NAIDOO & ASSOCIATES

Evaluation

The Gaps Project

Artist in Residence (AiR) – Marina Sossi

The Background

Naidoo and Associates were approached by Creativity Works to design an evaluation of one of its three Creativity**|LINKS** Artist in Residence (AiR) programmes called the Gaps Project. The approach to this project was co created by the AiR- Marina Sossi and Philippa Forsey on behalf of the Creativity Works Creativity/Links Project.

The Creativity/Links Project has the following stated aim:

> ***Creativity|LINKS will integrate creative informal learning, progression and re-integration with community into a jointly developed project with artist and community playing key roles. Creativity|Links will inform and link with the arts and health programme run by Creativity Works.***

It is within this context that Marina and Philippa engaged in the process of co designing the parameters and the rationale for the Gaps project. Marina had spend some time observing and talking to some groups before selecting which groups that she would be interested in working with . This process informed the discussions between Philippa and Marina and together they produced the following aims and objectives for the Gaps project. The Gaps project identifies three core interested and contributing parties. **The Artist, Group participants**, and **Creativity Works and partners in Health and Social Care.**

> ***Key concept***
> ***"The Gap"***
> ***Differences/Spaces/Links***
> ***Making gaps, finding gaps, regarding gaps, bridging gaps, understanding gaps***
> ***Using the concept of 'the gap' as a point of reference and focus for artistic practice.***

The concept of 'gaps' emerges as a natural progression or a re-vision of enduring emblem 'the empty space', but with a vibrancy and new found tactility. The gap suggests a completely new landscape on familiar territory; a gap is defined by its location, where it lies between or what it divides. There is a different tension in this impression; a gap creates space, a gap has impermanence, it is waiting to be filled, it is an invitation and maybe creates a space for YOU? It appears conscious of containment, self aware? In comparison; 'Space' has an airiness and an

infinity both liberating and inhibiting and 'emptiness', an emotional resonance with a tendency to introversion and potential to lack perspective. This tension in 'gaps' is particularly interesting in terms of inspiring creative sparks.

Aim:

To instigate and explore critical, interpersonal and self-reflexive dialogues around a central theme defined as The Gap
To explore the cycle of exchanges between artist, organisations, groups, individuals, subject, artworks and viewer identifying the 'gaps' where interaction occurs.

To examine invisibility and visibility within the artistic discourse.
To generate opportunities for progression for individuals, groups and the artist beyond the timeframe of the project.
To explore methods to successfully manage artistic practice and the creative cycle
To reflect on the project with an artistic conclusion that is critically engaged and recognised

Objectives:
To teach skills in creative writing, poetry, movement
To share ways to look at oneself in a new light
Introduce methods to 'disrupt' usual habits in the creative cycle (Develop a Creative 'toolbox')
To establish progressive practices with participants: creative writing, poetry, movement etc

Encourage verbal, written and creative responses to work
Develop dialogues amongst participants and wider community
Help participants find ways to relate to their own, other people's and the artist's work.

Links:
Addressing the links/relationships between the individuals, groups, organisations and artist involved in the project.
Finding ways for groups to respond to and be inspired by each other's work.

Proposed media:
Creative Writing & Poetry
Film & moving image
Movement & Drama
Painting & Drawing

Development of the rationale for design of the Evaluation of Gaps as part of **Creativity/Links**

Shaun and Marian Naidoo from Naidoo Associates met both Marina and Philippa to discuss the project and share the history of its development. In addition conversations explored Marinas philosophy and subsequent approach to the Gaps project as one part of the creativity links project and within the gaps residency identify the scope for a living theory approach for the evaluation.

Living Theory – Action Research

Living theory- action research involves those participating together engaging in a process of individual critical enquiry. A key focus involves how the individual can learnt and change their practice while holding themselves to account. Within this context the following questions are addressed.

Who am I?

What do I do?

How can I do it better?

What have I gained (in respect to well becoming and new artistic experience) from doing so? I.e. what have I learnt.

Or

What are my living values?

How have they changed as a result of the GAPS work?

How have I help myself to account for those changes?

Given the aims negotiated by Marina and Philippa, the evaluators thought it was an appropriate methodology to use as it would sit comfortably with the inclusional and responsive values identified by Marina and described as her practice. This practice involves the development of a good relational dynamic as the basis within which to engage in the process of creating. Both the group members and Marina (as well as the evaluator) would engage on a journey that would identify how artistically focussed creative interventions could change how participants could change/learn. It is the process of critical enquiry that underpins the creative process and that of living theory.

Timetable

Naidoo and Associates planned with agreement with Marina to meet with participants delivering the Gaps project on 22 separate occasions (including two preparatory sessions). An additional conference on the 31st of May 2011 was also scheduled.

Pre evaluation meeting 2x4 hours 8 hours

Conversation with Artist 8 34 hours

Time Out 3x3 hours 9 hours

Inspirational Art Group 3x4 hours 12 hours

My Time My Space 3x2 hours 6 hours these sessions were postponed or rescheduled without direct evaluator input/data collection

Philippas Group 1x2 hours 2 hours this sessions was postponed or rescheduled without direct evaluator input/data collection

Conference 31st May 1x6 hours 6 hours

Total timetable hours scheduled were 77 of which 69 took place .

Data Collection

Data collection occurred through a combination of note taking (see appendix 4 and semi structured video interview). In addition photographs were taken of work in progress as well at products resulting from engagement in the process.

Outcomes

Health and Social Care outcomes relating to the well being of participants were linked to the broader work of Creativity Works and the local health and social care partners that it works with. These were identified in conjunction with the University of Bath department of Health and Social Care and supplemented by Creativity Works. The *Creativity**|LINKS*** programme within which the Gaps project sits shares the same Health and Social Care outcomes. (See Appendix 1)

Outcomes for the Artist were identified subsequently to the project design conversations between Marina and Philippa. (See Appendix 2)

Participant outcomes were left blank. The notes outlines in Appendix 4 identify these against the Health and social care out comes and those agreed with the artist .

A further set of outcome statements relating to the consequences of the interventions between Marina and the group members were anticipated. These were gathered from some groups (not MYMS) and are detailed below

While all outcomes were important to identify in relation to the Gaps project they were to 'inform' rather than 'colour' how the **process** of creative engagement and learning developed.

The Process

The process involved in the artist intervention/s with each of the groups was seen as the crucial aspect to both the evaluation, the artists work and the creative engagement of participants. Artistic product that resulted as a consequence of creative engagement was part of the process. In an inclusional and responsive context where the artist and participants engage alongside each other, predetermining outcomes and products would be counter intuitive. While outcomes existed, these were to be 'held' so that focus could be maintained on the process of co creating and engaging creatively in activities based on inclusional and responsive practice based on the development of meaningful relational dynamic. This would enable both product/s to emerge through negotiated creative activities and outcomes to be gained that would correlate to those identified by the Artist and Creativity Works.

The evaluation would focus fundamentally on the process first while at the later stages identify evidence for the meeting of outcomes.

> ***Although some of the projects have resulted in tangible outcomes in the form of artworks, videos etc, the main emphasis for my evaluation is on the process - exploring ways for the creative activity to help people to learn, express themselves and communicate with those around them.***

Impact on the Evaluation Design .

The Aims and Objectives for the Artist together with the outcomes Identified by both Creativity works and Marina the AiR had an influence as to how the design of the evaluation developed. By using a methodology based on living theory- action research, the artist would actively engage in a process of critical enquiry. The role of the evaluator would be to help facilitate and support this process.

It was agreed that would be done through a series of meetings and conversations with Marina. These would be taped so that they could be reviewed. It would also provide a record of the journey and changes that were implemented throughout the time of the programme. This would also enable us to understand better where the artist was Marina was coming from as an artist. (Who am I? What do I do? How can I do it better?)These conversations acted as a means by which Marina would be able to express her formative learning at stages in her work. An opportunity to provide a summative account of herself and her work at the end of March was also agreed .It would be through this process that Marina would be able to hold herself to account for her values, learning and practice.

During this process these conversations began asking questions of the artist , her approach and rationale for doing what she does and how critically aware she was of her responsibilities as a socially engaged artist . In reflecting on my own learning here as an evaluator it was becoming clear that I was an evaluator, mentor and participant in this process. I was supporting the artist who was engaging in a process of critical enquiry, who in turn was supporting the participants in the three projects that she was working on to do the same.

Learning, engagement, responsibility, making visible the invisible
A journey in the development of critical consciousness

Within these conversations Marina disclosed much about her work and philosophy as an artist. There was a need to be responsive and inclusional, while at the same time enjoying the creative challenge of being spontaneous was as particularly key factor in her work. Marina also valued the need to focus on the building of 'meaningful relationships' as a precursor to how she wished to practice as a socially engage artist. Lastly there was a a desire to look at space and the creative opportunities that emerged as a result of what she could sense within it.

These conversations were both engaging and insightful of an artist very much aware of her own insight and intuition within a creative context. At times Marina struggled to communicate her rationale and identify learning . Marina and I knew that learning was taking place but the ability to communicate this was something that she initially struggled with. Needless to say as the residency progressed, Marina became much more able to represent her critical consciousness as an artist within the conversations. Many of these conversations revolved around the process rather than the development of the product and the relationship between the two . Opportunities to consolidate her learning and those who were participating alongside her were not as thoroughly 'connected' as they could have been. Evidence , particularly early on in the process with **Inspirational Art Group** (feedback and debrief from the artist studio visit) missed great opportunities to enable the artist and the participants to look closer at learning and how it impacted on their perceptions of self and self in relation to other.

During our conversations this led to discussions about what a socially engaged arts 'looks like' and what responsibilities such an individual had to those people that they come in contact with. What were they there for and how could they elicit more convincing evidence for following sessions based on group members expressing how their creative engagement facilitated by the artist has

moved them on. How they were discovering the Gaps that existed between their starting point and at each stage of the residency.

Clearly as an artist Marina has many suitable skills that when applied within a social context can be useful. I would suggest that as the residency progressed she was also able to identify the need to develop a greater quality of facilitator capability that would help others connect and acknowledge the changes they were experiencing. In many ways Marina was experiencing herself what she also hoped that her clients would experience as a result of her interventions. She was a catalyst in learning for others as the project itself was a catalyst in her learning.

The formative nature of identifying learning and progression based on the conversations was a useful means by which Marina was able to plot her progress in her own learning. Simultaneously Marina was also charged with the responsibility of being responsive to how she designed the creative activities week after week for the groups that she was engaged for. In many ways these processes were not too dissimilar. It was always planned that at the end of March Marina would have the opportunity to 'report back' what she had done within her residency to others. This was also a perfect opportunity to provide a summary of her learning and to hold herself publicly to account for how she practices her values and how she had improved what she does.

For this evaluation it was also a perfect opportunity within the parameters of living theory/action research for Marina to evaluate her learning and her actions. It was an opportunity for Marina to offer for discussion the questions that she was beginning to ask and sometimes answer regarding her practice as a socially engaged artist. To identify the challenges that she has yet to overcome and to offer the evidence behind any claims she has made to demonstrate the success in the residency overall.

One Residency – three very different groups

One of the great challenges experienced by Marina was that she selected three very different groups for a six week intervention with each group. Even with all the best planning in the world one group, **My Time My Place** would be difficult to gain a consistency for the six weeks. The group were losing their premises were they met on a weekly basis and were due to move to a new venue. Identifying a 'space' logistically and given Marinas creative perception of how space was part of her approach resulted in a shaky start. I do not feel that this instability was ever overcome. However through our conversations we were able to identify the potential of the journaling that the women in the group had done as a suitable platform from which to explore using other artistic mediums.

This was done quite successfully. The processes of facilitating a rationalisation of learning through this I am not sure was achieved. In our conversations we discussed the sensitive and sometimes fragile nature of the group and the impact that filming both activity and feedback may have. We did not do this in this case with this group. In her summative feedback on the 31st March 2011 Marina was able to have a representative of the group feedback the advantages of the work that she had done with each other. A representation of 'products' that was part of the process of creative engagement was shown as slides during the segment of the day that focussed on **My Time My Space.**

The Inspirational Art Group represented a much more stable entity than **My Time My Space**. As evaluator I was able to access both group and artist simultaneously in session. I observed the levels of creative engagement and discovery first hand and the joy experienced as people 'played creatively 'with other mediums. Music, movement and joint work was utilised to great degrees in order to help connect invisible with visible. I was able to record critical feedback on their learning from members of this group. Many had changed their perceptions as to how they could and would approach their visual art activities. Some had changed perceptions and claimed to see as a

consequence of Marinas input the world in very different ways. Nearly all felt more confident with increases in self esteem. Moreover the group and its individuals found the process drew them together more. They felt more cohesive as a result of discovering through their new creative engagement more about other individual members of the group. For some, initial cynicism had all but gone with a whole hearted and new capacity to engage in new and exploratory creative endeavours.

> ***"…….to be able to use a word or words and incorporate them into a picture…I had never given it a thought***

> ***"….each time with her I have gone home and felt that I had accomplished something new."***

> ***"…..she makes you feel relaxed without any pressure….."***

> ***"She comes and what can I say, makes it more real …. it brings a meaning to the art…. actually that's how it has hit me, it brings more meaning to how I feel about art."***

> ***"…..she has brought shapes and feeling to work that I wouldn't have realised before was actually there…I'm seeing things differently I actually wrote about it ….. I'm actually seeing people and things around me ……it's opened up a new aspect that I didn't know before."***

> ***"…..i just needed somebody like Marina to show them to prove to them that they can function as a group."***

> ***"As the weeks emerged, I was learning so much ,that sometimes it was difficult to take in….."***

The drop in youth club, **Time Out**, in Keynsham presented very different challenges for Marina. She had already negotiated a dedicated hour before the main youth club opens for those interested in exploring creatively. There was small but regular attendance at this slot and Marina was able to provide opportunities to try out different things. Interestingly enough this generated further interest from those young people who did not attend the dedicated hour. The activities and products created within that would 'spill over' into the main session. This is where Marina was able to demonstrate her values of developing relationships with young people as she talked mingled and networked, engaging with young people in conversations about what they may want to do. Marina could be seen crossing many of those different activities and engaging with young people in conversation. Mark the youth Leader cannily described how Marina was viewed by the young people at the youth club as :-

> **"…gaining their respect because they always expect her (Marina) to be there ….."**

As a result of this social networking, Marina was able to generate further interest and engagement from young people. This resulted in a range of creative ideas and mediums from Super While Rabbit to Serious Conversations in Strange Places – each time engaging other members of the community outside of the youth club. Recording these on video to be edited later and then shown enabled he young people to see the how they took part, how they came across and what they could do with a simple idea .

Reflection on what was gained by young people was difficult to record. All but two declined to have any of their reflection recorded choosing rather to be creative 'in the moment'. Clearly there was an opportunity here to creatively engage and explore using their ideas supported and facilitated by Marina. They gained a lot form this six week residency but have yet to identify what. As an artist Marina also gained. She was able to demonstrate in her practice the values that she has as a socially engaged artist. She did focus on the development of relationships and felt the creative challenge of being responsive and spontaneous in the chaos of activity and energy within the centre. Sometimes creating a 'spectacle' seemed to be a step too far for some of the young people, however this was an emergent process that harnessed the complexities of status and peer group pressures and 'street credibility' in very subtle ways.

> **'his status within the group changed as a result of his participation that would only be beneficial to him …..'**

Indirect interest and engagement took place as more of the young people in the centre began to trust in Marina and the creative opportunities that she was able to facilitate.

Summative Learning

On the 31st March, Marina had the opportunity to present her work and learning to fellow peers stakeholders and those group members that were able to attend. This was an opportunity for Marina to hold herself to account for her values and learning within a public arena. It was also her opportunity to present her own evaluation based on the development of her own critical consciousness as a socially engaged artist. As expected Marina took an inclusional approach inviting members of the group to feed into her report to her peers. Supported by evidence of 'products as process', Marina was able to demonstrate participant engagement. What she was unable to demonstrate was evidence of learning based on the development of critical consciousness from the participants. This is understandable given that Marina was herself engaging in a similar journey of development. This would suggest that those skills of artist and facilitator that combine in the context where she as an artist practices need further development. The goal would be to take participants alongside in not only the process of creative engagement but also in some way to formalise and record any learning based on the development of critical consciousness from participants . The inspirational Art Group was able to demonstrate this the most. However that is not to say the either of the two remaining groups didn't learn. Perhaps they just have not yet found a way to formally acknowledge the learning through creative engagement that took place. The key question here is: - **Is this the responsibility of the socially engaged artist?**

In addition the means by which the learning can be translated to personal outcomes needs to be more thoroughly thought through. Again we know that personal learning and or outcomes have been achieved but within some groups have not been formally recorded in a way that would demonstrate critical consciousness. What has been recorded is evidence of creative engagement. This begs the second important question – **Is evidence of creative engagement enough for a socially engaged artist?**

Conclusion and Recommendations

As I draw this evaluation report to its conclusion and make recommendations I am aware that context is so important. I also acknowledge the difficulties experienced by the artist with setting up and engaging with some groups due to factors beyond her control. I commend Marina for taking a very pragmatic approach to seeking solution as is in her responsive nature as an artist.

The mode developed for the Gaps project has been inclusional in its nature. Outcomes were agreed between Creativity Works and the Artist. This gave both parties an important ownership in shaping the project. This has been invaluable to both Creativity Works and the Artist and need to be recognised as being a significant factor to the success of the project.

Artistic Outcome a) – p) have been met. In reviewing the evidence on film and in situ with some groups Health and Social Care outcomes 1-25(with the exception of 13) have been identified by Inspirational Art Group . Time Out and My Time My Place have yet to identify their outcomes.

Taking a living theory approach to the evaluation places a greater responsibility on the artist to account for her practice and identify her learning/change and needs. As more artists seek to engage socially they have a responsibility to develop a critical responsibility for what they do and the impact that it has on those they do it with. This approach provides a model that will enable artists to account for their practice and any improvements that they make as a result of their learning. I believe that this provides a very suitable base approach for artists engaging socially.

The need to ensure that artists are also good facilitators is essential. Clearly Marina brought good qualities in her values that underpinned her practice. Is this exceptional? Was this enough? I would recommend that artists are supported in some way to develop their capacity to facilitate and critically engage in accounting for their and the learning of others in what they do. This would also go some way in addressing what Marina describes as the artists dilemma in her summative report back on the 31st March.

Is this the end of the beginning? I believe it is for this artist. There is still so much for Marina to develop further as a socially engaged artist. Maintaining her capacity to grow learn and develop is crucial to this. I would recommend that Creativity Works need to seek out those artists who demonstrate such qualities as a predetermining criteria for future commissioning. In addition and for additional payment ask the artist to formally write an account of the project/learning/evidenced outcomes.

Recommendations for Creativity Works / Creativity/links - Role of Project Manager

Philippa Forsey from Creativity Works was managing the process and in constant contact with Marina and the evaluator. As the Gaps project progressed it was becoming clear that taking a living theory alongside responsive and relational dynamic approach was putting Marina under pressures as an artist to address her values enshrined in her role and responsibilities as a socially engaged artist . The process was definitely emergent as and responsive process should be in this particular context . While tensions existed, the evaluator took on both a participative role in situ with other participants and a mentoring one helping the Artist develop a greater degree of critical conciseness in relation to her practice. This was a departure from a previous model within the Creativity**/links** programme. It was however one that I feel was able to identify the GAP in the way creativity works commissions artists working with community groups.

Socially engaged artists need to identify their responsibilities as such with the groups that they are working with. While we were happy to leave the Participant outcomes blank in the evaluation modle to populate it later and measure against the Health and Social Care and Artist Outcomes (see

Appendix 4) at a later stage ,it was also becoming evident that the artist could have a key responsibility in this area .

"……this would reduce your costs if you established products that were based on living theory action research and they (artist and participants in an along-sided context) were engaged in a process of enquiry and evaluating what they do for themselves. Evaluation doesn't have to be independent although it can be independently monitored and supported and facilitated …but in essence what they are saying is:- This is what I did ,what I discovered, This is what I learnt. This is what I gained and here are my outcomes …lets populate the empty outcomes colum …here are your outcomes and maybe some of them will join up …."

I feel that in may contexts Marina as a socially engaged artist brough many positive skills and values to this project . This is something that was recognised by Philippa when she was loking for a suitable person.

"We knew that Marina was a younger artist – we were well aware of that – when I spoke to then they only painted and drew - I knew that Marina had the right skills for this."

And

"There is something about along-sidedness here that is being part of the learning, whether you are an interviewer or practitioner - so that everybody being all round again ."

In many ways I think this applies to all who were directly involved in this part of the Creativity**/Links** Gaps project. The 360 degree ("all round") nature of engagement brought a greater sense of where the GAP in the project structure and approach was . Philippa was able to sum this up beautifully when she said:-

"..So what you are saying is that we need to empower the artist to be able to think reflectively so that they can be able to empower the participant to think reflectively …that is a whole raining programme and that's the gap.."

Within this context I would assert that empowering is not enough. Creativity Works has a duty to ensure that it employs artists that can not only offer socially engaging experiences to participants, but also ensuring that the same artists can engage in a process of helping themselves as well as their participants' identify their learning while engaging in creative processes and producing products as part of that creative and learning context. Social transformation doesn't just occur for the sake of it it can be designed to be part of a structured process (in this context while using creative engagement and learning) where critical consciousness can reify the new discoveries about shared and individual values which in turn can contribute to the progress and development of the group.

Creativity Works has one Creativity**/Links** project to plan and design .Here is an opportunity to ensure that the organisation can demonstrate its learning, through its agents in a way that will help create a new and much more robust approach to evidencing the effectiveness of its socially engaged interactions.

This process is not so much about quality assurance but transformational quality improvement from the organisation downwards - and up again . 360 degrees . These two thing are very different .

Philippas contribution to this process as project manager did give scope for many of these this to emerge. I am not sure if this was a conscious act but it is indicative of how artists and in my case evaluator) can work alongside to help develop a more robust evidence base including participants in this process on the effectiveness of both the interventions and activities .

"When Lesley asked me if I needed evaluation is said because we will need help in seeing back what we are doing through another person's eyes and this will give us weight and value to what we do - because in the organisation I don't carry that weight and knowledge and because the process is about reflecting artistic quality - I don't know whether I am the person to reflect that ."

For Creativity Works this is in many ways also the 'end of the beginning ' ….where new ways to support socially engaged artists and commission within the community can be developed further in a way to become more meaningful and more cost effective .

Lastly, a few words about evaluation. The approach to this evaluation was initially negotiated between Creativity Works, Marina and Naidoo and Associates. We have been keen to ensure that our expertise in artistic creativity, research and pedagogy were combined within the evaluatorary framework. In practice it was becoming evident that a thorough understanding of our approach was in some contexts lacking. This is normal and allows us as evaluators to also engage in an inclusive and responsive way. This has affected how our roles have developed over the project and firmly places us within the boundaries of the project itself rather than detached from the participants and the artist. I would recommend that the evaluation approach is integrated at the beginning of future projects allowing the commissioning team the artist and the evaluator develop how all strategies can interlock with each other.

Shaun Naidoo

Appendix 1 – Health and social care outcomes

Appendix 2 - Artist Outcomes

Appendix 3 – Evaluation Model

Appendix 4 - Outcome Results and Working Notes for the Gaps Project

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