheap digital cameras. Many of the older people who took part in the early phases were facing a future which involved considerable disruption of attachment to place, history and personal relations due to the proposed demolition of tower blocks and the breaking up of communities. The tools of a TV station helped to create a medium in which this material could be worked with creatively, with humour, and with reference to other local and national issues. The effects of regeneration could then be discussed and taken back to those in control of strategic decisions. By virtue of Tenantspin's symbolic importance (as a gateway to mass media and the information society); its practical potentials, and its inclusionary effects, it transformed a community project rooted in attachment to place, people and local memory into one that could articulate that sense of rootedness and its disruptions in the idiom of modernity. The channel itself became, for many, an object of attachment because it offered a reparative experience whereby fears of fragmentation aroused by regeneration were assuaged. The archive, which includes more than 1000 recordings, is filled with people's narratives and recollections.

Alan Dunne explains how *Tenantspin* was successful in including people who had previously been reticent about engaging in civic and political processes.

...when I first arrived the tenants that were in Tenantspin were the ones that enjoyed the meeting culture, the ones that were in trade unions, the ones that were on committees, the ones that already talked. And what we did was we sought out the slightly more neglected tenants, the more creative ones; they hated meetings but they were the real, obscure, creative, eccentric tenants that stayed behind their doors. Because as an arts project, um, it was also a democracy project, I mean it was both, it was about advocacy, about talking to landlords and architects and ministers, but it was also a creative project and I think we tapped into the creative community so they were the ones who had the life skills and the stories to tell and the gabbing and we kind of set up this really simple triangle of them us and an artist ... it was just setting up this very strange live magazine ... and suddenly it started, wrong phrase, but ticking a lot of boxes because it was the time when a lot of people were interested in social inclusion and silver surfers...

SOURCE: INTERVIEW WITH ALAN DUNNE 2010

Several FACT staff, artists and filmmakers referred to the notion of a triangular relationship between FACT, a community and an artist. In this relationship FACT is mainly, but not exclusively, a commissioning agent which establishes a relationship between an artist and a group or community. The essential creative relationship exists between the artist and the community, with FACT providing the open source to technological tools and opportunities.

4.2.4 The aesthetics of engagement

The work of Nam June Paik is of relevance to FACT both because of the exhibition shared with the Tate in 2011 but also because FACT staff cite him as a key influence. Much of Paik's work exaggerates and distorts reality confronting viewers with TV images and real objects, simultaneously and raising questions about relationships between the hyper and the real, about the role of technology in art and the cultural effects of technological structures. For example, he considered whether television was an essentially voyeuristic medium or whether it involved genuinely democratic potential by actively involving the public in production.

The real issue implied in 'Art and Technology' is not to make another scientific toy, but how to humanize the technology and the electronic medium ... [to] demonstrate the human use of technology, and also to stimulate viewers NOT for something mean but to stimulate their phantasy to look for the new, imaginative and humanistic ways of using our technology

LEE AND RENERT, 2010, p.28

In many respects, socially engaged practices appear to be a natural extension of Paik's installation art and the wider Fluxus movement which provokes the visitor or viewer to some form of action, interaction or involvement. The artist creates the conditions for the interaction and the art is in the process and in the relationships, as much as in the objects produced.

For FACT a major concern in commissioning artists is in their ability to work in collaboration with communities. It has clearly struggled at times with the relation between ethics and aesthetics. There is necessary tension in negotiating the desires of artists and communities, and a discomfort with artists using socially engaged programmes as vehicles for extending their own careers. We return to this theme below in a discussion of ethics and innovation.

4.2.5 The Local and the Global

FACT is rooted in the historical, social and political materiality of Liverpool's and its place-related mind-set. Bourriaud (2009) argues that altermodernity impels artists increasingly to start from a point of view of a 'global' rather than 'native' culture. However, Liverpool has existed in a global cultural *context* for hundreds of years whilst retaining a strong local cultural identity. Liverpool also has an unusual relationship to the rest of the UK. Several people interviewed during this project referred to the way in which the pejorative ascription of 'scouser' has been adopted by locals as a mark of an 'othered' identity. This has been significant in FACT's determination to provide an internationally significant arts centre outside of London. Current Director, Mike Stubbs, describes four key contexts:

... the regional and international context of innovative artforms; the economic context; the academic and local knowledge resources; and the social context of collaborative activity and engagement with audiences.

The original vision was simultaneously local, national and international: local, because the objective was to establish something creative in Liverpool for the people of Liverpool; national, because it was a distinctive cultural and creative hub; international, in the global influences of the films it brought in.

CASE EXAMPLE

Media Facades festival, 2010

This Europe wide festival encouraged an exploration of creative and cultural communication through urban screens, walls and buildings connected seven European cities: Berlin, Brussels, Helsinki, Budapest, Linz, Madrid and Liverpool. It involved a joint broadcast across the seven host cities and screenings such as the *SMS Catapult* which allowed people to 'slingshot' text messages onto buildings in the Ropewalks district of Liverpool. A team of Finnish artists worked with residents in Liverpool to create visual dance characters with 'Scouse' characteristics which were projected onto the city walls in a competitive 'dance off'.

At a different live event, four computer programmers produced music through text-based code on laptops. The laptop screens were projected onto the walls of the courtyard between the FACT building and Bold Street and also streamed live to Austria's Electronica festival which included several other cities.

FACT's approach to the festival is quite unique amongst the partner cities, as most of our projects have also been co-created by Liverpool residents. We've had residents from Anfield travel to Finland to make films, young people taking over public spaces and local communities creating 40 foot animated characters, so our approach really has been to engage our community in every aspect of this festival, as producers as well as audience members. Our aim with any project we undertake is to help create a voice, and for our part of the festival we wanted that to be a strong Liverpool one. (Patrick Fox, FACT)

FACT's gallery programmes are often co-curated with organisations in Europe using established artists such as Julian von Bismarck, Mizuki Watanabe, Lindsay Seers and Gebhard Sengmüller. All of these artists contributed to *Persistence of Vision* (2010) which explored the interplay between vision, memory and media. There is a tension between the pull towards integrating with a wider media arts field and maintaining an identity based on being of the city and with the city.

FACT retains an ambition to be part of a globalised art culture and there have been criticisms that the gallery does not showcase the work of local artists. However, FACT continues to invest in community projects and has embedded its socially engaged

practice through partnerships outside of the cultural sector. Initiatives such as the Capital Programme, the Media Lounge Exhibitions and the co-creative Gallery 2 indicate that FACT is working to hold these strands of work together and provide contexts in which they can exchange or merge.

4.2.6 Intensity and Duration

Unusually for a community project, *Tenantspin* has lasted for more than 10 years and part of FACT's organisational identity is invested in it. As people have sought to articulate its value the importance of intensity and duration of engagement has become clear, provoking questions on how this might be understood, or even measured. For many people the value is in the lives of those who have taken part.

John it changed his life and Dolly it changed her life, and if people are asking you about numbers you have to ask is that who you want work with ... If you have 50 people in there is that better than two. I am interested in projects that are small in big out - you may only get a few people but they are having a real experience and opportunity and learning and perhaps affecting a larger number of people. I can name 6 people who were there every week for 6 years and then going out and peer to peer taking that experience back out. Artists either bring a community to what we do or we go out and meet them in relation to what they do.

SOURCE: INTERVIEW WITH ARTIST 2010

Sustaining *Tennantspin* has involved a continued commitment to trying out new contexts and new modes of interaction. Although some mourn the simplicity and clarity of the original programme which had a clearer focus (tower blocks) and target group (older people), others emphasise how the programme has retained its relevance in changing circumstances.

10 years ago it was about changing minds about the tower block issue. There were 60 blocks at the time and now there are only 10 so it has failed to alter the course of this but a lot of decisions had already been made before they really got going. But it has evolved into something meaningful, is still working with the same communities and is interested in working with disenfranchised people who don't have a grasp on democracy in a national or local context and that is revolutionary even if it is now different. In a local sense it is making a real impact.

INTERVIEW WITH FACT STAFF MEMBER 2010

4.2.7 Partnerships and Collaboration

FACT has a dizzying range of local partnerships, with organisations which include Arena Housing, Liverpool Arts Regeneration Consortium, schools, colleges, foyers, universities,

the NHS, The City Council, the Ropewalks district and Anfield and Breckfield Community Partnership. FACT has deliberately built itself into the arts and civic establishment of the city and these partnerships have widened the reach of its social engagement activities. For example working with Tate Liverpool, the Tate brand brought art world esteem to FACT's programmes while FACT brought its long-term relationships with populations in the city. Once again *Tenantspin* has provided a model: the partnership does not simply involve an agreement to support the work, Arena Housing covers some of FACT's staff costs. This enables FACT to deliver much larger programmes than their core funding would otherwise allow, and partner organisations have a stronger stake within programmes and actively influence the process and the aesthetic.

4.2.8 Innovation and Ethical Practice

FACT's programmes often deal with difficult, social, cultural and personal material such as the experiences of ageing, stigma, marginalisation, institutionalisation and powerlessness. One view of these programmes is that they are quasi-therapeutic in that they enable people to reflect on distress and disorientation. However their unpredictability can make them look risky from a commissioning point of view. Programmes which operate to an open access formula have caused the most concern as FACT can't be clear who will choose to participate, what they will take from the experience, or how they will behave towards other people present. There have been several examples of people attending webcasts who have become upset and agitated and in some cases this has led to concerns about their mental capacity and/or the safety and wellbeing of others. By contrast, in the programmes developed with partner organisations (for example projects with schools) FACT staff and artists have been able to devolve judgements about safety and capacity to other people.

When we work with the NHS trust they can provide guidance and support, whereas when people come in to programmes cold and have paranoid episodes or other problems you have to deal with it in the real world.

INTERVIEW WITH FOX 2010

FACT has provided training for all staff in working with vulnerable adults. However, a further set of ethical issues relate to the possibility that socially engaged arts practice may lead to marginalised and vulnerable people feeling used or manipulated by artists. One artist who had worked with FACT over many years talked about some of the contradictions which can emerge when socially engaged practices become fashionable:

Artists are now jetting all over the world doing participatory art and I had a horrible moment at FACT when we invited, I shan't name names, but we invited ... two artists to come and work with [names local group]. And they turned up from another continent and they only had four days with us and the participants were not available that week and they were throwing hissy fits saying 'where the fuck are our participants' ... I thought this art world has gone to a certain edge here where everything is lost. ... And that was an

eye opener in terms of some good projects can come from that approach but it just opened my eyes to how trendy participatory art had become and sellable. The market consumed it and the artists feel pressure to do it on time because it is sellable. It has become an acceptable way of working and the art market has consumed it the way it consumes everything.

INTERVIEW WITH ARTIST 2010

The troubling relation between ethics and aesthetics has been highlighted in previous sections along with the importance for a strong aesthetic outcome of unpredictability, shifting control and provocation. The freedom to incorporate such elements could be fatally compromised if ethical imperatives lead to risk aversion. There is a danger of conflating upset with harm, limiting the possibility that difficult subjects can be handled, and assuming that the participants in these encounters can remain unchanged.

4.2.9 Authoring and Participation

In many socially engaged arts programmes the authoring of projects is a vexed issue. In *Rehearsal of Memory*, for example, Graham Harwood describes himself as the director and the patients and staff are credited as authors. One view is that Harwood is misrepresenting the process because he clearly retained a powerful oversight. A different question is raised by the *Waiting Programme*. Within this programme Blendid's *Wixel Cloud* (pictured below), is a 3D light sculpture that consists of 300 Wixels (Wireless Pixels) composed in a cloud formation and hung in the atrium of a health centre. This installation is beautiful, technically complex and conceptually sophisticated. There was no participation of communities in the design of this cloud, some minor participation in constructing it, and the final installation includes an interactive component. To what extent can such work be considered socially engaged? One possible answer may lie in the potential of the work to change the ways in which people relate to these health centre spaces and behave within them.



Blendid's Wixel Cloud

Within the same programme *Three Drops* by Scott Snibbe has been installed at Picton Neighbourhood Health Centre (pictured below). Here people's presence and movement triggers the animation on the screen when people walk in front of the projection. The work is split into three sections which all play with the idea of water; a shower of water pours over a user; a single drop of water is hugely magnified and can be played with like soft beach ball; and water is magnified to large molecules which can also be played with. The piece is set within a children's play area and is said to have an impact on the children's experience in the centre. Overall, the programme aims to create spaces that offer interest and distraction from the task of waiting for appointments. There are five projects in this programme each in a different health centre. In the first two projects the works were commissioned after the buildings had been completed and artists were asked to produce something in relation to the spaces. In the later three examples the commissions were developed alongside the overall design of the space.



Three Drops by Scott Snibbe

Several FACT staff communicated a clear view that despite the reported impact on waiting room users these particular examples did not meet their criteria for socially engaged practice:

If an artist or a community can do it by themselves then it is not a participatory project.

INTERVIEW WITH FOX 2010

This raises questions about what modes participation are most desirable and whether participation in production is a necessary component of socially engaged arts practice. McLuhan's distinctions between 'hot' and 'cold' forms of media is again useful. The technology being used in some of FACT's practices is 'hot' (That is, it is expensive and some of it can require knowledge, training and experience to use skilfully). However, FACT's open sourcing of technology, its approach to education and training all provide 'cooling effects'; or to put it another way they aim to make the technology accessible and useable. Expertise and technology can then be put at the service of the socially engaged encounter. Nonetheless, artists remain the technical experts, and retain authorial status

4.2.10 Conclusion

Donald Winnicott (1972) placed creative illusion at the centre of the imaginative process that preceded personal change, the idea being that we need to imagine things differently in order to break the established order and to allow the possibility of new connections and ideas. FACT's ambition to humanise new media art and place it at the service of individuals and communities is in line with Winnicott's notion and is central to its identity. *Tenantspin*, *Flunstellas*, *Rehearsal of Memory*, and the later commissions in the *Waiting Programme* all involve artists working with communities or groups in processes which imagine new possibilities. This might involve thinking about the emotions in a classroom and using new media technology to design a classroom of the future, or imagining how a health centre might operate as a resource for people to revise their relationship with the health sector.

The organisation's insertion into the civic life of Liverpool is crucial to its effectiveness. The attraction of partnerships have been about embedding practice in other institutional contexts. For other organisations partnerships with FACT have opened up new avenues for engaging publics and a productive friction which has emerged from exposure to a creative culture. For publics, the arts based activities have provided a focal point - a node or 'aesthetic third' around which a problematic set of relationships could be symbolised and re-configured.

4.3 GRIZEDALE ARTS

4.3.1 Socially engaged practice, experiment and diversity



In 1977 the Grizedale Society's sculpture project invited artists to respond sympathetically to Grizedale Forest. David Nash, and later Andy Goldsworthy were among those who produced work from immediately available materials such as wood, stone and earth. The initial vision was for an 'experimental outdoor studio' featuring sculptures that visitors would 'discover' (Griffin & Sutherland, interviews 2009). However, as each year more artists came and created work in the forest the sculpture 'trail' emerged, complete with site guides. This was also the hey-day of the *Theatre in the Forest*, situated in the visitor centre, which under the directorship of Bill Grant attracted celebrities like Ken Dodd. Whilst many in the local community remember this period with nostalgia, a sculpture such as *Ting* (Colin Rose 1984) a large metal hoop, was met with fierce criticism because it was constructed of non-organic material and considered to be out-of-place⁸.

According to Adam Sutherland (current Director of Grizedale Arts) the sculpture programme, became repetitive during the 1990's and increasingly failed to connect with innovations in national and international art. Meanwhile, it became clear that *Theatre in the Forest* was not financially sustainable (Griffin & Sutherland, interviews 2009). Prior to Adam Sutherland taking over in 1999, the theatre had three different directors in quick succession. The Grizedale Society was dissolved and the theatre closed – provoking some hostility towards the new organisation, Grizedale Arts, which emerged in its place. With the backing of the board of trustees activities were re-focussed on visual art and the organisation sought to distance itself from the land art heritage.

Sutherland's arrival heralded the development of socially engaged arts practice. Adopting a policy of rigorous 'honesty', Grizedale Arts believed the context 'demanded confrontation, ridicule, loud statements' (Griffin and Sutherland, p.21). In particular, it was critical of the impact of the tourist industry on the physical, social and economic environment. Work produced at this time included Calum Stirling's *Logo Wall*, which

⁸ <http://public-art.shu.ac.uk/other/grizedale/fi/00000018.htm>

used the colours and brands associated with the outdoor activity industry to colour bricks in a dry stone wall. The local press responded that the society would win no friends by defacing the forest in the name of modern art. During this period Sutherland was threatened and his car and house vandalised.

Grizedale Arts began to style itself as an arts-based research and development agency taking the view that the supposed rural idyll, could become a complex, multi-layered source of inspiration to its work (Griffin & Sutherland, interviews 2009). It started to undertake on-the-ground research with farmers, crafts people and the rural 'underclass', excluded from living in the national park because of the inflated cost of housing. It also developed a strategy of presenting contemporary art in traditional rural settings such as country shows. In *A Different Weekend* (2000) for example, the work of local crafts people was shown alongside that of artists who used similar techniques. Visitors often struggled to discriminate between contemporary high art and local craftwork.

These collaborations set a precedent for a way of working that has been adopted and extended by many of the subsequent projects at Grizedale; it showed a way in which artists could work alongside the existing subject matter offered by the area rather than obviously subvert it.

Griffin and Sutherland, 2009, p.43

It also began to crystallise a sense of moral purpose for the organisation:

I felt more than ever that there should be a beneficiary from art other than the artist and the art world. This idea, a kind of moral imperative for making art, was never far from my mind ... However, just who to help and how to do it was still in shadow.

Griffin and Sutherland, 2009, p.60

In 2002 Grizedale Arts worked with the local village of Sattlethwaite in celebration of the Queen's Golden Jubilee. The Women's Institute worked with artist Karen Guthrie to design a cake. In 2003 socially engaged practice was taken to other culturally marginalised communities in the UK with *Roadshow* (see Case Example). In 2005 Grizedale worked with Coniston to reinstate the Coniston Water Festival, which the community then took over and ran in the following years. These experiences, which aroused a complex mix of appreciation, ambivalence and hostility from the communities involved, helped Grizedale Arts to develop their concept of socially engaged arts practice in relation to the 'usefulness' of art and the artist, and a critique of the heroic-romantic conception of the artist as individual genius:

We hoped that the arts organisation could undertake a task, and that Grizedale and its artists could be useful to somebody...The time has maybe come for redefining roles - there is no shortage of options to do something, to change the world, to make an impression, to leave an indent.

Griffin & Sutherland, 2009, p.16

This re-definition of the role of the artist came out of a growing understanding of the need for art to be contextually embedded in the communities who provide its source material. In this sense, embeddedness has become both an ethical and an aesthetic imperative; ethical in the sense of being of use to those without whom the art would not occur, aesthetic insofar as the idiom of those communities is incorporated into the artwork itself.

With these principles in mind, Grizedale Arts visited a village in Japan with a group of artists: *The Seven Samurai*. In a process of cross-fertilisation which drew on the experience of the industrialisation and globalisation of Cumbria, the artists sensitised themselves to the specific conditions of the villagers. Through shamanic rituals, design, cookery and festivals, they suggested new ways to promote local produce. Closer to home, a more sustained socially engaged practice has been developed through Grizedale Arts' involvement in a seven year regeneration strategy for Egremont where it has worked alongside local institutions and everyday cultural practices.

Claire Doherty (2006) argues that new model arts institutions are taking on a role previously occupied by science and philosophy, which involves an active approach to experimentation, and discovery. Grizedale Arts have identified with this role seeking to re-animate existing cultural resources in places such as Barrow, Coniston and Egremont through their local and regional presence and their residency programme.

Despite its generally accepted profile as a centre for agriculture and tourism, Grizedale Arts views the Lake District as a microcosm of wider socio-economic conditions – an ideal laboratory situation to test out new approaches to culture. Hence the *Farmers and Arts Market* was a presentation of stalls and goods 'curated' for the benefit of *local* people outside of the tourist season. (Coniston Institute, Grizedale Arts 2010 blog). As might be expected of an 'experimental' agency, Grizedale's socially engaged practice has produced some mixed results:

CASE EXAMPLE

Roadshow, 2003

Roadshow took place over three weeks in 2003 and involved three outdoor and two gallery events, several artists and a variety of art forms, including two 'Battle of the Bands' competitions and a gospel meeting. The intention was to link a touring programme of live arts with local cultures. As *Roadshow* progressed it seems that any notions of 'linking' were being abandoned by the artists. Dan Fox, one of the artists explained:

An increasing mutual apathy between artists and visitors was leading to group hermeticism. Refuge from audience bemusement was sought at concession stands and familiar codes of exchange with each other.

Fox, 2003

Fox goes on to dispel any illusions the reader may have about engagement:

Roadshow was the May that gave the lie to other people's summers. It gave the lie to bright, summery but suspiciously Victorian ideas of Art's edificatory value. Marketed to within an inch of its own lifestyle, some artists have begun to search for an escape hatch, clutching towards social engagement, a rediscovery of certain older models from earlier times. Roadshow stood on the other side of that hatch and kicked them in the face.

ibid, 2003

At the third outdoor performance in Blaenau Ffestiniog, young people from the area threw wooden stakes at the artists' camp before setting fire to the education tent.

Strangely, it was one of the most successful moments of the endeavour, a glimpse of Roadshow's true purpose, the role our sideshow was playing in a bigger carnival of self-regarding conversation pieces. On returning home, back to cosy environs and sympathetic ears, whenever someone asked how Roadshow was, the best reply I could give was to fix them in the eye and simply state: 'They burnt down the education tent.'

ibid, 2003

Roadshow was an effort to stimulate thought about the wider arts world but was perceived mainly as a conversation within an inward-looking, privileged group. A seemingly bemused and sometimes uninterested audience participated on their own terms, destructively perhaps, but this 'pyrotechnic handiwork' was still read as engagement (Grizedale Arts, 2009).

CASE EXAMPLE

Craft Salon Coniston, 2010

Over a weekend, the craft salon at Coniston Institute presented a packed audience with a series of demonstrations and mini-lectures: Alistair Hudson on Mechanics Institutes; Adam Sutherland on the arts and crafts movement; John Byrne on the usefulness of art; Dorian Moore on basic computer language; Cathy Newby on the *Up-cycle* project which renovates discarded objects for re-sale. In the spirit of John Ruskin, the lectures celebrated traditional and contemporary 'crafts'.

For Ruskin, the separation of manual and intellectual labour was detrimental to both the working and upper classes: the operative was degraded into a machine for the mindless production of standardised objects, whilst the 'thinking' class was isolated from the physical materiality of labour. It is only when thoughtful activity underpins production through craft that the degradation is avoided (Ruskin, 1953). In this vein Charlie Whinney's demonstration of woodbending was well received by a 'thinking' audience.



Grizedale's socially engaged arts practice is stimulating participation where it would not otherwise exist. This has been recognised by arts professionals:

... one of my areas of expertise, for want of a better word, was looking at socially engaged practice and I was aware of what Adam Sutherland was doing up at Grizedale and ... I thought, and still think, it is amongst the most innovative practice that is going on in the UK. (Interview with arts academic - large metropolitan university 2009)

I think Grizedale rushed onto the scene in an extremely refreshing way...you know in the early days they really turned around the way people thought about how high art could be engaged with by audiences. So yep, I was definitely looking at Grizedale and the best bits of Grizedale influenced how we are working here.

INTERVIEW WITH DIRECTOR - ARTS ORGANISATION 2009

4.3.2 Philosophy, Civic Mission, Politics and Personalisation - Artists and Curators as Social Critics

Grizedale Arts see intervening in the local as a moral imperative (Griffin & Sutherland, 2009). Adam Sutherland has stood as Councillor for Coniston, achieving 10% of the vote on a platform aimed at reducing dependence on commercial tourism, regenerating the local economy and making the area a vibrant place to live and work.

... the notion of the landscape as an escapist paradise, a special world of roses over the door, happy, rosy-cheeked yeomen and freed from the constraints of urban society. The reality, of course, was and is rather more barbarous ... the rosy-cheeked yeomen curse the relentless hordes of pleasure-seekers who treat their land as a giant 'Centre Parcs' resort, but on whom the local economy is bitterly reliant. Of course in reality there is no such easily identifiable groups; both visitors and residents fight infinitely subtle degrees of belonging and entitlement.

GRIFFIN & SUTHERLAND, 2009

A well-documented example of Grizedale Arts' critical agenda was *The Billboard*, which focused attention on key socio-political issues in the area.

CASE EXAMPLE

The Billboard, 1999-2002

The Billboard, positioned in Grizedale forest was similar in size and shape to advertising billboards in urban environments. It met with fierce opposition in the local community who complained of an unsightly intrusion into an area of natural beauty. In 'consultation' with Grizedale Arts, the idea of burning it down eventually emerged. Amidst heated debate, the pros and cons were not so much discussed as enacted until, unable to bear the tension, someone propelled a torch-holder's arm towards the construction which went up in flames.

Kwon (2002) argues that as late capitalism is typified by a sense of being 'out of place', art should engage in spatial politics, positioning works in places where they do not belong. The Billboard could be read as an attempt to raise awareness among local and visiting audiences of the power relations that dictate the way rural spaces are used. Grizedale's view is that the tourist industry has produced a manufactured paradise which ignores the tensions of the area to sustain an escapist fantasy. Community members living in the village at the time seemed dismissive about awareness-raising:

... the Billboard was there to sort of provoke rather than just being sort of interesting or sort of stimulating or enjoyable, there seemed to be an element of 'let us put this in to stir up a response', which is, you know, maybe a very negative response but the negative response is actually [mocking voice] a really good thing because that meant that people were stirred up, you know.

I hated it being all like confrontational, and all 'we're going to put this there to make you think' and, it's like if you found Adam's house and stuck something up in his garden which was dead ugly and said 'Oh, I've put that up there to make you think'.

INTERVIEW WITH LOCAL COMMUNITY MEMBER 2009

The responses call into question Grizedale Arts' strategy. However, the idea that *The Billboard* forced the community to take responsibility finds some support:

... I was telling someone here who was on the arts side about how great it was that the Billboard was going to be burnt down and she said 'oh no, no, no it's fantastic I take an A level group up there, you know, they are really stimulated, you know, and the conversation is really great', so I can see it served a purpose in that way, but yeah it's whether you feel the forest is here to be enjoyed and respected or whether it's here as a kind of outdoor gallery.

INTERVIEW WITH LOCAL COMMUNITY MEMBER 2009

Adam Sutherland recalls a well-attended parish meeting in the village:

... I read out all the text and showed them the image on the slide projector, and it produced a really good discussion in the village. I mean probably the first time the village had ever really discussed half of the issues that came up that day. What actually came out was that the village was fairly split, some of the older farmers were very much – "these lads, they might be tossers, but they have hit the nail on the head, you know when it's about Tories and stuff they are completely right with that stuff".

INTERVIEW WITH ADAM SUTHERLAND 2009

According to Grizedale Arts, the 'wholeness' of the work is only understood in retrospect (interview with Sutherland, 2011). The elements in play include the artist's response to the environment, the appreciation and complaints of the audience, interaction with the community and its decision as to what to do with the artwork. The question remains as to whether the 'honest' debate and burning of the *Billboard* was 'useful' not only in Grizedale's terms – raising awareness about the use of the land, but in terms of wider agendas which bear on the transformative potential of art and its capacity to change how the audiences view the world (ACE, 2010). Estep (2008) argues that art is unlikely to change perspectives if it generates hostility, but Valdes (2010) considers that the *Billboard* provoked the local community to take responsibility for what they perceived to be *their* forest

Grizedale Arts is driven by a critical, political agenda which sometimes induces conflict. The discomfort surrounding events like the burning of the *Billboard* turns on the fact that they are enactments of polarised public emotion, collectively held, partly unconscious, and not articulated within a political process. They expose feelings felt to be inadmissible or even dangerous (the symbolism of burning an artwork was not lost on the crowd). By what authority or licence does an arts organisation reveal unspoken tensions? Grizedale Arts has responded that it acts as a contributing part of the community, engaging in its deliberations and micro-politics. The organisation takes a position, provokes, and can be held to account for its actions.

A contrasting example is provided by the Coniston Water Festival. Consistent with their critical civic mission, Grizedale Arts set out to produce something that would serve community needs and self-determination rather than the tourist industry. In the first year they worked with a community based committee that took over in the following years, eventually re-orienting the festival towards tourism, in contrast to Grizedale's original vision.

It remains a key principle of Grizedale's socially engaged practice that in working with places such as Egremont, Coniston, Nanling (China) and Toge (Japan), the social and cultural strengths of communities should guide the work. Embedding itself in communities, or working alongside them, is consistent with the personalisation agenda in that the process recognises the desires, needs and predicaments of the people involved. However, this is not the same thing as being led by communities and there is potential for friction insofar as the organisation, or artists, maintain a critical voice. This poses wider questions about the relation between cultural consumption and personal preference as expressed in everyday lives through art. It therefore bears on the value of public art and how far it should respond to a common culture.

Grizedale pursues personalisation in a way which reflects its own civic mission rather than what it sees as the avaricious consumerism of industrial tourism. This may demand that those who benefit financially from tourism be challenged. Rather than seeing personalisation as a form of differentiated individualism, Grizedale supports an arts practice that responds to the needs of different groups while recognising their interdependence. The usefulness of the arts comes from their potential to facilitate relatedness and forge community solidarities.

4.3.3 Modes of Engagement

Grizedale Arts uses a range of engagement methods: one-to-one interaction, performances, day-to-day activities, inviting disadvantaged groups to Lawson Park, running open work days, hosting temporary cafés, giving lectures and facilitating meetings. The activities are by turns provocative (*The Billboard, Roadshow*), regenerative (*Creative Egremont*), educative (*The Craft Salon*), polemical (Sutherland's electoral platform) immersive (artists residencies and residential programmes) and ceremonial (*Let's Get Married*).

Grizedale Arts engages with artists through the residency programme which currently awards six research and development grants a year. Residencies are flexible and the preference is for long-term and demanding relationships with artists who are encouraged to spend time with communities. Artists who maintain a focus on their own careers, rather than developing the committed and outward-looking orientation to embedded, engaged practice that Grizedale values, tend not to become part of the organisation's wider network (Griffin & Sutherland, 2009).

Artists with long-term relationships with Grizedale Arts

Nathaniel Mellors exhibited in the 2009 Tate Triennial *Altermodern*. He was also commissioned by the BBC to make a piece for the television series *The Seven Ages of Britain*. Mellors undertook a residency at Grizedale Arts having just completed his MA. He explains that many of the works he developed during this time involved dialogue with Grizedale Arts' Director, and that this contributed to a career "which is more sustaining". Following his residency he has been involved in several Grizedale Arts projects including: *Lawless*, *Roadshow*, *Seven Samurai* and *Romantic Detachment* and *Adding Complexity to Confusion* (2010) at Tate Britain.

Juneau Projects have a long-term working relationship with Grizedale Arts and describe it as their "second art school". They have been involved in annual programmes including: *Golden – Live in your Forest*, *Grizedale Live*, *Roadshow*, and *Lawless*. Grizedale Arts' approach to Socially Engaged Arts Practice has been assimilated by Juneau Projects into their own work, which has involved running music workshops with young people.

Jeremy Deller won the Turner Prize in 2004. He produced the 'hot rod' tea urn for *Romantic Detachment*, and introduced Grizedale Arts to Egremont. Recent work with Grizedale includes a drawing class with young people from disadvantaged backgrounds whose work was taken to Sao Paulo Biennial. Grizedale Arts also commissioned Deller's film about wrestler Adrian Street which had its British premier at the Coniston Institute during the Christmas Farmers Market and Art Fair.

Karen Guthrie (with Nina Pope) won the Northern arts prize in 2008 and has exhibited at the ICA, the Barbican and the Tate. Karen has had repeated involvement with Grizedale Arts projects over the last 12 years, including: *A Different Weekend*, *Golden – Live in your Forest* and *Welcome To*; a film set in Grizedale Forest with different local dance groups. Karen has as an ongoing relationship with Grizedale Arts and occasionally works freelance for them.

Marcus Coates has received a Paul Hamlyn award and the Sasakawa award. He exhibited at the Tate Triennial in 2009 and the 2010 Biennale of Sydney. Coates undertook one of the first artists' residencies at Grizedale after period of working in isolation. He used it to explore the limits of our understanding of nature, a theme that has repeatedly appeared in subsequent work. Coates has been involved in many Grizedale Arts projects including: *The Billboard*, *Seven Samurai*, *A Different Weekend*, *Grizedale Live*, *Great Escape* and *Virtually Grizedale*.

Other artists who have worked with Grizedale Arts include Mark Wallinger, winner of the Turner Prize in 2007, who was involved in: *A Different Weekend*, *Great Escape* and *Golden – Live in your Forest*. Olivia Plender was nominated for the Becks Future award, exhibited at the Tate Triennial *Altermodern* (2009) and the Tate Triennial in 2006. She was involved in *Romantic Detachment* and *Cumbriana Proof*. Matt Stokes won the Becks Futures award in 2006 and was involved in Grizedale Arts projects: *Roadshow*, *Let's get Married Today*, *Romantic Detachment* and *Virtually Grizedale*. Bedwyr Williams was the Welsh artist in residence at the 2005 Venice Biennale and contributed to the 2006 Liverpool Biennial. He has had repeated involvement with Grizedale projects including: *Roadshow*, *Let's get Married Today*, *Virtually Grizedale* and *Seven Samurai*. Pablo Bronstein has been nominated for the Becks Future award. He has been involved with several projects including *The Return of the Seven Samurai* and *Agrifashionista.tv akaToadball.tv*

When interviewed, with very few exceptions, artists affirmed the influence of the residency on their work. They spoke of the depth of attention their work received:

Adam was really supportive of us, taking these risks and sort of experimenting ... being able to take part and talk about work and generally build relationships as well. I think all of that kind of fed into how the work developed, and certainly our nascent ideas of collaboration and participation within our work, they were really allowed to grow there and we had a lot of opportunities to try things out and to make mistakes...

INTERVIEW WITH ARTIST 2009

... I'm quite interested in the way, you know different power structures exist ... and that probably goes right back to the stuff I was beginning to work on at Grizedale which was you know a fairly formative point for me ... you know you're kind of, you're developing your language and your approach and they, they were kind of very supportive that I could go there and propose ideas and they supported the realisation of those ideas.

INTERVIEW WITH ARTIST 2009

... why is this relevant to society, this is something that I had been toying with and had trouble with before I went to Grizedale ... so I started to work in a much more socially engaged way and I think that this pattern was probably to be seen in a few other artists working in Grizedale and that sort of opened up a new world for me ...the idea of being productive and being a social agent and doing a job, being an artist and doing a job that really couldn't be done by anyone else in society...

INTERVIEW WITH ARTIST 2009

There is a 'Fairy Story' parable in Grizedale Arts' book *Adding Complexity to Confusion* which appears to parody this immersed engagement. A prince comes to look after a beautiful kingdom but is abused and lied to. He carries on working and moves to a farm where he builds a place for good people to live and work together. This involvement in the 'honest and real, rock of the farm' is a self-parody but describes the Grizedale ideal: staying 'honest' through struggle with the physical, social and emotional reality of the environment.

4.3.4 The Aesthetics of Engagement

Paul (2008) argues that a mature aesthetics of socially engaged practice has yet to be developed. Grizedale Arts' particular style or idiom of engagement is described by Griffin and Sutherland as "...humour, dumbness, lack of scholarship, anti-aesthetics and a celebration of the non-specialist hobbyist approach" (2009, p.11). However, this captures neither the moral seriousness, nor the attentiveness to particular needs and contexts (for example when working with disadvantaged children), which find aesthetic expression in the work Grizedale undertakes. Its defence of an aesthetic of amateurism finds a justification in Ruskin's celebration of the forms of Gothic architecture (expressions of 'hesitation', 'thinking' and 'mistakes') which result in 'healthy and beautiful' buildings.

... it is one of the chief virtues of the Gothic builders, that they never suffered ideas of outside symmetries and consistencies to interfere with the real use and value of what they did.

RUSKIN, 1953, p.55

Grizedale celebrates the full range of crafts and skills pursued by local populations, which have often 'looked better, odder and more complex than the art itself'

GRIFFIN & SUTHERLAND, 2009

Grizedale Arts' aesthetic formed partly in its initial period of provocation and confrontation is still perceived by some to depend on 'strategic' antagonism:

... I went on this panel a couple of weeks ago and he [Sutherland] was just being grumpy. You know he played that persona that I think he thinks people expect. I think he thinks if he didn't do that and he was a bit more, sort of, approachable, or a bit more placatory then he would be selling out in some way.

INTERVIEW WITH DIRECTOR OF ARTS ORGANISATION 2009

... they're provoking from within and for reasons, the aim is to get these issues across, I feel it's deeper than to provoke, to shock.

INTERVIEW WITH CURATOR 2009

... they would ask artists to do projects which were out of their comfort zone and they would challenge them to maybe engage with communities or maybe locations in a radically different way to studio practice; and also to confront communities at the same time and so it was that double confrontation but with a generous spirit - it wasn't meant to be aggressive, it was something generous and looking for progress through confrontation rather than confrontation for confrontation's sake.

INTERVIEW WITH ADMINISTRATOR, ON-LINE GALLERY 2009

Grizedale's provocative pursuit of honesty is directed at everybody. When the honesty stall outside Lawson Park Farm was covered with graffiti: 'It's not on that you leave scrap metal and carpet in this lovely place! Take note' Alistair Hudson blogged:

We shall henceforth endeavour to keep this idyll free of clutter and signs of non-wilderness; but where to start? Tractors, cars, spades, straight bits of wood, disposable barbecues, tourists, fudge, brightly coloured clothing, spruce forests, quarrying.

GRIZEDALE WEBSITE

Whilst Grizedale can be abrasive, it also has a gentler, more playful side as shown in its collaboration with the local Women's Institute:

...[We had to] make some Victoria sponge cakes in tray sized tins and then we put them together, you know like a wall overlapping and interlocking except it made a great big square cake about the same size as our kitchen table ... and then it was iced, it was iced in Kendal, and we stuck it together, all the separate sponges we stuck it together with jam, it was a really sticky afternoon [laughs] never been as sticky in my life.

MEMBER OF WOMEN'S INSTITUTE

Grizedale Arts embraces the everyday as a form of anti-aesthetics and a celebration of the non-specialist, evident in its involvement in Country Fairs. The Lawson Park library opening showed films from Oxen Park amateur cinema club, featuring a hill farmer describing his work, an advert for a local business, and the gunpowder factory which used to be situated nearby. The films attracted considerable interest.

They said that they could have made them better if they had put more time into it, I think that that's the attraction ... today we're so professional in everything that's done, it's just really lovely to see that guy at the gunpowder place just talking off the cuff, with his enthusiasm and love of the past industry. I could have listened to him all day.

INTERVIEW WITH MEMBER OF LOCAL COMMUNITY, 2009

4.3.4 The Local and the Global

Grizedale Arts is pro-active in forming partnerships and operates in a wide range of contexts, from the relatively affluent Coniston village to the economically challenged and geographically remote Egremont. As with the artist development programme, there are principles at work in Grizedale's cultural activation and regeneration. The defining aim of rendering artists and art 'useful' confers a recognisable moral status on its activities and has enabled it to move beyond the friction generated by some of its less popular decisions to build alliances with key local partners. This has also raised its standing at regional level, enabling the organisation to take on a key co-ordinating role in forging a viable cultural milieu among disparate and often competitive organisations.

Internationally, Grizedale undertakes cultural exchanges and talks of reconfiguring cultural boundaries between the local and the global. For example, the *Grizedale Arts Field Trip* offered disadvantaged young people a lecture on Ruskin's approach to art and a drawing class by Jeremy Deller. The completed drawings were taken to the Sao Paulo Biennial.

Projects such as Seven Samurai in the small village of Toge in Japan, aimed to reinvigorate the village and enable the villagers to become more 'self-determining' (Grizedale Arts, 2010 website).

... I think our generosity and the generosity of the village and our unique skills as artists and the unique skills of the village really worked together in a way that the market economy of the village really could never work ... I had had an effect on a mountain community in Japan so could I have an effect here, at a political level, and be influential, and so that's kind of the area I've been testing since.

INTERVIEW WITH ARTIST, 2009

The following year, seven of the villagers from Toge returned to Coniston and created 'The Paddies' in Lawson Park Farm for vegetable production. They also hosted a 'Japanese Country Cafe' in Coniston using local wild food.

... that was attended by about 70 people, which was purely and simply for the community... they have done work with the foreign communities and people don't know they are being targeted at all, but from that we are hoping that physical health will improve, their eating habits will improve and so yeah, it's a very wide circle ... so it is about everyone widening their perceptions, both artists and locals.

INTERVIEW WITH MEMBER OF LOCAL COMMUNITY 2009

Grizedale generates links between communities with related problems such use of land and food production. The cross-fertilisation of skills and knowledge suggests new ways of tackling problems, whilst challenging public consciousness in relation to local/global distinctions.

4.3.5 Intensity and Duration

Grizedale Arts' long-term vision is supported by the development of Lawson Park Farm and reflected in its work with artists and with communities:

Nanling and Coniston and Egremont are complex and untypical, they need a bespoke approach to make them work well and nuanced understanding that evolves over time, it's not a quick fix and shouldn't be. Like any relationship it needs work and commitment.

ALISTAIR HUDSON, 2008

They have remained committed to organisations and individuals even when these relationships have been difficult. Coniston Institute is an ongoing project and despite sometimes open conflict with other groups, Grizedale has continued with a long-term negotiation and planning.

Grizedale's focus on process and 'experimentation' for resident artists could have produced a meandering, incoherent body of work, however its re-iteration of core principles has helped to enable a sense of purpose and definition. Even where no art object is produced the pursuit of integrity means that whatever the artist has achieved is viewed as potentially useful in that it can feed back into the ongoing development of their work. An open-ended focus on process rather than outcome means projects sometimes fail to come to fruition, or rather the outcome is the process itself, and whatever has been learned or changed by it.

4.3.6 Partnerships and Collaboration

Grizedale Arts is actively pursuing partnerships and collaborating with many other organisations. It is involved in Plus Tate – a programme with eighteen national partners which aims to promote cross-pollination of ideas amongst different arts organisations. Grizedale is also involved with the National Garden Society and is the only non-horticultural organisation to host one of its open days. A number of local partners such as the MIND group have been invited to Lawson Park. Relationships have been established with Lanternhouse in Ulverston to facilitate collaborative working amongst arts organisations in Cumbria.

... I think there is an element of a competitive approach being encouraged in urban areas because it's quite healthy when they are all quite close together, but it's not really so healthy in a place like this, you just disappear.

INTERVIEW WITH ADAM SUTHERLAND, 2009

Work with Coniston Institute and Egremont Regeneration Partners has already been highlighted and are part of the strategy of embedding the organisation, locally and regionally and making it useful.

4.3.7 Innovation and Ethical Practice

There are difficulties in maintaining artistic freedom whilst attending to seemingly contradictory agendas of a risk averse public realm. Grizedale attempts to navigate tensions created between the need to innovate and simultaneously satisfy stakeholders, funders and consumers. Their aim of using art and artists to improve social and economic conditions is explicit 'to contribute, to be political, to be economically relevant, and, ultimately, to be emotionally and spiritually driven' (Griffin & Sutherland, 2009, p.12); Hudson observes that creativity should make things work better. The *Billboard*, controversial as it was, was ethical in that its fate was turned over to the community. However, Sutherland's perception is that funding was withdrawn by the County Council because of the burning of a publicly funded art work. The reason given was that the work didn't engage the public – which was manifestly untrue – though the nature of the engagement may well have caused unease. The *Billboard* appeared to be in conflict with something which is often taken as an ethical imperative – the idea that people should not be unduly upset. For Grizedale, not upsetting people is seen as less important than honesty and usefulness in art, and when faced with a curatorial decision, these principles take priority.

4.3.8 Authoring and Participation

Grizedale Arts' aesthetics of engagement involves an ability to maintain relational and presentational fluidity through an openness which allows others to dictate the direction projects may take (Beasley, 2009 in Griffin & Sutherland, 2009). For example, rowdy stag and hen parties 'crashed' the evening opening of Lawson Park. Both groups were disruptive - the stags hogged the microphone and the hens performed the limbo to Lionel Ritchie's All Night Long. This intrusion was celebrated by Grizedale and incorporated into their re-enactment of the night at Late at Tate.

[Grizedale] purposefully sets out to challenge the accepted relationships between the artist and curator, author and authored. This I suggest is where its criticality lies, in that grey area between overarching framework and individual practice: a negotiated landscape in which art and ideas are privileged above all else.

BEASLEY, 2009

Grizedale have observed that artists applying for residencies are submitting what they assume are Grizedale-type projects. A more thorough assessment is being developed which will require candidates to volunteer at Lawson Park Farm. Authoring and participation within Grizedale occurs within an ethical and philosophical framework rather than within the singular confines of any individual's 'vision', whether curator or artist. Hence conditions are created for artists to undertake work which reflects a relationship with the human and physical environment.

4.3.9 Conclusion

The rural Cumbrian location of Grizedale Arts is central to its identity and infuses every aspect of its work: residencies, regeneration activities, relationships, re-interpretation of Ruskin and regional presence. Its partnerships, collaborations, and activities are driven by a consistently moral social vision which is to promote 'useful', 'forceful' art. This is achieved through embedding itself in local and regional physical environment and contexts and seeking to activate communities. Grizedale Arts are aware that in a globalising and marketised world international cross-currents make themselves felt in the remotest corners of rural England. Local landscape, resources and publics become the basis for a cross-cultural fertilisation which is part of the organisation's contribution to contemporary art. Hence Grizedale is supporting and developing arts practices which are rooted in particularities of place and vernacular, and yet which 'travel' internationally and hybridise according to the needs of the new communities they serve. Grizedale have cultivated an aesthetic of the amateur in order to honour craft and facilitate new channels of participation and have used this to connecting artists to local production conditions. Through their artist development programme Grizedale's used localism, with some success, to invigorate art of international standing.

Grizedale Arts' seriousness of intent, underpinned by strong ethical and civic values is often belied by its (anti-branding) self-deprecation and the wit with which it provokes the communities it seeks to engage. It is also capable of self-irony and to a degree this protects it from being seen as moralising. Grizedale is resolutely critical of the commercial art-market and of self-serving artist ambition and is prepared to work with open-ended residencies which feed back into the development of its socially engaged practice and into sustaining the networks which make this possible.

Through its critical and even truculent stance, Grizedale Arts has influenced an entire generation of artists, some of whom have gained considerable acclaim. Lawson Park Farm has become a hub for on-going relationships with an extended artistic community who share its core values. Numerous interviewees attested to its idiosyncratic but substantially generous hospitality.

Grizedale's critique of the romanticisation of the Cumbrian landscape and the associated commercially exploitative tourism is a foundation for its socially engaged practice. The art it supports and produces varies greatly in its subject-matter and intended audiences, but has as an overriding mission which is to keep us 'honest'.

4.4 CENTRE FOR CONTEMPORARY ARTS (CCA)

4.4.1 Socially engaged practice, experiment and diversity

In 1974 the Scottish writer and playwright, Tom McGrath, founded The Third Eye Centre in Glasgow, described by the Guardian as 'a shrine to the avantgarde'. The centre hosted visiting artists and performers such as Allen Ginsberg, Whoopi Goldberg, John

Byrne, Edwin Morgan and Kathy Acker as well as becoming the focus for Glasgow's counterculture. In the 1980s it presented key exhibitions by new Glasgow painters such as Stephen Campbell, Ken Currie and Peter Howson and was home to the National Review of Live Art.

The Third Eye Centre closed at the turn of the 1990s and the Centre of Contemporary Arts (CCA) was established in 1992. CCA continued the tradition of commissioning and presenting work by Scottish-based artists and also new work by key international figures. Working across all art forms, the centre has aimed to become a cultural hub for the city.

We are committed to supporting artists who want to explore new ideas or who want to move beyond the traditional boundaries of their discipline.

CCA FIVE YEAR PLAN

In 1996, the organisation was awarded a lottery grant to redevelop and expand the building and in 2001 the newly refurbished CCA opened to the public. However, in 2006, a severe financial crisis provoked re-structuring. The current Director Francis McKee describes his experience:

The former director left at the end of 2005. I was Director of Glasgow International and was invited to come here in a caretaker role. In the first week I spent 10K and went straight into overdraft ... We were in a desperate financial situation with half of the next year's budget already spent. At first it [CCA] seemed dead, the art community hated it because it was posh, intimidating and commerce centred ... The new refurbishment had meant a bigger building but without a bigger budget. The first question was why not shut it? But it needed to be kept open for Glasgow International so we were free to do what we wanted in the meantime. We moved out of an office and turned it into a creative lab space. We had loads of equipment and thought why not give it to people and let them use it. So we were given six months by ACS (Arts Council Scotland) which then gave us half the grant to see what might happen ... It was an opportunity for grassroots stuff, hence the open source idea...

INTERVIEW WITH FRANCIS MCKEE 2011

Francis McKee suggests that, perversely, this provisional reprieve allowed the organisation freedom because it was thought unlikely to last. However the CCA's move to open source is part of a wider movement towards socially engaged practice in the arts sector and has taken place at a time where there is a wide-ranging debate about the democratisation of arts provision. Creative industries consultant Tom Fleming has argued:

For many theatres, cinemas, galleries and other types of culture house ... wholesale renovation is born out of an urgent requirement to change or die, and it is just beginning. ... Our culture houses no longer have audiences; they have participants, patrons and peers.

CITED IN CCA FIVE YEAR PLAN

4.4.2 Modes of engagement

Core exhibitions, Open Source and Outreach

CCA's open source curatorial strategy has attempted to work the tensions between a core exhibitions programme and an outreach programme. The building on Sauchiehall Street received a lottery redevelopment grant and changes more than halved the amount of office space and created additional areas for artists to develop their work. Residencies were given to artists based in Scotland who needed time, resources and support to experiment.

In this new world, traditional delivery systems do not always meet requirements. In a digital age where the public can choose when, how and to what extent they want to participate in a broad spectrum of activities, the monoculture of the curator is increasingly insufficient. Audiences no longer want or are willing to accept a 'top down' model in which an organization acts in splendid isolation, choosing what is shown from a lofty position of authority. Instead, venues need to find new ways of engaging this 'public' as participants and collaborators through co-commissioning, co-curating, and acknowledging the tastes of different communities through the different spaces of the institution. Importantly too, venues need to be 'better aligned' to agendas in innovation, knowledge exchange and the wider creative economy.

CCA FIVE YEAR PLAN

CCA positions itself as a leading organisation in open source programming. It describes how the approach speaks to the desires of artists and other publics, allowing a host of creative organisations access to buildings and resources in pursuit of their own artistic and creative ends. It describes itself as an umbrella organisation and creative hub for a range of other smaller cultural groups and independent artists. By developing links with a range of particular interest groups whose work fits its wider remit and philosophy it is making its facilities available to people who would not otherwise use them. Examples include film makers and cineastes such as *Magic Lantern*, *Camcorder Guerrillas* and *Paul Welsh*, bands and music promoters such as *Nuts and Seeds*, *Glasgow Improvisers Orchestra* and *Fallen Angel* and theatre and dance companies such as *Theatre Cryptic* and *Dancehouse*. These groups are given space, technical support and training to develop their own programmes. This strategy aims to establish for the CCA a broader profile in the general cultural life of the city through exhibitions, film screenings, concerts, performance and a wide spectrum of opportunities to participate in the arts. Within the building a range of workshops, master classes and courses has also been developed for the public (for example *Write*, *Camera Action* and *Scottish Screenwriters* and *Making Film*). Some organisations are housed in the building (such as *Electron Club* – a Hacker Co-operative which offers classes on programming and robotics).

The core exhibitions programme promotes art created locally to a wider audience and introduces art from other countries to Scotland. Examples of commissioned exhibitions include: *Autoconstrucción* by Abraham Cruzvillegas, *Dirty Hands* by Alex Pollard and Clare Stephenson, and, in partnership with Chisenhale Gallery, *The Last Days of Jack Sheppard* by Anja Kirschner and David Panos. In addition, an outreach programme is now taking CCA to deprived areas of the city, engaging with schools and adults at a community level. These programmes draw on new funding streams for environment and education which have been used to initiate art and gardening programmes in primary schools and community gardens/allotments in two districts of the city. The programmes seek to engage local people including those using mental health services and other allotment holders in these localities.

Internships

CCA has also launched an internship programme and recruited two interns in the areas of arts administration and arts education. Other interns have helped to develop links with schools and develop an environmental programme. At the time of writing CCA is looking to link its internship programme with its UWS collaboration and develop a support structure and a formal contract of learning which provides recognition for the work interns undertake. This development in part emerges from a desire to offer interns a clear and coherent learning experience. In some programmes such as the allotment programme, interns have taken a great deal of responsibility for 'doing the work'. Some of the interns we interviewed observed, without complaint, that this work was rather different from what they had imagined they might be doing at the CCA.

Publishing

CCA publishes catalogues for particular exhibitions and *2HB*, a quarterly publication dedicated to creative writing in the context of visual art. It also holds three book fairs annually, inviting leading art publishers to exhibit and organise related book launches and literary events around them. Over the past 18 months it has supported the launch of *Aye Aye* bookshop in its foyer with a rent-free agreement. The publishing related activities perform a vital marketing function for CCA through their dissemination across Britain and the world.

4.4.3 Philosophy, civic mission, politics and personalisation: artists and curators as social critics

A commitment to experimentation, 'intellectual commons', hybridised Scottishness and local context provide important frames for the work that the CCA now supports. It is seeking to embed socially engaged practice within multi-cultural Glasgow, with its multiplicity of fragmented sub-cultures, and some of the UK's most culturally excluded urban populations. International artists working with the CCA are encouraged to respond to the local context and situation, as the case example on the next page demonstrates. Artists provided with space in the building, through its open source strategy, are selected on the basis that they have a good fit with the CCA's wider philosophy. Hence, a 'directed', practice of open sourcing is essential to CCA's mission. Francis Mackee describes a commitment to use public money given to CCA to support, develop and protect artistic activities which are experimental and emergent.

The mission and activities of CCA also involve a response to the building, which has some large public areas on the ground floor and numerous small rooms in the floors above. By offering these spaces to other groups CCA is introducing new discussions, activities, activism and publics which are intended to mix and hybridise with existing activities. CCA's 'cultural tenants' are given subsidised space in the building on the basis that the CCA, public and tenants must benefit equally.

The programme ethos of our partners is initially assessed by the CCA programming team to ensure it is in keeping with our overall artistic direction and then, once approved, each partner can programme as they see fit.

INTERVIEW WITH FRANCIS MCKEE, 2010

The diverse uses of the cinema demonstrate CCA's open source practice in microcosm. It has taken a deliberate decision not to host commercial cinema and film which allows it to respond to the needs of small communities of interest. Independent film makers use it for test screenings; BBC Alba has screened a season of Gaelic film; artists show experimental work, and critics can discuss movies.

Magic Lantern celebrates short film as a platform for innovative and rule-breaking ideas. It was started by members of CCA's box office staff and now it screens work across Scotland. The work with *Magic Lantern* led to collaboration on a Scottish Short Film Festival which became a key strand of the Glasgow Film Festival. *Camcorder Guerillas* who make political and activist films, and *Document 9* - an international human rights documentary film festival - both wanted a public platform operating within an informed contemporary art context. The relationship with *Camcorder* has developed into a cultural tenancy in the building and collaboration on larger projects.

CCA has also developed collaborations with music groups including: *Ceol's Craic*, a monthly Gaelic club and platform for Gaelic art and culture; *The Glasgow Improviser's Orchestra*, a large ensemble of around twenty musicians from diverse artistic origins; *Nuts and Seeds*, a collective promoting the best of underground music in Britain and *The Fallen Angels Club*, promoting roots music in Scotland. The long term programme with

Ceol's Craic has contributed to CCA becoming the Gaelic hub of the city. Together they realised that most programmes for Gaelic have concentrated on children with adults seen only in the role of parent. At the CCA they have sought to develop the parents as an audience, relating Gaelic and contemporary culture. *Nuts and Seeds* have tended to put on 'stranger' bands at CCA. The value for them is the context provided by the CCA and its programming experience and ability to put a critical framework around the acts.

CASE EXAMPLE

Abraham Cruzvillegas

Abraham Cruzvillegas creates work that reflects his upbringing in Ajusco, a district of Mexico City developed by migrants from the countryside attracted to work in the city's building trade, who co-operatively constructed their homes and communities. Cruzvillegas works with the social and political implications of such community action. Whilst based at CCA he incorporated new ideas from a Glaswegian context.

The recent book for Abraham Cruzvillegas' exhibition was seen as an important contribution to the social history of Mexico City and 400 copies were distributed to libraries across Latin America.

The Cruzvilleda residency was used to network with people across city. He wanted to make a mobile sound system, so we helped him with that, and he wrote 18 songs about the memory of the place he came from, made a CD (recording with our technical people here). We tied him into just about everything. This was about embedding someone long-term in the city – taking on a Glaswegian imprint, not having someone come in, stay a couple of weeks, and then fly out again. The Curator of Glasgow Sculpture studios is now on residency in Mexico. The project developed its own momentum and some Glasgow artists have moved to Mexico. Mexico is suddenly a really big place for Glasgow and vice versa and we have no control over it any more.

INTERVIEW WITH FRANCIS MACKEE



4.4.4 Aesthetics of engagement

Use of the Building

The aim is to provide space and resources to groups at a modest cost without colonising their activities. Small bands and promoters are thus able to make a modest profit out of niche events, and two bands per month are given seed funding. The strategy aims to build a sense of ownership among those who might otherwise have regarded the organisation as elitist.

If we do fewer exhibitions, there is room for some of the less traditional things like gardening. 'This land is your land' did bring in different audiences. We're thinking, how can we do these things so they also work within the art world and we retain credibility in that world?

INTERVIEW WITH FRANCIS MCKEE, 2011

CCA have sought to modify traditional spatial practices within galleries, for example by holding cookery classes in the gallery in the face of objections from some staff that it looked a bit 'crappy'. Referring to the building, Francis Mackee responded

... it's too nice, we're too precious. We have given over the foyer to the craft stall, and bookshop. We decided we like them and they like us. They are friendly shops, more crappy, less intimidating, more human, so people might think, oh there's shops, a cafe, and oh there's art as well. The bigger question: is to show we're generating work, a place with things in process, residencies. Our budget is 146K and 96K goes on exhibitions. What if we do 3 exhibitions [instead of 9 per year] with spaces for smaller things in between – more fluid and engaged.

INTERVIEW WITH MCKEE, 2011

The context of this provocation was discussion about the spatial practices of the institution which have re-coded the social use of space (Lefebvre 1991) so that exhibitions and practices can spill out of the galleries and 'travel' round the building into the cafe and public areas. This invites others to bring their own spatial practices into the institution provoking negotiation, contestation and transgression. The tensions generated are reflected in the staff group as they come to terms with organisational change and consider what might be retained from the past, and how far they will lead it in the future. Cookery classes in the gallery and similar practices have challenged their aesthetic sensibilities. Many joined CCA to practice gallery-based curating and are being asked to engage in activities which resemble community development, or adult education. The rationale is presented as 'survival' but this underplays a considered change of direction with a philosophy of common access and ownership of cultural goods and resources, necessitating aesthetic as well as structural and political transformation.

The open source model is now quite well embedded within the CCA. However, for an outsider the building still sends out mixed messages about organisational purpose. While the cafe seems to be mostly used by CCA staff, students and the kind of public one might expect to see in an art gallery, the bookshop in the foyer is in deliberate contrast to mainstream corporate style, with its rustic, handmade wooden cupboards and chicken-wire doors. It has the air of a slightly out-of-place installation within what is an otherwise sleek white-walled modern art centre.

Outreach programme

Sustained work to build an education and outreach programme links the CCA into communities across the city taking activities to outlying areas and bringing audiences from those areas to Sauchiehall Street. This work currently has very little funding to support it and much of it is delivered by short-term interns under the direction of Francis McKee. However, it is seen as being of critical importance to the development of the organisation's socially engaged practice.

The outreach programme has focussed on ecology, food production, environment and energy. The advantage of concentrating on agreed themes is that it secures long term funding for programmes with tangible outcomes, while incorporating contemporary arts practice. CCA has undertaken guerrilla gardening and worked to establish gardens in primary schools across Drumchapel. The city has provided two large allotment plots and has worked with artists who are interested in environmental and botanical issues such as Justin Carter, Alex Wilde and Rachel Mimiec.

Whilst work such as Jeremy Deller's *Battle of Orgreave* exposes a group of people to the vision of an artist, the CCA's approach in community gardens focuses on creating the *conditions* for engaged arts practice. As a visiting outsider it may be hard to see the art in some of these activities, and conscious of the fact that it is still developing this work, the CCA is prepared to admit that sometimes it's just about gardening. This approach (consistent with open source) allows collaborative relationships to develop on an equal footing.

CASE EXAMPLE

Researcher Reflections On A Trip To Drumchapel

I met Kenny, the community worker, at the site of the community garden project – a sizeable piece of land on the edge of a bleak housing estate overlooked by two unlovely tower blocks. The place was strewn with debris and Kenny was despondent because they had organised a group to clear the ground only two or three months previously. Some of it was take-away rubbish dropped by kids from a nearby school who congregate there, and according to Kenny get blamed for most things (in this instance with some justice, though there was not a bin in sight and evidently no local cleansing service either).

Some of the stuff had clearly been thrown out of tower block windows and the trees dotted here and there were festooned with ‘witches knickers’ (plastic bags to the imaginatively challenged). There was not much sense of civic anything - though the area was not exactly wild; the grass had been cut and the plot for the garden was well-fenced. On the way there from the station we saw two beautiful little urban deer who stared at us for a moment and ambled off – Kenny explained they had been moving into the area and were living there amongst all the dereliction.

Also present were a female intern, a PhD student interested in reclaimed urban spaces, and two artists. We talked about the slow pace of community engagement projects which can get mired in bureaucracy while the local council works its way through layers of agreements, risk assessments and contracts. In the case of Drumchapel, this has been going on for seven years and the locals who originally engaged have since lost interest and drifted away. The council insisted that local people be involved in the management and running of the site, and according to Kenny they don’t want to be. They want to get out there and dig and not sit in endless committees. Now there has been a change of direction by the council and they don’t seem to want local people involved much at all. However, they are about to release £20K for the project so work will begin with artist input, locals, and interested parties.

I asked what Kenny what it was like working with CCA and what artists could bring to a project such as this and he said that apart from all the ideas as to how the space could be designed and used (sensory garden, performance space, playground and so on) it was the refreshing ‘let’s just do it’ mind-set which by-passes the endless delays of local government. He referred to the re-development of a bit of ground adjacent to a nursery which CCA had helped develop and which the kids and parents just loved.

The relationship with CCA started when Kenny threw out a challenge – ‘What are you doing for outlying areas like Drumchapel?’ Francis responded with ‘Ok what can we do’? It developed from there. I asked what potential Kenny saw for using the community garden to open up access to the arts and the CCA itself. He said this is very much the intention – there is virtually no cultural activity in Drumchapel and the arts are another country. There are 16 year olds who have never been to the city centre 10 miles away, let alone an arts exhibition. However, L.I.F.E had organised trips to the CCA when they did the exhibition *This Land is Your Land*. Gardening connects with the healthy living agenda and can get volunteers mobilised.

Kenny is a local man, with long experience of the area and trying to get things off the ground. This needs staying power and a long-term view. He gave the impression of someone who would doggedly carry on carrying on, but the involvement of the CCA, who also take a long-term view, had clearly been a shot in the arm.

4.4.5 The Local and the Global

CCA's local field of vision configures around a contemporary multi-cultural Scottishness - and a variety of global themes which are also relevant locally (such as colonialisation). An example is the exchange programme with CALQ (Conseil des arts et des lettres Québec) in Montreal, where an artist from Quebec works in CCA for three months and Montreal selects a Scottish artist from a CCA shortlist to carry out a 3 month residency in PRIM (Productions Réalisations Indépendantes de Montréal). This has been recognised by the Canadian High Commission as a pioneering relationship between cultural bodies in Scotland and Quebec.

CCA attempts to achieve a balance between exhibiting international artists and using its space and influence to promote Scottish artists. They try to link different strands of activity: exhibitions, residency programme, open source, outreach and education, so that CCA's interest in Scottish culture speaks to a global cultural context.

4.4.6 Intensity and Duration

The gardening projects in Drumchapel and East Glasgow involve the development of long-term relationships of trust which take time as people want to know that the organisation will be there for years rather than months. Some socially engaged arts practice seeks to engage specific communities (such as mental health service users) and in specific activities (like making a film). The CCA's gardening projects are more open, less targeted and it is possibly less clear how these projects might develop. The CCA is happy for communities to take control but they are prepared to take a more active role if there is no clearly articulated community ownership. In Drumchapel there is an identifiable local community and community worker. In contrast, those who have taken part in the allotment project in the East End have mainly been from a local centre for people with mental health problems. The project has aroused suspicion from neighbouring allotment holders who have had gardening tools stolen. The CCA recognises it may need to retain a role in managing and supporting the project on a long-term basis and also that it might develop a different style and purpose to the one in Drumchapel. This reflects the uncertainty in much socially engaged practice: it is hard to predict the direction of travel and how projects will be received, responded to, developed and co-produced by community partners. For CCA, the 'art' lies in providing the conditions for something creative to emerge and recognising its possibilities as it does.



Allotments in Glasgow's East End

The CCA's ability to sustain long-term projects is impaired by staffing pressures. Due to funding limits the gardening projects have been supported by interns rather than permanent members of staff. Many interns are on three month placements. Although digging, weeding and gardening have not always felt much like art for the interns, this is not their main issue or concern. Rather, it is the limited possibility of seeing through development in programmes that are only likely to produce change over a five to ten year period.

4.4.7 Partnerships and Collaboration

CCA receives most of its funding from Creative Scotland. Most of this is for maintaining the building with a relatively modest sum for core programme expenses. A more substantial grant for its core programme comes from Glasgow City Council. Funding from these sources has not increased for years. However in the last three years CCA has managed to sustain and grow its level of programming and has been looking at ways to diversify its income streams. After facing near-bankruptcy it has aimed to develop a lean, effective model. It retains ambitions to grow its staff base with the addition of an education and outreach team.

CCA has a core group of long term partners such as University of the West of Scotland, Glasgow Improvisers' Orchestra, Document, and Independence.

This open approach process has several key advantages for the future of CCA. Partners bring their own funds to deliver their programme and this enables CCA to offer a wider range of work more regularly within limited resources. Partners often find they can do more ambitious work because of the support that CCA can provide. The increased range and scope of activity generated in

the building has significant public benefit. It also enables CCA to offer more programming choice to a wider range of audiences, something that is recognised as vital to the health of arts centres into the future.

INTERVIEW WITH FRANCIS MCKEE. 2011

Strategic partnerships help to support CCA's aims for audience development. Finance from partnerships can offer stability which can help provide opportunities to support smaller scale companies and projects.

CASE EXAMPLE

Partnerships

In 2009, CCA initiated a new collaboration with the University of the West of Scotland (UWS). With a strong reputation for courses in the arts and creative industries, UWS has looked to CCA to provide an urban platform to showcase its work. It aims to establish a creative hub in Glasgow locating many of its artistic showcases and platforms at CCA along with a site in Glasgow's riverside Digital Media Quarter.

With the range of programming, workshops, and classes developed by CCA, there is an obvious link between UWS student needs and CCA's ability to provide access to content and real-time experience of the arts. Now that UWS are becoming cultural tenants, they are exploring the potential for links with other cultural tenants in the building.

UWS can also begin to supplement CCA's own education programme, offering courses that can be taken by the general public. The internship programme can be extended to incorporate temporary technical posts for students on vocational courses.

The plan is to identify joint funding opportunities for training and programme collaboration. Increasingly, funding provided by bodies such as the AHRC is aimed at partnerships that disseminate academic work and research to a broader public. The CCA/UWS collaboration suits this priority for knowledge transfer and through such partnerships will open up new funding streams.

4.4.8 Innovation and Ethical Practice

CCA's work with mental health service users in the East End has caused some concern among health practitioners. The risk averse culture of the health sector can find the unpredictability of socially engaged arts practice difficult, leading to concerns about the safety of service users and questions about how involvement in arts programmes relates to other roles, such as service user or provider. The fact that socially engaged arts practice can take on a quasi-therapeutic aspect is taken by some health practitioners to indicate that it should be subject to similar governance to health services. Providing participants are professionally supported, if needed, there is no reason why this should be the case. The strict forms of governance imposed on clinical

staff would undermine the ability of exploratory projects to work emergently. However, lack of clarity over these issues means that vulnerable people could fall into a gap between health and care services and arts-based provision. At CCA it is unclear how these issues are being handled. Interns who working on allotment projects told us about people attending from a local service who they thought had mental health or addiction problems. They had not considered it necessary to find out more. The group were usually accompanied by staff which perhaps made these issues feel less pressing, and care staff had their own obligations of confidentiality. A sense of working in partnership is the key to good practice here, so that respective roles, responsibilities and expertise can be clarified.

4.4.9 Authoring and Participation

CCA's gradualist approach to working with communities is in contrast to the way in which it has been challenging its own staff. The outreach work builds on recognition that some communities are structurally excluded from arts or have never been introduced to them. They are unlikely to make use of what organisations like the CCA have to offer without new and tailored opportunities for participation and engagement. The CCA is trying to learn how to work with communities in a way that meets their needs. Attending to relationships and creating the conditions for something to emerge in *collaboration* is the key to their approach, with the artwork as a 'third' which contains distinctive contributions from both communities and the CCA.

4.4.10 Conclusion

For the CCA, impending institutional demise was the spark for creative change. The conflictual process of re-structuring the organisation has served to re-focus its activities towards outreach, open source, cultural tenancies, educational partnerships and internships. The CCA has become a diversified cultural hub within Glasgow, while retaining a core exhibitions programme which exhibits Scottish and international artists.

For the organisation this has involved risk, pain and the development of new modes of practice. In 2007 CCA produced the French high wire artist Didier Pasquette's attempt to walk between three of Glasgow's high-rise tower blocks. The event provides an allegory for the challenges the organisation has encountered. Buffeting winds proved too severe to allow the walk to be completed. The CCA had been trying to arouse interest in its work among local residents. It took a double-decker bus to the site with a view to bringing people back to the CCA. Local people came to the bus and chatted but no one would step on board. In cities like Glasgow many residents don't feel safe outside their own areas and they certainly don't feel comfortable in institutions like the CCA. Perceptual winds can be as hostile as the weather and social engagement seldom builds from one-off spectacles which cannot dissipate the cross-currents of local suspicion. That process work requires local knowledge, steady building of relationships, and embedding the organisation in communities as CCA is doing with its gardening and allotment projects.

5 FINDINGS

5.1 SECTION 1: TRANSFORMATIVE PRACTICE

5.1.1 Finding Forms for Feeling

“...these small changes in the doing of things were in themselves a feat. And they do herald more to come. Because the making of these small changes changed us and these changes inside us were not small; we were profoundly different now than we had been before.”

SUSAN GRIFFIN 1971

In a period where the evidential requirements of policy are couched in the language of measurability, transparency, effectiveness and impact, there is still some way to go before the ‘changes inside us’: expansion of imaginative capacity, nurturing of creative illusion, reparative emotional states, multiplication of relational potentials, can be accounted for in ways that will prove persuasive for policy makers. Yet these changes - where they occur - can be very significant to the individuals and communities who become engaged with contemporary art. The hope and expectation of change may indeed be a primary motive for engagement with the arts. There is evidence that the barriers to art participation for many people are psychological - they are ‘not for people like us’ – or ‘we may not know how to behave’ or even ‘what to wear’ (Keaney 2008). There is a defensiveness underlying such responses - a fear of being shamed. It seems likely that such strong emotions could only be countered by affectively significant experience. The primary value of the work produced by the organisations in this study, lies in the way they try to provide such experiences through the opportunities they offer for taking part, and the way in which the work they commission and produce enables the discovery of new forms for feeling which connect selves and communities. When aesthetic form is found to ‘contain’⁹ otherwise inchoate or inexpressible feeling, it can become a ‘force’ - that ‘moves’ individuals or becomes a driver of social change. This is how we have come to understand Grizedale’s notion of ‘forceful art’; it is what implicitly lies behind Artangel’s notion of ‘ambition’; and within the field of socially engaged practice it also helps to give social meaning to the idea of ‘excellence’. We have demonstrated through numerous examples in the chapter on the organisations that the forms for feeling, or experience, produced in socially engaged arts practice come in many varieties and are as likely to be found in the process as in the artistic outcome.

⁹ Containment is a key concept in British Object Relations theory, relating closely to Donald Winnicott’s notion of ‘holding’ (1971). If chaotic, disorganised thoughts, feelings and sensations can be contained they can be processed, held in mind and rendered intelligible

The problem for the researcher is that such changes manifest themselves in subtle and complex ways. They are partly unconscious, they are partly biographically specific to the individual, but they express a *relationship* to a cultural field held in common, and this relationship can be observed and understood. For this reason we have conducted a relationally sensitive psychosocial study, adapting for our methodology approaches developed by cultural anthropologist Clifford Geertz (1974) (experience near inquiry); cultural analyst Alfred Lorenzer (1977, 1984) (scenic understanding); and psychoanalyst and art historian Anton Ehrenzweig (1967) (analytic and syncretistic perception). We have also drawn on the late Donald Winnicott's (1971) clinical and theoretical understandings of the relationship between play and cultural creativity over the life course.¹⁰ With this approach we have been able to consider the ways in which the people who engaged in the artwork in this study have been able to make personal or collective use of their symbolic potential.

Confidence in this perspective was strengthened by another research project: *Who Cares: Museums, Health and Well-being* conducted by the Psychosocial Research Unit in parallel with this one during the same period, which studied the social engagement activities of six north west regional museums (Froggett and Farrier 2011). There too, we conducted detailed ethnographic observations and interviews about art-based participation and engagement, and used similar methods to analyse our material. We concluded that, among other things, what such work had to offer to groups of culturally marginalised people was the possibility of finding new ways to represent their experiences and the quality of feeling they evoked. Artwork extends the capacity for symbolisation – and hence communication – of hitherto unarticulated lifeworlds and internal worlds in such a way as to preserve their *vitality*. By doing so, they give people a sense of authenticity and potentially a voice. The point that emerged strongly in the 'Who Cares?' Study and in this one was not simply that artwork enables symbolisation and representation, but that it helps people to create an embodied, sensual connection to the world outside themselves - it provided a third object between themselves and others that can be shared. By animating, or re-animating, a link between individual and the cultural field, it enhances their relational capacity.

Confidence was also boosted after taking feedback from artists and organisations and holding a one day symposium to discuss our findings with over a hundred participants from the arts sector (23-05-2011, FACT, Liverpool). We foregrounded our findings in embeddness, personalisation, intensity and duration, and civic contribution - which our collaborators in the research process had identified as particularly salient. We also presented our conclusions in relation to transformative practice. Our conceptualisation of the 'aesthetic third', in many ways the most abstract of our ideas, provoked by far the most discussion and was thought to be particularly useful for understanding the ways in which the arts can bring about engagement and change. Although the enthusiastic reception of this concept surprised us, it should not have done. Even though the 'aesthetic third' was only briefly explained and illustrated in the time available on the day, it was received with a recognition that it could make sense not only of the work we

¹⁰ Play in this conception is the means of reconciling inner and out reality, and is the basis of symbolisation and hence the pre-condition for participation in the cultural domain

had studied, but of the arts practice many members of the audience were themselves engaged in. We are indebted to the people who took part in this discussion in helping us to see that the aesthetic third is the pivot on which the other dimensions of engagement and transformation depend.

5.1.2 The Aesthetic Third

Artistic outcome and aesthetic (whether conceived as aesthetic of process, product or both) is not subordinate to other social agendas. The artwork remains as an essential third object or point of dialogue between the arts organisation and members of the public who are not arts professionals. However, it may also act as a third between the provisional community involved in its production and appreciation (artists, curators, participating publics) and the social domain that it aspires in some measure to change.

To 'work' as a third point of attention which activates new interpretations, it must retain aesthetic integrity and hence vitality - this 'liveliness' helps to open up ways of seeing things differently. Where the aesthetic third 'collapses' there may still be pleasurable experiential immediacy, but it is unlikely to generate new relational forms or critical dialogue.

For the sake of clarity the aesthetic third will be explained via a single extended empirical example: Abraham Cruzvillegas' *Autocostrucción* illustrates the potentially transformative effects that flow from it

In *Autocostrucción*, Abraham Cruzvillegas' reflects his upbringing in a district of Mexico City developed by migrants from the countryside, attracted to work in the building trade, who used their skills collaboratively to construct their homes and communities out of whatever they could find. Cruzvillegas' art works with the social and political implications of such community action. During his CCA residency he made a mobile sound system. He wrote 18 songs (hybridising musical genres) about the memory of the place he came from, and broadcast them around Glasgow as he toured the city on a five wheel bicycle. It was constructed in a workshop called *The Common Wheel* where people with mental illness repair old bikes. Using CCA networks he explored the possibilities of hybridisation and translation so that his work took on a Glaswegian imprint. Below is an account of what happens in the course of a (hypothetical) interaction:

- *The artist and participant meet or engage through the artwork.* Perhaps it takes the form of an encounter with a local shop-keeper as the artist parks his bicycle, after having broadcast one of his songs.
- *The artwork becomes a cultural form for their experience;* their ways of relating to one another; the things they say or do together; and the emotional quality of that exchange – including its pleasures, ambivalences and antagonisms. The songs, the bike itself and the encounter contain this strange meeting point between a Mexican artist and the everyday culture of a Scottish city shopkeeper - the things they have in common, and the things that make them 'foreign' to each other. The artwork gives a form to this encounter which contains both the Mexican's internalised construction memories and the human and physical

setting of the shop-keeper's business. It is the 'third thing' between them which holds together these disparate elements.

- *In providing a form that shows what could not be said, experience is symbolised - brought into being in a new language.* The vitality of this symbol will resonate and be recalled: the astonishing spectacle of a Mexican on a five wheeled bike, singing his songs of remembrance to the Scots.
- *The aesthetic third takes something that exists in the imagination of those who participate in its production or reception, and by finding a cultural form it that can be understood by others, is shared.* The aesthetic of the artwork contains the artist's idiomatic way of expressing his family's experience, but it is only realised in the encounter with the shopkeeper who receives it in his own Glaswegian idiom. In producing a third between them it has taken on a form which others, perhaps the shop-keeper's customers or passers-by, can also encounter in their own idiom. The work evolves as more people come into relation with it.
- *By enabling experience to be shared the aesthetic third creates a vital link between individual and community.* This Mexican artist inserts something of himself, and via himself his origins, into a new cultural community which is changed by it. At the same time, through the shop-keeper, Glasgow passes into the Mexican and he incorporates it into his art. Rather than being just a meeting point this has now become a cross-fertilisation, giving birth to something new.
- *This new thing is a link which has its own vitality* - if the form that has been found 'works', it resonates in the body as well as in the mind; it plays on the emotions. It is the strength of the aesthetic that produces the vitality of the link and this is key to the transformative potential of the art.

The aesthetic of a work like this does not collapse into what is Scottish on the one hand, or Mexican on the other (in any case Scotland and Mexico are hybrid cultures). It is a third thing with an existence independent of the artist and the shop-keeper, and the communities they come from. It has a life of its own that can be put to use. In this case the liveliness of the object finds expression in the DIY aesthetic of the bike and sound system which tours Glasgow, and also in the lyrics which weave together the many musical influences on the artist. There is a chaotic 'off the back of a lorry' feel about it, which resonates in a city where there is also the 'make do and mend' of poverty, and the stitching together of cultures - some of it is ugly like the parents' house, but beheld with affection.

5.1.3 Psyche meets society

As art-forms which speak to collective dimensions of experience, socially engaged projects function as a third in that they have a key role in providing a point of articulation where the imaginations of individuals meet shared cultural forms. In this sense they are also a means whereby individuals insert themselves into the social and whereby the social can be creatively internalised by individuals.

The aesthetic third imparts a liveliness to the object so that the symbolic function can work. The Cruzvillegas example should make it clear that (especially when it is an artwork) a symbol is not merely something that stands in the place of something else. It carries the 'living' imprint of the person who produces it, and the situation to which it refers. It has an objective existence as a cultural object, but at the same time it has been subjectively endowed with the idiom of its author. In combining something of the author with something of the world, it allows inner and outer worlds to meet, creating a new relationship between them. As has been shown in the chapters which detail the work of the organisations that make up this study there are many 'authors' in socially engaged arts practice: each person who interacts with the artwork brings to it his or her own unique fantasies, memories, anxieties and desires, subjectively endowing it with something of themselves and producing another third, which then exists as a common cultural object.

5.1.4 The Power of Illusion

Socially engaged practice facilitates change processes in individuals and communities by nourishing the capacity for creative illusion – that is, the ability to think and act 'as if' things were different.

Importantly creative *illusion* rather than *delusion* is issue here since illusion involves imagining alternative realities, whilst delusion involves denial of reality. The four organisations in this study are, or aspire to be, thoroughly embedded in local contexts, and it is this that enables them to respond to the illusional capacity of the people who become engaged with their work, while reckoning with the constraints and opportunities of everyday life and local conditions. *Autocostrucción* is the outcome of the artist's emotional and physical embeddedness in the community of his childhood, and his re-interpretation of that experience through his five wheeled bike, his songs, and his encounters with the city of Glasgow. Direct translation of this experience of his origins may well have met with polite incomprehension or indifference. By embedding himself in Glasgow he evolved a form that made the aesthetic of *Autocostrucción* intelligible to Glaswegians – they could recognise themselves in something that was also profoundly different. In doing so they could imagine that their lives could be different and for some this was a precursor to action: several artists from Glasgow have moved to Mexico.

5.1.5 Emergence and Attentiveness

In simple terms socially engaged practice aspires to create the spaces and opportunities for new things to happen – things that have not yet been conceived. Creating without pre-conceptions means fostering conditions rather than producing the object or situation, and tolerating uncertainty and indeterminacy.

In this sense socially engaged practice is counter-cultural demanding a quality of attention attuned to emergence rather than the logic of production, and complexity rather than reductionism. Out of emergence and complexity it must nevertheless produce. Participants in such processes acquire new ways of producing things which involve taking time, being present in the situation, and attending to process.

The co-construction of *Autocostrucción* has continued beyond the residency and its possibilities have multiplied as one thing has led to another. This organic model of development – which follows the intrinsic logic and unfolding aesthetic potentials of a thread, an image, a metaphor, a refrain or a story-line, is common to many durational projects. Cruzvillegas' work has led to a CD, a book that has been influential in Latin America and on-going related exhibitions, notably at the Tate.

5.1.6 Inside-out/outside-in presence

At the level of communities there is a tension between embeddedness and critical distance which needs to be sustained if arts organisations are to be effective agents of cultural change.

The organisations can best be understood as an element in a social ecology where they occupy fluctuating states between harmony and friction. Their status veers between that of insiders within the communities of interest in which they operate, and outsiders who are able to reflect back in modified artistic form some of those communities' conflicts and divisions. There is a parallel here to the ways in which socially engaged art implicates individuals by playing with an alternation between (emotional) absorption or immersion and analytic appraisal.

The resident artist goes through a process of embedding through which they become part insider, part outsider. This could also be seen as the process of producing a psychic 'in-between' - a third space, out of which an aesthetic third will emerge. The tension between insider and outsider status is clearly a key dimension of Cruzvillegas' work. Although his residency at the CCA involved immersing himself in his new environment, its networks and ways of life, this is not the same merger. He brought to his view of the city an everyday aesthetic of 'elsewhere' grounded in a fabricated Mexican homeland and infused with the cultural influences that were already there, and more that he encountered along the road that led to Glasgow. Cruzvillegas likes to call himself an 'inter-galactic itinerant'. 'Itineracy' or 'nomadism' have become common motifs in international contemporary art alongside localism and embeddedness. What do we make of this apparent paradox? Returning to the empirical - the process and production of art and the relations it generates - we observe that this is in a sense simply the contemporary form taken by the 'in-betweenness' of socially engaged art – its liminality. In his travels and his art Cruzvillegas constantly re-works his insider and outsider status – patching, grafting and welding elements together from all the elsewheres of his life in order to find a place to inhabit, however transiently, like his childhood home.

5.1.7 Visual and performative languages

Individuals and communities who participate in socially engaged art acquire new languages of social awareness – thereby expanding the possibilities of experiencing and representing the world differently.

The transformative potential of socially engaged art may elicit a wide variety of responses: shock, bemusement, pleasure, scepticism, humour, but it is realised when it

generates a cultural form for experiences that need the visual or performative register for their fullest expression.

In common with much contemporary visual art the hybridisation in *Autocostrucción* is of cultures and also of artforms, which multiply the pathways to symbolisation. Any artist is compelled to proliferate these pathways to avoid cliché and continue to present his conceptions in ways that are lively and arresting, and can reverberate among those who are affected by them. Cliché here is taken to mean the de-sensualisation of language so that it loses its living link with what it signifies. When an aesthetic third is produced in socially engaged practice – in whatever language – it has ‘passed through’ its author – and also ‘through’ others who have participated or engaged with its production or reception, so that the symbol is animated with some part of them both – including their dispositions to express themselves in visual, verbal or musical form.

5.1.8 Policy Relevance

One of the important findings to come out of audience research, highlighted above (Keaney 2008) relates to obstacles to participation and attendance and the fact that psychological barriers are among the most significant in deterring people from engaging with the arts. The arts are perceived as a risk and people are afraid they might not enjoy and understand them, or know how to react – in other words they arouse anxiety. To complicate matters further, socially engaged practice deliberately seeks to ‘make strange’ the everyday, proposing that people look at what they take for granted in a new ways. It is often inherently provocative *depending* for its effects on a degree of anxiety. The risk of estrangement, of not knowing what to make of such art is, in other words, real. The organisations in this study generally sought to deal with this situation by creating the conditions in which anxiety is rendered tolerable – for example through relational context, information, familiarisation. Another strategy is to provide people with a motive to override their anxiety in pursuit of other aims – the acquisition of skills, knowledge, status; or the promise of a life-enhancing experience; or the opportunity to make oneself heard; or benefit one’s community. Personalisation can help insofar as it makes art more usable, more personal - handing over tools and resources so that people can get involved. This is done within various frames: education and learning, community development, arts and crafts or ‘therapy’.

What then is the significance of the aesthetic third? The artwork does not just activate barriers and elicit defences – it can also contain within its self the means for overcoming them. The symbolic aesthetic third provides a form for the strange, unsettling experience it evokes and detoxifies it. In so doing it assuages the anxiety it has created. At the same time it rewards by providing something never experienced before, and the means to relate it to one’s own experience and that of others. While there is every reason to improve accessibility, it is not necessarily the case that socially engaged art should seek to be socially ameliorative, as a *primary* goal. The key concern of New Model Arts Institutions should be to produce aesthetically distinctive, provocative, forceful, committed, complex and socially useful art – ameliorative consequences will very often follow.

5.1.9 Conclusion

The transformative dimensions of socially engaged arts practice which depend on the production of an aesthetic third have been outlined, for the sake of clarity and consistency, through a single extended example which incorporates many of the motifs and strategies of contemporary visual art: nomadism, hybridisation, duration, embeddedness, processualism, interactivity and a re-articulation of local-global connectivity. Most of the art projects we have considered and studied in this research could have been chosen to illustrate the concept of the aesthetic third in arts practice and its ramifications. This is a central conceptual development of the research and will clearly bear further discussion in work which is to follow, not least because there is insufficient scope in a report which is aimed at a number of different audiences to consider in detail the methodological and theoretical resources from the social sciences and humanities which have helped us 'see' what has been presented to us.

In answer to the question: 'How can socially engaged practice change individuals and communities?' we can now adapt and refine an insight from the *Who Cares? Museums, Health and Wellbeing* research (Froggett et al 2011) mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, essentially a 'sister' project which asked tried to explain the transformation potential in relation to the transformational potential of gallery based practice:

The aesthetic third contains both something of the individual and something of the world, meaningfully conjoined. It is in the link - the experience of being meaningfully conjoined with a bit of the world that well-being resides. The fact that the bit of the world in question is not only a cultural object or process outside of the self – but an object of wonder, curiosity or delight, can only enhance the pleasure in the link. The sense of discovery is not only the discovery of something new, as is often thought, it is the discovery of a personal relation to something new – an enriching expansion of relational possibilities.

5.2 SECTION 2: SYNTHESIS OF KEY THEMES

5.2.1 Socially engaged arts practice, experiment and diversity

The New Model Arts Institutions in this study have all commissioned and produced visual and performative arts projects which are breaking new ground and are positioning social engagement at the centre of their practices. There is considerable range and diversity and the work is aimed at a wide variety of audiences. Some projects commissioned by the organisations in this study are highly tailored and targeted at specific participant groups.

Examples are Smother (Artangel, Sarah Cole) which worked with young mothers from the Coram Young Parents Project; Rehearsal of Memory (FACT, Graham Harwood) which worked with patients and staff at Ashworth Special Hospital; CCA's Allotment Projects which have worked with groups which include Mental Health Service Users in Glasgow; Grizedale's work with Portuguese speaking children which included a drawing class by Jeremy Deller. Other projects and events reach out to a general arts-aware public, families, the idly curious, tourists, passers by, virtual arts communities and web-browsers. At times socially engaged arts practice is strategically set alongside popular art-forms as when Grizedale tried to model an alternative to commercial tourism by re-inventing the Coniston Water Festival. Alternatively, socially engaged practice takes up popular activities like gardening, infuses them with new ideas and turns them to a social purpose, as CCA has done with gardening in primary schools. FACT has commissioned projects to offer interest and distraction to people waiting for health appointments. Between them the four organisations, representing different approaches to socially engaged practice, are demonstrating its potential and diversity and producing audacious, experimental work, characterised by attentiveness to process and informed by a social agenda.

5.2.2 Modes of Engagement

Most socially engaged practice in this study has developed hybrid methods and art-forms, makes use of new and old technologies and skills and is exploring new forms of participation in the creative process as well as new ways of addressing audiences. However such practice also borrows liberally from other modes of individual or collective engagement, including education, community development, psychotherapy, civic and political action, entertainment and leisure, cultural tourism, regeneration, environmentalism, psychotherapy, health and social care.

The organisations in this study aim to influence social institutions outside of the arts sector with the distinctive contribution of artists and curators through collaboration, participation, dialogue, immersive experiences and provocation. Alternatively, the work directly addresses the publics that it seeks to involve through festivals, exhibitions, performances and propositions. The arts organisations are learning from what partner organisations and different audiences bring to the artistic process with the result that the methods used are becoming ever more dialogical, relationally aware, and responsive

to context. They are increasingly receptive to the distinctive contribution of the temporary or permanent communities who are engaged by the artworks.

Although socially engaged arts practice is invariably facilitated through the process of developing artwork, this does not mean that the artistic outcome or product is neglected. Rather, responsiveness to the needs and desires of participants means that the outcome becomes one point in the matrix of inquiry, relationships, events and practical activity that comprise the work as a whole.

There is a question how far the work should be artist-led. In Artangel's commissions and Grizedale's residency programme the expectations as to what the artist might produce are open-ended and the principle is emergence. In its allotment projects with disadvantaged communities CCA nurtures the conditions in which in which things can be 'grown' – they may or may not become art. Ceri Buck's *Invisible Food* (Artangel Interaction) started with meandering walks round a housing estate, looking at local plant life. Three years later it has a legacy of poetry, wild plant maps, conviviality and wild food fusion cuisine. In work like this the curator/producer makes judicious decisions about whether and how to push for an artistic outcome. In Graham Harwood's *Rehearsal of Memory* (FACT) which sought to communicate life experiences at Ashworth Secure Hospital, the artist describes himself as the Director, crediting the patients and staff as the authors of the work. This kind of work emerges collaboratively according to its own rhythms, responding to spaces and situations.

5.2.3 Socially Engaged Practice & Personalisation

Socially engaged arts practice can support a personalisation agenda insofar as personalisation is understood in terms of social values. Personalisation in a commodified art market can mean the tailoring of personal consumption to individual preference. Socially Engaged Arts Practice is decisively at odds with forms of personalisation aimed at the production of cultural commodities for individualised consumers. On the other hand, it can imply a relationship to a community which offers opportunities for individuated experiences, accommodating the differences between people's preferences within situations which also give rise to a collective experience of art.

An example would be Grizedale's work with Egremont Regeneration Partnerships, where there are coherent programmes of events, discussions, exhibitions and performances which cater for a variety of needs – including those of people who value local crafts and traditions and others with more contemporary cultural reference points. The aim of the programmes is not merely to offer diversity, but to do so in such a way that participants can explore their relationship to what they hold in common.

The organisations in this study are using technologies which support interactivity and enable individuals to access the arts in personally satisfying ways. However, in line with their socially critical stance they are producing work which challenges, unsettles and pre-figures new ways of doing things, and to this extent they may confound personal preference.

5.2.4 The Aesthetics of Engagement

Aesthetics of social engagement are revealed in artistic process. The organisations in this study imprint their own idiom on the art they produce through their commissioning, the ways in which they support artists, and by their social commitments which mediate relationships between artists and their environment. The art is inserted into everyday situations and practices.

However, there are differences in how the organisations relate to the everyday. Grizedale is committed to 'forceful' art that is 'useful' to the communities it involves. It will sometimes put on highly crafted events such as *The Re-Coefficient's Dining Club*, a five course soup dinner in Sheffield which commemorated Ruskin's founding of the club. However in ceding control of the creative process to participant groups it aims to embed itself in localities and value an aesthetic of the amateur. Grizedale's *Late at Tate* included a 'guess the weight of the cake' competition and a barn dance in the main hall. There are strains of the aesthetic of the amateur at the CCA too. The organisation is conscious that its premises can be intimidatingly 'nice'. It has made efforts to populate the pristine white entrance with craft stalls and a book-shop, which keeps its books behind chicken wire when not open. The CCA uses exhibition plinths, but these can be turned to different purposes and exhibits can spill out and travel round the building into spaces like the café. FACT is aware that its present building is sleek and self-referential and its Capital Programme proposes to make it more accessible.

Each organisation commissions and co-produces work infused with specific environmental and relational factors that depend on location, networks, history and curatorial commitment. Hence FACT's programmes express something of the cultural and civic life of Liverpool filtered through new media and expressed in the community TV channel *Tenantspin*, or in the *Media Facades festival* - which linked seven European cities - through digital displays that played with local identities. Grizedale's work has to be understood in relation to its location in rural Cumbria where global influences exert themselves over the key industries of tourism and agriculture. CCA is embedding socially engaged practice within multi-cultural Glasgow and its 'Scottishness' reflects many of the city's tensions: positioned uncomfortably between a seasoned exhibition going public, a multiplicity of fragmented sub-cultures, and some of the UK's most culturally excluded urban populations. Artangel, the one organisation without a gallery space or physical base (other than office space) has been free pursue the logic of inserting art into unusual situations as far as it can go. Its Interaction Programme engages intensively with the particular communities the work involves. Hence *Smother* emerged from a prolonged interaction between artist, producer, partner agency and participants but is saturated with the everyday idiomatic sayings and doings of the teenage mothers at its centre.

5.2.5 The Local & the Global

For the organisations in this study socially engaged arts practice is the basis of an internationalism that allows cultural exchange, hybridity, cross-fertilisation and cultural translation, and where artistic process and outcomes enable the material realities of

different cultures to confront one another. Since such practices draw their integrity from the ways in which they embed themselves in the conditions of people's lives: localities, communities and personal interactions, they have a distinctive part to play in forming the international reputation of the arts in the UK. In contrast to the commercial arts sector, the internationalism of these organisations aims to re-configure relationships between local and global by establishing contexts for interaction and influence. The mutual exchanges that result within artworks and throughout their production, account for much of their aesthetic character and social impact.

5.2.6 Philosophy, Civic Mission & Politics

Successful strategies of social engagement are driven by a strong social or civic mission and are built on coherent and robust philosophies of engagement. While the emergent nature of much of the work, involves protracted timescales and uncertain outcomes, underlying principles can still be discerned in the social relations through which artworks are produced. The socially engaged arts have a key role to play in placing the arts at the centre of civil society.

FACT which has many partnerships in relation to agendas of regeneration and community development has sought to embed itself in Liverpool's complex civic mix of institutions. It has engaged with a variety of political stakeholders including the Local Authority and grassroots organisations. It has also become a commissioner of arts inputs into health settings. The CCA, is increasingly moving in a similar way in Glasgow, using open source as a means to give substance to the principle of 'intellectual commons', attracting a myriad of

sectional groups to its resources, and gaining support from outside of the cultural sector for its outreach activities. Grizedale has sought to re-articulate and re-interpret the intellectual legacy of John Ruskin in developing a socially useful role for artists and in establishing art as a force for social change. It is a regeneration partner and has consistently promoted alternative models of cultural tourism. Adam Sutherland, its Director, has stood for election on the parish council. Artangel, from its inception has been concerned with nurturing socially critical art, from Michael Landy's *Break Down* – a flamboyant protest against consumerism in which he systematically destroyed all his own possessions, to the low impact politics of sustainable living suggested by Ceri Buck's *Invisible Food*.

5.2.7 Intensity & Duration

Good socially engaged practice can involve singular events but the most effective projects are emergent and involve duration, depth, and sustained engagement. They are intensive in relation to artist involvement and curatorial support. They also tend to be relationally complex, not infrequently requiring negotiating skills, emotional intelligence and a willingness to work through contradictions to see them through to a successful conclusion.

All of the organisations in this study have commissioned projects involving lengthy research and development processes and open-ended timescales which are essential to

their eventual realisation. Beyond specific commissions the organisations themselves take a long-term view, creating around themselves communities of interest among artists, publics and funders, managing their on-going presence in order to sustain relationships conducive to socially engaged practice and actively seeking to generate new forms of artistic receptivity demanded by the artworks.

To evaluate the impact of projects like this by virtue of the numbers of people they attract in the first person is to miss the point that they produce reverberations in participants, partner organisations and the environment

which continue to be felt long after the projects have finished. They also function for a time as 'laboratories' in which new forms of engagement are explored.

Sarah Cole's Smother is a case in point: it was in every sense a nine month 'gestation', passing through several precarious formative phases, of uncertain recruitment and halting progress and consolidation, until a core group of young mothers transmitted their experience of teenage motherhood to a group of professional actors, and then jointly oversaw the emergence of the installation and performances. Conducting the creative process involved the weekly presence of artist and producer (Rachel Anderson), at the Young Parent's drop-in. Their co-presence was as necessary to support one another as it was to carry through the work. The project workers from Coram who hosted the sessions were intimately and reflectively involved in the work which was regularly reviewed by their manager and senior staff. This was a huge input of professional resources, requiring adaptability, a sense of common purpose, and a willingness to work through the tensions that inevitably arise in cross-professional situations.

5.2.8 Partnerships & Collaboration

Socially Engaged arts strategies frequently involve complex partnerships with other agencies most often with the public and voluntary sectors, and social enterprises. Some of the strongest work emerges from the reciprocal influences of partners. Sustaining these partnerships is often painstaking and challenging on all sides, involving collisions of organisational culture and frequently gaps in expectations and understanding which require patience and skilled diplomacy. Nevertheless socially engaged arts practice can impact on partner organisations who come to recognise the benefits of arts-based practice.

Coram's partnership with Artangel described above is a case in point. As a result of the partnership Coram have recovered something of their own prior history of using the arts in their work with vulnerable parents and are in the process of re-embedding them securely within their practice. Institutional change of this nature is likely to have longer and more far-reaching effects within the sectors affected than high impact events aimed at mass audiences, and since organisations like Coram work within a range of partnerships, especially with health and social services, such effects are likely to ripple outwards.

Conversely, partner organisations offer artists and arts institutions access to new audiences and a wealth of experience in engaging culturally excluded and marginalised

groups, but partnerships can be programmatic as well as project-based. For FACT and Grizedale they have been particularly vibrant in the area of regeneration where both organisations have maintained a strong local or regional presence. Unusually for a socially engaged practice FACT's Tenantspin is now over 10 years old and has had several lives or phases. It originated in an effort to ensure that older people subject to regeneration and at risk of displacement could find a voice through learning to use the media tools of a TV station. Over time these tools have been used in different contexts and with different populations. Grizedale's input into the Egremont Regeneration Partnership has sought to build on valued local traditions such as the Crab Fair, while combining and re-interpreting them in the context of critical international currents in contemporary arts.

5.2.9 Innovation and Ethical Practice

When compared with partner organisations subject to formalised and procedural ethical governance (as in health and social care) arts organisations enjoy and benefit from a degree of licence. The organisations in this study were acutely aware of their ethical responsibilities and vigorous in articulating them. This is critically important in ensuring that innovation and experimentation can continue. Some socially engaged practice poses sharp ethical and political dilemmas, particularly around participation and benefit, voice, and the question of who artists are authorised to speak for.

A further issue is that projects that make further issue is that projects that make an impact can generate friction. Friction has both 'productive' and 'irritant' potential (although these are not mutually exclusive) and commands attention. Work that makes a sustained impact needs to hold within itself the tensions it reveals and maintain or hold together an environment receptive to the work. It was striking that while the organisations projects reflected (and reproduced) different fields of tensions, they did so in most instances with an exceptional spirit of generosity, measurable in terms of time and rewards, and manifest in terms of an open curiosity and reflective self-questioning. There is something inherently 'reparative' in such a stance in the sense that it tends to repair or heal. Its suggestion of concern in allowing others to reveal themselves, rather than imposing views of how they should be, can go a long way to offset the friction involved in any confrontation.

5.2.10 Authoring & Participation

Collaborative social engagement projects open up spaces in which boundaries between artist, curators and publics are transgressed and in which the locus of artistic control may shift between any of those involved. This typically involves subverting or playing with boundaries rather than erasing them. Many of the most purposeful projects are also strongly authored – or directed - by the artist or organisation. The organisational ethos is assertively present in many of the local or regional interventions already cited and is essential to preserve a sense of purpose amid the often competing agendas of partner organisations.

Residency programmes such as Grizedale's, and internship programmes such as CCA's, also open pathways in which organisational influence is disseminated even though few explicit demands are made of artists in terms of what they develop. There are biases in selecting individually commissioned artists towards those who can work interactively and collaboratively with participants. Authorship may be distributed but most projects benefit from an artist-led desire for a strong aesthetic outcome. The art in many of these projects is partly in holding the tensions thus generated.

5.2.11 Research Implications

Much Socially Engaged Arts Practice aims at making an intervention in long-term change processes and complex webs of social relations. Although attendances or internet-presence can be measured numerically, it is difficult to quantify such influence. But it can be evidenced empirically with research which is interpretive, reflexive, ethnographic, narrative, biographical and longitudinal. Theoretically rigorous and generalizable conclusions can be drawn from rigorous qualitative and case-based research. This has implications for the kind of research commissioned: measuring impact via footfall will continue to be important for gauging audience numbers and widening participation, but the question of who engages, how they engage, in what circumstances, and to what end, needs sophisticated qualitative analysis and theoretical generalisation.

Research and evaluation in this sector should look two ways: on the one hand heightening among artists awareness of the ways in which their work affects individuals and communities, and on the other, informing funders and policy-makers who are concerned to reposition the arts in relation to other cultural fields such as sports, education, tourism and health. This cannot be done exclusively through impact studies. As the idea of the transformative potential of art is central to socially engaged practice, empirically grounded and well theorised explanations of how transformation occurs is becoming vital. Such explanations demand cross-disciplinary approaches which position the socially engaged arts in relation to individuals, institutions, communities and wider societal structures.

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7 APPENDIX

DATA SOURCES

Data Collection: Grizedale Arts

The approach to data collection

The initial period at Lawson Park involved 5 full days total immersion including sleeping on-site, physical labour during day, sharing meals and cooking and cleaning. Extensive field notes were compiled during this visit. Approximately 10 ad-hoc interviews with staff and artists were conducted during the initial visit.

Eighteen narrative focused interviews were conducted with the directors, artists, curators and personnel in various arts organisation.

Data Source	Description
Visit to Coniston	Pre-arranged narrative focused interviews have been conducted with five highly active members of the community in Coniston.
Visit to Sattlethwaite	Prearranged narrative focused interviews were conducted with eight members of the local community. These interviews asked for general perceptions of Grizedale but also sought for opinions and views about the infamous Billboard project.
Library launch event	During this event the researcher took up a position of observant participation. Two brief ad-hoc interviews were conducted after the event.
Lawson Park opening	During the day five narrative focused interviews were conducted with artists and four ad-hoc interviews with members of the community.
Salon evening at Ulverston	Ad hoc interviews were conducted with five members of the audience during the event.
The Re-Coefficients dining club: Sheffield	Four ad-hoc interviews were conducted with audience members during and following the event. Field notes were compiled following the event (which can be compared with other assessments by ACE and an artist who has written an essay on the event, comparison of methods and perspectives of potential use).
Salon event at Coniston	Five members of the audience were interviewed during the event and five artists were interviewed over the course of the weekend.
Egremont visit	Egremont was visited several times. This included an initial scoping visit, visiting the Apple Fair (in 2009) and shadowing an artist who intended to publish a red-ink version of Egremont Today. During these visits ten ad-hoc interviews were conducted with members of the audience. Five narrative focused interviews with members of the community and two narrative focused interviews with artists who have been involved in the area

Data Source	Description
Documentary evidence	This included the Grizedale book: Adding Complexity to Confusion, a range of publications by Alistair Hudson and Adam Sutherland, an ethnographic account of previous research in Egremont by Claire Doherty, and web-based material

Data Collection: FACT

The approach to data collection

The researcher occupied a desk space in the collaborations team at the FACT office for the period of data collection (one or two days per week for 5 months). This allowed the opportunity to observe the team at work and to build relationships with various team members. It also allowed opportunities to pick up on unplanned opportunities to go to meetings, attend events and to talk informally with staff and visitors. This immersive form of ethnography allowed the researcher to characterise the 'FACTness' of FACT and to examine the distinctive characteristics of this particular New Model Arts Institution.

Data Source	Description
Ad hoc interviews in office	A series of 25 ad-hoc interviews using conversational form whilst in the office and made extensive notes based on observations.
Narrative pointed interviews	15 narrative pointed interviews were conducted with artists, curators and FACT personnel from various periods of the organisations history and people who have taken part in FACTs programmes.
Visit to North Liverpool	One day was spent in North Liverpool with Laura Yates from the collaborations team full time. Several community venues and the afternoon with the Digital Stories group talking to them and observing their work; 8 ad hoc interviews in the course of the day.
Programme Group Meetings	A number of these meetings in the course of the work. They were an opportunity to observe the team working together in planning for upcoming activities, gallery shows and events.
Blendid installation:	A day with Dutch designers Blendid and with a number of FACT volunteers working on the construction of Blendid's Wixel Cloud. 10 ad hoc interviews were conducted and a recruit for a narrative pointed interview was obtained.
Health Centre event:	The researcher took part in an afternoon coach tour organised by FACT as a part of the Waiting Programme. This was a coach tour attended by people from the NHS, artists, commissioners and lots of people from FACT; 12 ad hoc interviews and an artist recruited for a narrative pointed interview
Young Liverpool film night:	This is an annual event held by FACT at which they screen a number of short films made by local young people. Observational field notes were gathered and 4 ad hoc interviews conducted,
Nam June Paik Exhibition:	The launch event was attended and observed and 10 ad hoc interviews conducted

Data Source	Description
Flunstellas Programme	One day of a 10 week programme was attended. This was being run by the artist Neil Winterburn for a local school, who was interviewed. Informal discussions took place with teachers and young women throughout the day
Event about collaborations with artists in education	The researcher co-facilitated this event for teachers, young people, artists and commissioners and recorded a group discussion exploring the possibilities and limitations for the development of these practices in an education context. 4 ad hoc interviews were conducted after the event.
Knowledge Lives Everywhere launch	Two researchers attended this event and interviewed 12 people.
Documentary evidence	Extensive use of the FACT website and archive, video archive from TenantSpin, Nam June Paik book produced by the Tate for the 2010 exhibition, Knowledge Lives Everywhere, a series of FACT policy and planning documents, Digital Stories book.
Feedback interviews	Two feedback interviews were conducted at the end of the research with the Director and the Director of Programmes

Data Collection: Artangel

The approach to data collection

Due to the different organisational structure there was a much greater focus on projects within Artangel although some time was also spent in the office. Two members of the team spent a total of 10 days in the office taking observation notes and conducting 10 narrative pointed interviews and numerous impromptu conversations. The whole research team attended an orientation lunch.

Data Source	Description
Smother	This project was the context of an intensive 9 month immersion of a researcher within the programme, including field notes, ad hoc interviews, informal conversations, reflections of participation, observations, detailed interviews with the artist, the producer, management and project staff from Coram, and the young women
Invisible food:	Interviews were conducted with the lead artist and producer. Photographic and film-based material was collected from work undertaken in London and Karachi. The special issue of the Daily Jang 20-09-2009 was a further documentary source. Web-based reviews and discussions were considered
Museum of Non-Participation:	Interviews were undertaken with the lead artist and producer. Visual and text-based outputs were studied alongside web-based material
Web-based and documentary sources	Reviews and discussions were consulted to gain an overview of other projects within and outside the Interaction Programme

Data Source	Description
Feedback interviews	Three feedback/final interviews were conducted at the end of the research with Micheal Morris (Co-director), Rachel Anderson (Head of Interaction) and Cressida Hubbard (Finance Director).

Data Collection: CCA

The approach to data collection

The researchers visited the CCA on two occasions, three months apart. The aim at CCA was to use an immersive or 'experience near' approach, but in the context of limited time. The research team spent concentrated periods visiting the organisation and also visiting sites and programmes and interviewing participants.

Data Source	Description
First visit	On the first occasion a researcher visited and spent time with Emma Caulfield and Francis McKee. Two detailed interviews were conducted and a visit was arranged to the allotment site in the East End of Glasgow.
Second visit	<p>On the second occasion two researchers visited for three and four days respectively. A series of 14 interviews were conducted with key personnel, artists, and community respondents. Time was spent observing the institution and use of the building.</p> <p>Visits were undertaken to community sites which were the venues of CCAs socially engaged practices, including:</p> <p>Visit to Drumchapel: Four ad hoc interviews were conducted with people on this visit, including a key community development worker, interested artists, an intern and a PhD student with a knowledge of similar work.</p> <p>Visit to Allotment in East end: A researcher visited the site with an intern who had done a lot of the initial work in reclaiming the site from the bind weed. Three ad hoc interviews were conducted.</p> <p>Visit to Schools gardening Project: A researcher visited this project and conducted interviews with three of the staff from the school.</p>
Documentary material	Including books and pamphlets relating to specific commissions, the five year plan, a records and photographs of past outreach work (especially gardening in primary schools). Photographic material relating to past projects was made available by staff.