

Young people, youth organisations  
and galleries working together

CIRCUIT

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TEST

RISK

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CHANGE

*Edited by*

*Mark Miller, Rachel Moilliet, Eileen Daly*

*'The arts often suffer from a form of amnesia - we forget what we've done and what we've learned. Circuit has provided us with careful, thoughtful evidence that will not only allow the sector to remember what was done but also consolidate and build on what is now known.'*

- Pat Thomson

*'What Circuit offers the art world is a cohort of people who are unrestricted in their vision... the art world needs to reconnect with ideas that are playful, ambitious and uninhibited.'*

- Georgia Colman

*'There was a shift point where I realised I had a voice and that was a powerful thing. You're not just a number or statistic, you actually make a difference.'*

- William Dean

*'We are the next generation. All of those guys who are chairmen or CEOs, we will be the ones who will be in their seats...'*

- Angela Wereko-Anderson

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## Foreword

*Régis Cochefert*

Director, Grants and Programmes,  
Paul Hamlyn Foundation

For Paul Hamlyn Foundation, access to the arts is a right, not a privilege. Because we see the difference it can make, we are interested in opening up opportunities to as wide and diverse a group of people as possible. It is therefore one of our strategic objectives to support organisations that have ambitious plans to widen access to – and deepen participation in – the arts. It is not enough simply to increase numbers; our emphasis is on addressing inequalities of opportunity and creating space to step back and look at the systemic problems preventing participation.

We firmly believe that young people have lots to contribute to the world that we live in and we support work that gives them both voice and agency; we want them to be able to shape the programmes and services that they use.

*Circuit* was funded through one of five Paul Hamlyn Foundation twenty-fifth anniversary gifts with a focus on supporting 15–25 year olds to come together with six Plus Tate partners and across the four Tate locations to help organisations think differently about what galleries can offer young people and, crucially, about what young people want from galleries – whether this is through physical spaces and programmes or digitally.

In bringing together many voices, this publication charts the life of *Circuit* as an ambitious national programme that involved over

175,000 young people across England and Wales. There were successes and failures. Some things went well, others did not. Many plans were realised and others had to be re-thought. But through the many ups and downs that each partner went through in the life of the programme, the *Circuit* team and the galleries involved gathered a huge amount of learning.

Paul Hamlyn Foundation wants to strengthen the relationship between the cultural and third sectors. I hope that you will enjoy finding out more about this unique programme, and that the learning from our partners will help shape your thinking and your practice. *Circuit* was about conversation, collaboration and action: please use our findings to support your change processes, whether through big or small steps.

## Introduction

*Mark Miller*

*Circuit* Programme National Lead,  
Tate Britain & Tate Modern

I introduce this publication knowing that galleries and museums are at a crossroads. Our cultural institutions are beginning to decide whether to maintain their position as transmitters and repositories of selected histories and knowledge, or if they are to engage with defining how to embrace an inclusive and responsive approach to our broader lived experience. Over a four-year period, the undertone and echo of the work through the *Circuit* programme has been to ask: how can cultural institutions be more valuable and connected to our social, political and cultural experience?

The purpose of this publication is to present nuanced and technical insights from the *Circuit* programme, describing an expansive initiative that connected 15–25 year olds with the arts. The book brings together reflections upon activity, research, ethos and the philosophical approaches to work with, for and by young people. And while not reflecting every aspect of *Circuit*, we aim to make clear the voices and experience of the wider programme through essays, articles, quotes and comments chosen by each partner gallery. Contributions are written by staff from all levels and departments, artists, curators, consultants and national team members, and importantly, from young people themselves whose voices articulate their views on key issues and questions. The publication is primarily aimed at practitioners, artists and educators working with young people across the cultural and youth sectors; however, these approaches may also be transferable to serve intergenerational participants and other varied audience programme aims and objectives.

Youth cultural production currently operates within the hierarchical structures of our institutions. In many cases this work still strives to create a consistent space within museums and galleries that understands its 'quality' and value. In addition, the sometimes blurred definitions of 'quality' within established gallery presentation practice means that this work still requires wider organisational advocacy and understanding.

There are many cases within this publication that draw attention to the value of young people as producers of cultural activity – for these producers themselves, for audiences and for an organisation's relevance to wider society. *Circuit* presented the importance of young people maintaining their culture, autonomy and criticality within organisations while aligning this work with wider organisational aims and strategies.

The words 'a clash of cultures', which emerged from *Circuit* in relation to partnership work, really resonated with the perceptions, assumptions, re-learning and adaptability required to build a long-term approach to gallery partnerships with youth sector organisations. We highlight the time, capacity and motivations required to test and take the action needed to aim for truly valuable equitable and reciprocal partnerships. Additionally, our work reveals that the need for a deep and rigorous understanding of the context, structures and methods of any potential partnership is crucial.

Research, evaluation and reflective practice became a core mechanism for decision-making. Embedding these practices saw many challenges surrounding capacity, as well as questions about how to capture, articulate and implement data, but this work also had a key function in enabling young people's voices to be at the centre of the programme, enabling some participants to remain critical and reflective.

Importantly, we highlight the various approaches and challenges of the structures, knowledge and experience required to deliver a national programme that is focused on organisational change. The time and capacity required to enable professional and personal change of habits, and how – or not – wider organisational practices can be or are resistant to accommodating these changes is also explored. With this, it is clear that defining what working with young people looks like, especially when considering 'how', 'why' and 'what' type of organisational change can be produced, crucially, with young people as the catalyst is also explored. The emergent question being: what does diversity, difference or equity mean in various geographic locations and varied organisational infrastructures within rural, urban and suburban contexts?

There are many steps still to be taken to navigate the structures of organisational hierarchy that might lead us to being empowered to take risks with a long-term outlook. Additionally, we recognise the time it takes to build organisational trust and the support needed to test different approaches. In light of this, we hope that these chapters are a useful addition to the wide range of publications, organisations and individuals who are working towards enabling cultural organisations to be 'useful' in society by embracing the knowledge, skills and context that sit outside of our organisations' front doors.

In recent years an 'activist ethos' of many young people has seen a calling out of privilege, and the lack of difference or equality of access within many cultural organisations. Some of this has focused on the need for action to achieve representation of our immediate social, cultural and political contexts, as well as a broader diversity of race, class, socio-economic background and gender through artistic programmes, collections and workforce. The visibility and reach of social media continues to play a key role in these debates, and has helped to galvanise collective action. This dynamic force has caught

the attention of some cultural organisations, perhaps more so than the previous decades of work towards effecting organisational change within cultural organisations. But it still remains to be seen how much change these actions will afford, and what middle ground for progressive collaborative relationships can be realised. These ongoing concerns and debates serve to amplify the question: what is the appetite for change for all interested parties? And if so 'when', 'why' and 'what' can be made real for the long-term.

As we move towards a more decentralised relationship with media, broadcast and digital platforms, shared values, reciprocal partnerships and collective ethos are all moving into the foreground. It seems clear that young individuals and collectives from a range of backgrounds have much to offer and are forging potential organisational models, ways of working, archiving, collecting and actively contributing to defining the cultural expertise of the future.



## About Circuit

### Values and Aims

In the context of post-UK riots in 2011, increasingly reduced access into higher education and cuts to the arts and the youth sector, *Circuit* was established to contribute to play a role within the wider ecology of provision and support for young people.

The structure, aims and values of *Circuit* were developed to explore the ways in which galleries can create long-term relationships with youth organisations that ensure a diverse range of young people have equal access to their resources. Additionally, the programme set out to understand and identify what types of organisational change would be required to make these aims sustainable.

Coming together as a national network, *Circuit* aimed to create better access to the arts for young people and to be more relevant for the diverse audiences who do not traditionally access cultural resources in galleries.

#### ***Circuit* values**

- Making a positive difference
- Young people's ownership, agency and authenticity
- Social, cultural and creative diversity

#### ***Circuit* aims**

- To make a positive difference with and for young people
- To improve access and opportunities for harder to reach young people through extending and developing sustainable networks between the arts and youth sectors
- To develop and change practice within and across cultural organisations
- To change attitudes and behaviours towards and about young people



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*Circuit* was structured around four strands, which aimed to connect and cross-fertilise, providing a range of different entry points to the programme in an attempt to create equal access for young people from different backgrounds.

#### **Partnership**

- Collaboration between galleries and youth organisations
- Develop long-term strategic partnerships with support from management and leadership
- Develop sustainable support and cultural activity for young people with complex needs and from diverse backgrounds
- Base projects on the interests and needs of young people
- Change the traditional notions of 'outreach' projects, with young people as participants of peripheral activity
- Structure opportunities to allow for long-term welcome and participation to projects for a wider range of young people with varied abilities and interests
- Provide opportunities that assist transition to core peer-led activity in galleries for young people who might not usually get involved in these projects, such as those with complex needs and diverse backgrounds

#### **Peer-led**

- Participation for young people with galleries in a deep, direct and sustained way
- Provide opportunities for informal learning through collaboration, as well as active contribution to the development and delivery of programmes within the gallery
- Structure programmes so that young people with different backgrounds, skills and interests can actively take part
- Focus on the benefits to the young people involved

- Create a setting where young people can air their voices and be listened to, and make this a long-term commitment to contribute to change within the gallery
- Allow for risk-taking, exploration of ideas, reflection and experimentation, through multidisciplinary art forms, digital media and online platforms
- Create pathways for participants to progress and develop skills and experience throughout their involvement

### **Festival**

- A high-profile and quality large-scale event for diverse young audiences
- Support a group of young people at the gallery to have autonomy and ownership to develop and programme a festival, which through its large scale has an impact within the gallery
- Celebrate and highlight the work of young people through a variety of creative and participatory platforms
- Respond to current cultural experiences and interests, as well as to the gallery's artistic programme or collection
- Use a model that reflects the particularities of a specific gallery's community, location and vision
- Take risks and do things differently
- Shift attitudes and ways of working with young producers and audiences
- Provide practical skills for young people in event management and production

### **Digital**

- Use digital platforms and resources to demonstrate work produced by young people and artists
- Provide a democratic platform for all participants, staff, partners and facilitators to contribute their reflections on the *Circuit* website

- Use digital platforms to serve as a reference point for those involved in the programme and beyond, and to disseminate ongoing experiences and findings
- Engage with national and international audiences interested in work with young people in the cultural context of galleries and museums
- Use social media for interaction and discussion
- Develop collaborative digital projects at and across different galleries
- Produce new work and content that reflects current digital trends, and creates an exchange between digital and offline, analogue programmes

## Circuit Partnerships

### Circuit galleries

*Circuit* was a four-year national programme connecting 15-25 year olds to the arts. Led by Tate, and funded by Paul Hamlyn Foundation, it involved six Plus Tate partner galleries, the four Tate galleries and over 80 partners, including organisations from the youth, education, charity and local authority sectors. It reached over 175,000 participants through events and projects.

### Circuit Partners

#### Firstsite

Barnardo's, Colchester and Tendring Youth Enquiry Service, Colchester Institute, Essex Boys and Girls Clubs, Essex Youth Service, Inclusion Ventures, InterAct, Leaving and Aftercare Team, Essex County Council, Mid and North Essex Mind, Signals, The Sixth Form College Colchester, The Waiting Room, University of Essex, YMCA Colchester

#### MOSTYN

Afasic Cymru, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS), Coleg Llandrillo, Pixel, Viva LGBT+, West Rhyl, Young People's Centre, Ysgol John Bright, Ysgol y Gogarth Special School, Ysgol Y Graig (Penrhos Avenue) Alternative Education Centre

#### Nottingham Contemporary

Action for Young Carers: The Carers Federation, Crocus Fields, NGY Youth Provision: NGY My Place, Nottingham City Council Youth Offending Team, Nottingham Refugee Forum

#### Tate Britain & Tate Modern

Bosco Centre, Fast Forward, involuntary-movement, Octavia Foundation, Pempeople, Ravensbourne University, Raw Material, Renaissance



Foundation, Southwark Council, University of the Arts London Widening Participation and Progression – Careers and Employability, City of Westminster Looked After Children's Services, The Westminster Society

#### **Tate Liverpool**

Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS), Holly Lodge Girls' College, Merseyside Youth Association (MYA), The Prince's Trust, Walton Youth Project, Young Person's Advisory Service (YPAS)

#### **Tate St Ives**

Cornwall College: Pathfinders, Cornwall Council, Falmouth University, Flashlight, St Ives, Hayle Community School, Hayle Youth Project, Newlyn Art Gallery & The Exchange, Truro and Penwith College, Young Mums Will Achieve

#### **The Whitworth**

42nd Street, Bridge College, Brighter Sound, Children's Society, Contact, Curious Minds, Dance Manchester, Factory Youth Zone, Future Skills College, House of Manchester, Manchester City Council, Manchester School of Art, Powerhouse Youth Centre, Proud Trust, Rathbone Manchester, Rathbone Trafford, St Mary's Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC), Trinity House, Unity Radio, Z-Arts

#### **Wysing Arts Centre & Kettle's Yard**

Cambourne Youth Club, Cambridge Youth Foyer, Changing Frames, Fenland Group, Generating Alternative Possibilities Cambridge (GAPs), Girton Youth Club, Romsey Mill, Youth Support Services, Cambridge South

### Image Captions

- 1 Designer Jenna Young  
(This is The Uniform) presentation  
at Tate Britain's 1540 gallery, part  
of Late at Tate Britain: Stance, 2017  
Photo ©Tate (Dan Weill)

Galleries and  
the Youth  
Sector  
Building  
Partnerships

Why would galleries and youth sector organisations work together?

Partnership work between galleries and youth organisations was a central strand to *Circuit*, which was specifically set up with the aim of developing long-term strategic partnerships between the two sectors. The objective was to create more sustained cultural opportunities for young people that aligned with their interests, instead of focusing on ad hoc short-term projects planned by the gallery, which have sometimes characterised past partnerships. The strand wanted to shift work with young people from different backgrounds from being 'outreach' work on the periphery of a gallery's Learning programme, rather bringing it to the centre of an organisation's work with young audiences. It sought ways to work with youth organisations and young people, rather than delivering arts projects for them – thus making collaboration between the arts and youth sectors mutually beneficial for all.

The first two years of *Circuit* were set aside for research, aiming to give galleries time and space to examine how they develop projects and relationships with youth partners, and to begin building effective longer-term relationships with organisations in their local area. A whole range of partners were involved spanning the youth, education, charity and local authority sectors. They came together to find common ground, identify challenges and try different approaches.

The same was true when it came to the development and delivery of the projects that followed. *Circuit* wanted to enable truly collaborative



projects with the emphasis on youth organisations and young people taking ownership. Staff and artists found themselves exploring new facilitation methods to ensure that projects could be responsive to young people's needs, building flexibility into projects instead of just striving for a predetermined outcome.

Some partnerships lasted, some didn't. Changing circumstances presented ever-evolving challenges. And after four years, *Circuit* galleries and youth organisations are continuing to test means of collaboration and evaluate their partnerships to understand how best all sides can learn from and support each other - both when building relationships and delivering projects.



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Nicola Sim

## Findings from the field: Partnership working between galleries and youth organisations

*Nicola Sim was a doctoral researcher at Tate and The University of Nottingham between 2013 and 2017. (1) Her research focused on the similarities and differences in gallery education and youth work, asking whether it would be possible to establish a permanent collaborative approach between the youth and gallery sectors.*

The prospect of working in partnership with people and organisations in other fields is inherently alluring: there is the potential to draw from untapped knowledge, to connect with different communities and to expand capacity and ideas. But partnerships also represent risk, compromise and a possible loss of autonomy. They require practitioners to step outside of their professional comfort zones and to navigate external agendas. The dominant concept of 'partnership' is also vague and overused. Public organisations and services are increasingly expected to forge alliances across sectors, but the complexity of partnership working often goes under-discussed. *Circuit* afforded an opportunity to investigate the specific nature

of partnerships between galleries and youth organisations, and to explore the factors that frustrate and motivate this area of work.

### **Understanding the context**

Work between the youth and visual art sectors is bound up in inequalities. For many youth workers and young people, galleries are sites of privilege, wealth and middle-class values. The remarkable buildings that galleries occupy are locations of symbolic and literal power. Within these sites, the status and profile of gallery education work has also grown consistently since the late 1990s. The youth sector meanwhile has been politically marginalised under successive governments and changing policy priorities. Young people who have been exposed to structural disadvantage populate the sector and youth workers have seen their professional identity eroded and resources cut. Alongside this, there are entrenched habits in institutional arts learning programmes that have historically reinforced uneven power dynamics, and a culture of problematic practice has exacerbated a lack of trust between the youth and art sectors. Short-term, hastily organised projects that are planned for rather than with youth organisations have characterised this practice for decades. A major bugbear of youth and community organisations is that they are frequently seen by the cultural sector as potential suppliers of 'hard to reach' young people rather than as equal collaborators.

It is also evident that the youth sector and gallery education sectors have a 'surface level' understanding of one another. While many youth workers use applied arts activity in their practice, visual arts institutions are not considered to be natural spaces of engagement. And while many gallery practitioners have experience of working in youth settings, 'youth work' is rarely discussed within the gallery sector as a coherent and distinctive body of knowledge. Many partnership programmes between galleries and youth organisations have gone before, but institutional memory is short-lived. There is a lack of

inherited knowledge in gallery youth programmes, and a lack of mechanisms for retaining and rooting experiences. 'Learning on the job' is a common phrase used in the informal education sector.

### **Creating the conditions for dynamic, equitable partnership**

There needs to be a mutual respect for practice in order for cross-sector activity to operate democratically. As a youth practitioner suggested during *Circuit*, one set of expertise should not be the 'sideshow' to a more dominant set of expertise. The relationship-based skills possessed by youth workers often go under-recognised, and are therefore not deployed as effectively as they could be in projects. This mutual respect comes from understanding one another's worlds and recognising the strengths, histories and traditions of each other's practices. Partners also need structured and non-structured (social) time built in to get to know one another before a firm commitment is made. Allowing space for relationship-building, skill sharing and exploratory conversation is an important feature of good partnership work. However, this process needs to be scaffolded and demonstrably useful if it is to be valued among competing pressures, on both sides, to produce outcomes.

Putting youth or arts practitioners into environments where they feel underprepared and unfamiliar can be disempowering. Projects need to include time for practitioners to observe and acclimatise, and for appropriate levels of support to be determined. When outside of their home territory, practitioners need to feel welcome and confident that their presence and practice will be accommodated. *Circuit* has shown that recruiting practitioners from the youth sector into galleries (and vice versa) has the potential to create lasting change, but this process is not without challenges. Investing in youth sector expertise within galleries and arts expertise in youth organisations can ensure that this knowledge is brought in-house. However, cross-sector recruitment also exposes differences in language, taste and values, which need to be carefully negotiated.

### **Designing programmes**

Youth organisations and galleries can work together in ways that expand beyond providing artist-led workshops. Alternative avenues for collaboration include: establishing local networks of arts and youth organisations; setting up work placements for young people; peer-to-peer training and running experimental pilot projects that are devised in partnership. Having an open attitude to collaboration at the outset can create unexpected pathways.

Art practice is often treated differently by youth and gallery workers, as in many youth work settings, art is positioned as a vehicle for a therapeutic or developmental purpose or as a distraction or communication device in the process of engagement. Gallery workers are typically interested in the intrinsic power of art to inspire and provoke debate and creativity, and in opening up the core programmes of galleries to diverse audiences. But although approaches to art by youth sector organisations and galleries are based around different pedagogies, this does not mean that they can't coexist.

To enable these different agendas to align, practitioners should ensure that creative agency does not just lie with the gallery partner. Rather than simply bringing culture and creativity to young communities, good partnership working draws from the existing creative resources and ambitions of those communities. 'Starting from where young people are at' is an important principle of youth work, and practitioners on both sides should not assume what young people might want to do, but give them the tools and options to make decisions.

Maintaining high-quality practice is critically important to youth workers and gallery workers alike, but interpretations of quality social and creative practices often differ. Some youth workers believe that focusing on generating a public product in galleries, for example, an exhibition or event, is not always in the best interests of young people,

and is incompatible with the process-oriented nature of youth work. Gallery educators need to communicate the ability of their practice to meet both institutional and social agendas.

One key approach tested through *Circuit* involved finding alternative spaces for partnerships to take place, outside of the partners' own venues. By working in former shops, cafés, bus stations and other public realm sites it was possible to create hybrid environments that didn't belong to one expert discipline. These types of offsite settings can push the limits of both practices and cultivate spaces of shared uncertainty. For young people these represent social spaces where they have greater levels of agency. Alternative temporary sites can also provide creatively challenging contexts for artists, and therefore motivate innovative practice.

#### **Inclusivity and diversity**

Programmes and practitioners must be mindful of young people's circumstances without reinforcing particular identities or a young person's sense of marginalisation. For instance, young people leaving care or in mental health services often have their agency taken away, so more time, flexibility and support may be required to create a democratic environment where participants feel empowered to make decisions and express personal tastes. The concept of 'attaching' to programmes is also uniquely challenging for young people who do not experience a sense of attachment in their wider lives.

Understandably, class and social distance are the biggest barriers to retaining the engagement of young people from less advantaged backgrounds. Young people are often expected to assimilate into gallery youth programmes that are largely populated by self-motivated art students. This can mean that only a limited demographic of young people from partnership groups make the

'transition' into the peer-led groups that are frequently attached to a gallery's Learning programme. Those who do transition can sometimes experience feelings of inferiority or exclusion if their particular forms of social and cultural capital do not match with those of the group. If a peer group is diverse and inclusive from the outset, there is greater opportunity for integration.

Models of programming should ideally be conceived with young people, so that they reflect participants' behaviours and cultures, rather than those of the institution. Models of practice in peer-led gallery programming can tend to privilege the types of young people who are motivated by demanding professionalised experiences that contribute to their CVs. The most diverse programmes are shaped by the groups themselves, and not by mimicking bureaucratic institutional behaviour. If gallery youth programmes are to accommodate diversity, they need to serve different motivations, beyond the desire for participants to get a career in the art world. Gallery youth programmes arguably often rely on the culture of youth volunteerism generated by the inaccessibility and kudos of gallery jobs.

Overall, galleries need to be realistic and honest about their capacity to support vulnerable young people if they are to secure the trust of youth organisations. If not, they risk participants' disengagement, which could lead to damaging carefully cultivated relationships between young people and youth practitioners. Arts organisations also need to consider the class/race/gender/age diversity of their workforce, as well as the profile of freelance staff. While the vocational training tradition of youth work has generated a relatively diverse workforce that increasingly self-identifies as working class, the gallery education sector is predominantly occupied by highly educated, middle-class white women. The recruitment of representative role models into youth programmes can be critical to young people's engagement.

### **Power dynamics**

While there has been a shift away from the paternalistic language of 'outreach', it is evident that partnership programmes still tend to operate in the margins. Many projects are frequently run separately from 'core' peer-led programmes in galleries, although these separations are sometimes deliberate, and are about recognising distinctive group identities rather than fostering division. To be less hierarchical, there need to be mechanisms for partners to hold one another to account. A common practice in youth work is the use of steering groups to oversee projects and ensure that the investment and legacy of a project is held across different partners and different levels of seniority – not just by individuals on the ground. This model is one example that could be adopted by partnership programmes going forward.

Youth organisations whose roles and responsibilities include signposting young people towards new opportunities are more incentivised to support young people's independent engagement with galleries. However, those that are concerned with retaining their cohort of young people can sometimes adopt gatekeeping behaviour. Practitioners' willingness to encourage cross-organisational engagement depends on the degree of trust, awareness and confidence that has been generated between partners.

Uneven power dynamics in partnerships are sometimes the product of a funding model that places resources in the hands of one partner. This can create an uncomfortable benefactor-beneficiary relationship where one organisation is servicing the other or setting the agenda because they hold the purse strings. Uneven distributions of funding can also create inflated expectations and lead to organisational jealousy. Sometimes the different budgetary and staffing scales of organisations mean this is unavoidable, but where possible it is beneficial for all partners to have a share of control over a project's funding and design, in order to sustain a more democratic relationship.

### **Future legacies**

By working in a long-term way, partners can breed a culture of reflection and honesty. Partners can make mistakes and learn from them and avoid the temptation to over-claim successes or underplay problems in reporting. Perseverance and a commitment to longevity are therefore key aspects of sustainable partnership work. Organisations need to consider diverse pathways, ongoing opportunities and progression routes for all participants. Employment and employability are key preoccupations for young people, and programmes that put young people in positions of responsibility by offering paid placements can have a powerful impact on individuals and institutions.

A successful partnership culture shouldn't depend on the availability of project funding. Partners can be resourceful with their existing assets, develop networks and utilise one another's spaces and expertise. Youth organisations and galleries can become part of each other's lives and collaborate on developing creative youth provision in the long-term. One way forward is for galleries to take on board suggestions for change, in order to shift perceptions about the exclusivity of their spaces. Organisations and their partners should continually review the internal and external barriers preventing engagement and create legacy and dissemination strategies for passing on experience to peers and colleagues.

On both sides, there needs to be a greater clarity of understanding around the meaning of partnership. Organisations could bring much more criticality and reflection to the process of working together and if possible, programmes should evaluate the journey of partnership as well as the journey of individuals. On a broader level, national bodies could support the building of research and practice communities in youth work and the arts to facilitate the integration or exchange of knowledge between the sectors.



As practices, youth work and gallery education have a lot of common ground. Their histories have been entangled in Britain since the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, when children's charities and public galleries emerged as part of a wider movement of social reform aimed at improving the lives of disadvantaged communities. The community development movement and community arts movements of the 1970s also represent part of the shared history of these practices. There is great potential to act together in solidarity around a shared commitment to informal education.

Pressures on youth services and the precariousness of youth worker jobs in particular can make building sustainable partnerships difficult. However, arguably programmes such as *Circuit* can help to preserve and defend the core values of democratic youth work. In an age of managerialism and auditing, youth sector/gallery collaborations have the opportunity to champion creative, un-prescribed and politically/socially engaged relationships with young people.

### Conclusion

The PhD research associated with this essay uses the theoretical writings of Pierre Bourdieu to look in-depth at distinctions between the fields of youth work and gallery education, and at the particular dispositions of practitioners within those fields. In doing so it is possible to identify why it might be hard to shift habits of practice and work harmoniously with people and organisations from other fields. As suggested, these fields are governed by specific ways of doing things and are populated by workers who understand the tacit codes of behaviour and professional skills required to operate within them. By rethinking what counts as valuable professional, social and cultural capital and recognising the inequalities that can alienate young people and hinder relationships, the youth and art sectors have the potential to build a permanent collaborative or cooperative field of partnership.



# Setting Up Partnerships

*Julie McCarthy*

## Forming effective partnerships

*Julie McCarthy is a Creative Producer at The Horsfall, a creative venue for young people with mental health difficulties, which is part of the mental health charity 42nd Street in Manchester.*

*'Have you got any young people who would like to take part in our project?'*

Working in a young people's mental health charity, as a self-styled cross-sector, double agent, this is a question that appears in my inbox on a weekly basis. However well-intentioned, this commodification of young people is, at its most extreme, seeking out the most disenfranchised in pursuit of and exchange for funding, sometimes without the knowledge, expertise and resources available to fully support those young people.

Often, the youth sector is compliant in this relationship. The voluntary sector so often has all the expertise to engage with the so-called 'hard to reach' but that process alone has depleted all its resources. So what do they do now? And how do the cultural and voluntary sectors form honest, effective relationships when cultural organisations are now

encouraged or even required to bid for health inequalities or social inclusion funding, which is the traditional arena of the voluntary sector?

This is where *Circuit* comes in.

42nd Street worked as a partner with The Whitworth during *Circuit* and although the first contact with them was 'have you got any young people...', the dialogue shifted and shifted quickly to: 'What can we do together so that young people who access our youth provision can access what's on offer at the gallery too? What can we do together so young people access the right to culture and a cultural voice?' And for both of us the answer turned out to be simple: we shared resources, we shared expertise. We lost our egos. We were generous because we trusted each other.

The outcome of this approach meant that young people had the support they needed to take part in ways that were right for them, not just for us. They were held, until they didn't want to be held any more. We spent money, arts money, on key work and mental health support and this really was vital.

We worked hard to make sure that young people in our partnership had the agency and the space to articulate what they wanted to change at The Whitworth; we worked hard so that they could grow confidence in the absolute belief that they would be listened to. This was, and still is, collaborative practice between young people, gallery spaces and the voluntary sector.



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Mark Miller

## Reflections on the comparative ecologies of the cultural and youth sectors

*Mark Miller is the Circuit Programme National Lead who developed Circuit's vision and strategy from its early stages, oversaw its delivery and continues to direct the sharing of its findings as part of the programme's legacy.*

A phrase that emerged from the *Circuit* programme was 'clash of cultures', which really captured some of the differences faced across the youth and cultural sectors, such as a pastoral bespoke focus on young people's individual needs, compared to a more group-led approach in galleries. There are also varied approaches, understanding and experiences in areas such as diversity, and socio-economic and cultural difference, with galleries being predominantly middle class, and youth sector predominantly working class. Social class and its effect on understanding, or navigating privilege or disadvantage, requires more interrogation within the cultural sector to benefit working partnerships with the youth sector to support a diverse range of young people.

In addition, the cultural sector predominantly struggles with and questions its civic and societal role, along with its responsibilities

to its communities. As such, the *Circuit* programme produced a space, or middle ground, to unpick our values and the 'normalised' practices that produce non-inclusive comfort zones in galleries. And in parallel, understanding where the changes and questions arising from the *Circuit* programme fit into current organisational thinking. This created uncertainty and needed time and reflection to consider what type of change is required, or possible, and how to negotiate this within organisational structures, hierarchies and expectations.

This work across both sectors has been core to *Circuit's* values, and aimed not only to enable access to cultural activity in galleries, but for all involved to understand what conditions or changes to our practices are required to be true, open, valuable and relevant to a wider society. Rooted in Learning, or gallery education programmes, these aims and values arrive from a history of social, cultural and political justice, equality and reacting to the civic responsibility of a public organisation's status.

One of the questions asked while setting up the structure and aims of the programme was: could young people, who face a wide range of social, economic and cultural challenges, work in a long-term way at the centre of our organisations?

What would be required to establish these young people as producers of cultural activities in galleries that reinforced a need for a shift in approach? How could changes occur that embraced their perspectives, ideas and recommendations for organisational change in a truly authentic, supportive way?

These relationships aimed to forge an understanding of ways of working across the youth and cultural sectors and to develop new models and structures. As well as this, they set out to build

resilience and solutions for arising challenges that provide the most appropriate methods to support and benefit young people.

Working in partnership, co-production, or as allies across the youth and cultural sector helped to begin to identify possible roles galleries could play within wider intellectual, social, cultural and economic ecologies. (2) Though many of the approaches, values and aims aligned across the youth and cultural sector, there is still clear evidence that training, and sharing through equitable collaborations, are required for progressive work across sectors.

*Circuit* findings suggest that taking time to understand values, and to question, is crucial for a change in approach. Even when this time to reflect is built into a programme, and explicitly acknowledged, the traditional mindset is to retreat to gains from short-term project partnerships, not necessarily to adopt an outlook that embraces long-term strategic partnerships. This seems to come from a sense of responsibility in 'delivering' and normative expectations of what the work should look like, as well as assumptions and/or demands of what organisations require more immediately.

The ability for Learning curators, coordinators and programmers within galleries to understand, resource and respond to a) a change in landscape in terms of the social and economic shifts, and b) the requirements of young people from a wide range of diverse backgrounds, experiences and disadvantage, presented challenges within the *Circuit* programme. Some of these challenges have been defined as a lack of capacity, skills and experience of the relational, logistic and programmatic methods to engage young people. Training and skills development are required within the cultural sector to enable improved, relevant and up-to-date methods of approach that better connect with youth providers.

The perception surrounding work with the youth sector, which is frequently viewed as instrumentalised, can present barriers and promulgate a view that this is 'social work', which causes long-term compartmentalism. This disconnects artistic and socially engaged practices from strategic or organisational change; the kinds of change that enable a connection with unrepresented communities, artists and audiences. Again, much time was and still is required to begin to change the ways in which we talk about the work with, by and for young people and why this is of importance and value to any organisation. Indeed, we also need to rethink how we discuss and describe young people themselves.

In some cases, the identification of young people as 'marginalised' or 'hard to reach' has the effect of curtailing their potential and progression. (3) The labels and 'box ticking' used to categorise these groups come loaded with assumptions, perceptions and limitations. Facilitators, artists and other young people who are involved in arts and youth practices also have prescribed roles and labels that arrive with preconceptions. Our findings indicate that these issues and the support required (or not required or assumed) are best addressed and discussed openly with all participants when specifically working with and understanding concepts and communities of difference. These identity perceptions are deeply held and complex to change.

Alongside these issues of 'constructed diversity' are questions surrounding social engineering and what the positive and negative effects can be on young people who are surrounded by people more similar to themselves than different. This is amplified when participants from youth sector projects join peer-led core groups in galleries, where staff members are managing a mix of class, race, skills and economic backgrounds.

Constructed 'difference' needs to be recognised and questioned with a view to how such construction inhibits the potential of all

those involved. Part of change is to question whether some of this protectionism is limiting and has the effect of delaying young people's progression, independence and ownership. Or whether this protectionism is a default position taken by organisations and staff which limits the shifts required for engaging young people who have requirements for support or who have assumed substantial requirements for support.

What the findings suggest is that cultural and youth sector organisations should begin to construct programmes, interventions and training that aim to connect and influence organisational priorities. An understanding of the limits and shifts within the youth sector should be better acknowledged and understood. Partnerships across sectors need specific training and sharing of practice in order that they might initiate mutually shared organisational language, aims and vision.

The influence of social class is not sufficiently discussed or highlighted within the cultural sector as a barrier to participation and exclusion. Though many gallery programmes' politics, motivations and aims align with those of the youth sector, the values are often associated with the delivery of relatively small areas of wider organisational vision and strategies such as diversity, inclusion and community. The personal and professional skill base and experiences of professionals in cultural organisations are connected to different social class, racial and cultural backgrounds, which therefore presents unconscious bias, different perceptions and societal codes. These also include economic and educational opportunities that provide key tensions including identity politics and privilege, which should be brought to the forefront when constructing partnerships.

*Circuit* has provided young people with an important provision that has enabled support to be accessible in time of need when

resources are depleted across the UK. The programme has seen galleries explore methods of co-production and co-delivery and work with artists as leaders of engagement. Additionally, the programme has demonstrated the requirement to be adaptable and flexible, by adjusting structures and content in response to issues surrounding retention, participation and entry points for young people from a diverse range of backgrounds and experiences.

Our experience within *Circuit*, despite our intention to merge groups, showed that there was a lack of change in terms of diversity. Though ethnic diversity was established, there was a lack of diversity in education, social and economic background across the peer-led core groups – the groups more central to sustainable relationships and activity in the galleries. This meant that the programme did not adequately represent those young people connected to youth sector organisations, i.e., those with the least access to the resources of galleries.

Having said this, young people coming to *Circuit* through partnerships did move to the core of these organisations, though in relatively small numbers. It has been highlighted that the resources and skills required to maintain and support these young people is lacking in some, but not all, cases, again a reference to the skills, experience and knowledge needed in the cultural sector. It is important to remember the distance travelled by all galleries involved in *Circuit*; most began with junior staff and with support from a programme manager only and have developed their practice and confidence, aspects that will influence the future of their career paths and hopefully extend to the wider sector.

*Circuit* has presented in-depth opportunities to recognise and illuminate learning from work with the youth and cultural sectors that may offer a way forward. It has demonstrated the possibilities of

balanced and cohesive partnerships, through reflection, research and responding to the existing social, cultural and professional barriers such as institutional habits, capacity and resources. *Circuit* has laid solid ground for the next steps to establish equitable and sustainable partnerships with youth sector organisations.

*Tomos Jones*

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One ongoing discussion was the definition of 'hard to reach'. In the youth sector, I worked with young people who were disengaged from education, training or employment. In the gallery setting any young person who didn't access galleries was 'hard to reach'; this meant that almost all young people fell into this category. This suggests that galleries themselves are one of the biggest barriers to young people engaging.

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## Identifying partners and the 'hyper-local'

*Andrew Vaughan, Learning Manager, developed an audience development audit to unpick 'hyper-locality' at The Whitworth and explore the spaces and places close to the gallery where young people spent their time.*

Prior to taking part in the *Circuit* programme in 2013, The Whitworth did not have an existing young people's group. We thought about the label 'hard to reach' and reflected that it was The Whitworth that is hardest to reach, rather than the young people themselves.

We wanted to connect with and map cultural provision and participation among young people within walking or short bus journey times to the gallery. And the outcome of this research helped us to prioritise partnerships with organisations in neighbouring wards that have low levels of social engagement such as Powerhouse in Moss Side, Z-Arts in Hulme and Rathbone in Trafford.

To recruit young people to form our core group, Whitworth Young Contemporaries (WYC), we initially decided to work closely with those

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Young people feel underestimated and are aware they are a tick box.

All young people are individuals. You can't make assumptions about their needs and interests.

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Thoughts from delegates at the *Circuit* conference, Test Risk Change, March 2017

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who work with young people all the time, targeting our resources and provision alongside established youth partners. This strategy was a quick win solution as it enabled us immediate access to a diverse range of 15–25 year olds who were right on our doorstep.

We soon became aware that some of our partners feel uncomfortable when arts organisations with new project money align themselves with youth sector partners as ‘suppliers’ of young people. Because of this, alongside programming specific activities, we took the decision to invest in long-term partnership thinking by having no agenda. We also tried to strip away personal and organisational egos, and found that the most successful partnership meetings were when both sectors were able to come together and listen. This helped shape and influence good practice, aiming to ensure the best possible outcomes for individuals rather than an approach that uses young people as a cultural commodity.

Pat Farrell, one of our WYC artists, highlighted an interesting observation as a result of being commissioned to explore and respond to our immediate locality creatively. He used psycho-geography as an approach to walk and map the surroundings close to the gallery. He commented,

Young people who attend local youth spaces are not hard to reach, we know where they are. The question is how do you connect with the all the rest who don’t go to organised spaces and hang around in the park or on street corners?

This insightful observation made us question our strategy. By exploring our locality physically, through walking and noticing, Pat and the WYC group helped us consider something that was radical.

On these ‘hyper-local’ walks Pat had noticed many other places and spaces where young people were gathering and hanging out – engaging

on their own terms. These included cafés, music shops, hairdressers, local colleges and late night burger joints. One way that the group acted on this observation was to approach a local fast food outlet as a partner. WYC developed a relationship with the diner Archie’s, and together they have been piloting new experimental drop-in workshops with young people who traditionally did not visit or engage with the gallery.

## Working with partners



"BEING HARD TO REACH, IS IT  
THE YOUNG PEOPLE WHO ARE HARD TO  
REACH OR THE ORGANISATIONS?"<sup>1</sup>

"WHAT MAKES IT EASY TO  
GET OVER THE THRESHOLD?"<sup>4</sup>

*In her role as Programme Manager:  
Young People, Tate St Ives,  
Sally Noall found that 'Why do  
we work together?' and 'What  
is the wider benefit?' were  
questions they asked themselves  
about partnership working.  
What became important was  
to acknowledge that asking  
questions can inform the  
conversations and actions that  
may be taken afterwards.*

### **Why?**

Why are we offering what we offer, and why would partners work with us? Who is the project for (young people, the partner, the organisation, the funder) and who sets the aims?

### **Listen**

What does the partner need? Where does their expertise lie? What do they currently fulfil and what are the gaps? What are their embedded aims and why would they work with us? How could a project/offer

fit with what they already deliver? What is their capacity to support?  
What could a partnership achieve that we couldn't achieve alone?

### **Know your offer boundaries**

This could include budget, skills, contacts and experience audit affecting the number of sessions, duration, timescale, objectives etc. Which aims do we want or need to meet? Where do our aims meet, and where do they diverge? What can't we offer? Where's the boundary and where is there flexibility?

### **Flexibility and change**

Where does the flexibility lie? In budget, capacity, site, schedule? In aim or focus? What can change and what needs to remain constant?

### **Commitment**

What can we and the partners commit to? What time, capacity and resources do we have? Who holds the specialism at what point? Who else needs to be involved?

### **Capacity**

Our capacity and our partners'. How do we work to best capacity and to the best satisfaction of all stakeholders? Where can we be generous and where do we have to pull back? How do we measure quality and how do we know quality?

### **Outcomes**

Is there a need for a predicted outcome? If so, who defines it? Is the outcome material, conceptual, emotional? Is it part of a longer process or does it see the end of a project? Can the Learning outcome be predicted? How do we embrace tangents and be responsive?

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Create partnerships and then  
go to funders with a request.

Funding is then part of  
the conversation rather  
than the reason for it.

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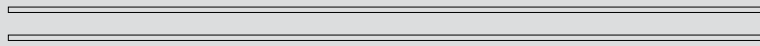
Thoughts from delegates at the *Circuit* conference,  
Test Risk Change, March 2017

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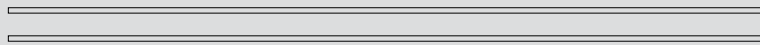




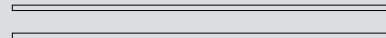


Why aren't we talking about  
the role race and class play  
in building these partnerships  
in arts organisations?

What language and principles  
could be used to bring the  
youth and cultural sectors  
together as allies?



Thoughts from delegates at the *Circuit* conference,  
Test Risk Change, March 2017



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Both partners have to be  
invested in it for it to work.  
It has to be mutually beneficial  
for both partners for it to last.

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Laura Turner-Blake, Curator: Young People's  
Programmes, Tate Britain & Tate Modern

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Yes, gallery and youth sector  
organisations are compatible  
but only if you know each  
others' expectations and work  
together to identify them.  
Because otherwise it's one  
organisation working towards  
some outcomes and another  
supporting an individual's  
complex needs.

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Alice Thickett

## Sometimes the stars don't align

*In 2016, Alice Thickett, Youth Programmer at Nottingham Contemporary, re-evaluated the gallery's partnership strand to see if its partnership work was mutually beneficial. If the evaluation suggested it wasn't, the gallery was open to making changes to reach their goals.*

Sometimes plans don't work. The stars don't align and the people invited don't attend. This is especially true of partnership work. What worked for one project might not work for the same project held later in the year. What excited one group of young people may bore another. With lots of factors affecting what young people can prioritise, it's no wonder that sometimes we just have to admit that a project hasn't worked.

*Circuit* taught us that the learning we take from a project, how we evaluate it and what we do to move our partnerships forward is more important than a project being successful if we don't know why it was a success.

When the project with Nottingham Youth Offending Team didn't work out, we knew we had to evaluate what had happened to be able to move on and make sure we were providing the right access points for the young people they work with. Part of this evaluation process involved getting feedback from the partnership group, and the email correspondence below illustrates the complex nature of partnership work with 15–25 year olds:

Rachel, Youth Offending Team

Just wanted to say thank you for giving us the opportunity to run a Girls Group at the Contemporary and I'm sorry that it did not work out, as it did have the potential to be a very effective programme. Unfortunately, that is the nature of the young people that we work with and we can never guarantee their attendance at appointments, no matter how hard we try! Thanks again for your hard work.

Alice, Youth Programmer

Thanks for the email. We understand how it is with these young people, and hope that they progress positively with the support they are receiving. Thank you for your time trying to get this off the ground, when you have such important work to do. Would you mind, if you have a spare moment, to write a paragraph or so, evaluating what happened and explaining why attendance was practically impossible this time around?

If you have any young people you feel could be signposted to our young people's programme in the future, please don't hesitate to send them our way! Let me know about the evaluation, and thanks again.

Rachel

Looking back on the Girls Group and possible reasons as to why it was unsuccessful, I think that there are a couple of

explanations. The reluctance of Case Managers to refer their young people to the Girls Group is a common problem and we come up against this same problem with the other groups that we are currently trying to run here. This issue is being addressed by management, which will hopefully lead to an increase in referrals to not just the Girls Group but to all the other groups that we run.

Also, the most common problem with running programmes here is the lack of attendance. Even if attendance at these programmes is a statutory part of their order, the responsibility for arriving at these programmes, on time, is theirs, as we do not have the time or facilities to pick every individual up from their home and bring them to the programme. It is our responsibility to ensure the expectations of behaviour and attendance are explained clearly to them prior to the programme commencing, and that we correctly follow up any failure to attend by issuing warnings or breach of order action. The nature of their chaotic lifestyles means that attendance is never guaranteed, no matter how much we encourage it. Thanks again for providing us with this opportunity.

*Andrew Vaughan*

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**I think we always feel like we've got to do something: we've got to get a result; the partnership has got to go somewhere; we've got to impact on the young people. When actually, I think I could have spent the first year having conversations with people, having cups of tea. Spending time within their organisation, just saying 'hi', no pressure.**

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## A clash of cultures?

*Tomos Jones joined MOSTYN following several years working in informal and experiential education. Through their partnership work, MOSTYN came to use the phrase 'a clash of cultures' to describe the different approaches of arts education and youth work.*

The clash of cultures between the youth work and art gallery sectors need not be prohibitive of exciting work together. Provided their differences are acknowledged and accounted for, valuable opportunities could be exploited and barriers broken down to enable hard to reach young people to fully engage with galleries. In order to achieve this aim, failures and shortcomings must be recognised in order to adapt accordingly and ensure the funding makes a difference.

Drawing on my experience I would like to make the following recommendations:

- That youth work professionals carry out suitability audits with organisations as part of the grant-funding process

- Develop and implement more robust quality assurance and monitoring processes with organisations, through effective evaluation. Use findings to inform how future projects are shaped and ensure that the emphasis of projects is on the needs of the participants
- Reach a definition of 'hard to reach' before beginning delivery
- Implement a six-month lead in time before delivery to ensure organisations can identify weaknesses, have adequate planning time and are equipped to deliver ambitious programmes
- Run regular team-building events for programme staff teams and young people to develop relationships and mutual understanding. Include trainers from the youth-work field in gallery training days

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Youth sector organisations should be encouraged to approach galleries with their own proposals, so that ownership is there from the start, before launching the unsuspecting but usually well-intentioned artist into sometimes impossible situations.

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Youth programmes need to push arts organisations

There needs to be a 'levelling' of hierarchy within projects where staff, artists and participants are valued the same

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Thoughts from delegates at the *Circuit* conference, Test Risk Change, March 2017

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# Project Delivery

Lucy Wheeler

## Collective / creative identity: Partnership work with young people

*Lucy Wheeler, Learning and Engagement Officer, Kettle's Yard, worked with Cambridge Youth Foyer, an organisation providing support for local 16-25 year olds who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. Key questions included: how do you engage young people with art who are lacking in creative confidence? How do you open up creative pathways and entry points for young people without creating additional pressure and stress?*

### **Creative identity and peer-leadership**

The long-term nature of our partnership with the Foyer has meant that we have progressed from taster workshops and short internal projects to projects with public outcomes to suit the pace, progress and confidence of each individual taking part. This timeframe has allowed individuals the time to feel confident to try new things, experiment, take risks and gain and enhance their creative skills.

The longevity of the project has also enabled the group to feel confident in generating ideas and making decisions collectively, leading to the group leading public workshops at the 'Gallery Takeover' alongside *Circuit* Cambridge - our peer-led group.

### **Entry points and progression**

A key success has been offering Arts Award as an additional offer and option for the group. Using Arts Award has allowed individuals to navigate their own progression on their own terms with something that is tangible and has helped to develop confidence and new pathways and networks. We have seen three young people at the Foyer progress from bronze to silver, and one young person using his arts award portfolio to secure a place on an access art foundation course. Reflecting on the Arts Award, the group had different responses - some were motivated by the tangibility of the award and the associated pride, while others saw the award as an opportunity to try new things, a positive distraction and the chance to progress back into education. At times, it was challenging to support the young people in the semi-structured framework for the Arts Award while maintaining an open-access drop-in provision.

### **Space**

It has been of the utmost importance to create a space that is comfortable, relaxing and social. This has, at times, been challenging to balance - as there have been different needs from the group. For example, music served as a catalyst to a calm, social environment, yet could also disrupt and break down the group dynamic.

As artists Lizzy Hobbs and Emily Tracy reflected: 'We really wanted to offer some new possibilities and introduce new techniques and ideas, so each week we brought something new to try. Sometimes the young people didn't feel up to it and we found that the most important thing was creating a comfortable space and a kind of quietness, which

allowed them to form their own ideas and take the lead. Sometimes we felt like our artistic skills and equipment weren't really needed, but in the end we realised that being there, chatting about this and that, encouraging them to make things was the most important part of this project. Emily and I found it quite a different experience; the challenge required a different kind of stamina, and perhaps more creative improvisation on the spot.'

Isabella Martin

## Youthie

*Isabella Martin worked as the lead artist on a project for Wysing Arts Centre & Kettle's Yard with Cambourne Youth Club. Each week the participants experimented with materials, playing with these processes towards developing an identity for the club. The project was subject to a fragile dynamic which could easily move between camaraderie and violence, characterised by moments of excitement, risk and sometimes apparent failure; together they explored ways the project could reflect and sustain a sense of belonging.*

As with the beginning of any project, I had a plan laid out for how we were going to proceed. I planned sessions that would build into something, with big aims and all the good intentions those aims bring with them. But of course, what happens when you leave the gallery spaces,

the learning studios and usual frameworks? The moment this project commenced it was irrevocably altered, squeezed by the physical space of the youth club and its participants into something different and ultimately better suited to this new context.

The sessions were held alongside the usual youth club business and were offered as a drop-in attraction competing with a pool table, music, eating toasties, drinking tea and just hanging out. This last function of the youth club is the most important. Many of the parks in Cambourne have signs restricting those over fourteen years from entering. That leaves the skatepark, the local Morrisons and then this place, once a week. The youth club provides the only environment where these young people can have ownership over their space and where they work together as a group to maintain its sometimes unstable dynamic.

The project was thus intended to offer something alongside that. To create a space to explore art mediums and processes, to test things out, to experiment and see where things led. Most importantly, the intention was to offer these art sessions in the spirit of the youth club and of the *Circuit* programme, to encourage the young people to take ownership of their learning, to build their self-confidence, develop supportive peer networks and thus instil a sense of autonomy in the participants.

Starting out a project with the intent for it to become peer-led is a strange task. How do you go about presenting something solid enough for people to invest their belief and time in, but also open enough to be shaped by their input? As a non-peer the hope is you can become an increasingly invisible but consistently reassuring presence; something tricky to instigate when you start out as an outsider, especially as it involves gaining trust, which is hard won in any new environment. It's impossible to take a plan into a new context and expect it to stay the

same. It's what makes things different, throwing ideas out into the real world, and seeing how they morph and adapt to fit new contexts. When you enter a new space you have to find where you fit. This involves being happy to shed what you thought was important in the face of what is becoming progressively more so. It's what made *Circuit* partnership projects so exciting: new models of sharing, learning and being creative together happen out of this mix of good intentions, unpredictable environments and people who question everything.

As the project progressed, learning the technicalities of art processes became less vital in the face of the sessions being a space to retreat from the usual youth-club dynamic, a way to talk and to hang out in a different, more intentional way. Making art in this scenario becomes no less important, just different. It's printmaking while talking about the weekend. It's decorating a sketchbook as a way to test ownership. It's designing a graffiti tag and testing out different identities through it. It's rejecting the intentions of the provided materials in order to redecorate your BMX.

It takes quite a paradigm shift to reposition the role of the art in a project like this. People made things, re-made them, often destroyed them at the end, and left empty handed. How can you measure the value in this activity? The only thing for it was to make space for the young people to take these materials and ideas in their own directions, towards different purposes, which were sometimes unknown at the beginning, hard for them to articulate or even to put into words.

If creativity is about experimentation, risk, exploration and learning to be vulnerable, then the conditions for all these things to happen have to be established as part of a group effort and in a peer-led manner. Only then do people feel able to share and fail, test things out and make mistakes. In a youth group, where the social mores and expectations have such a rigid hold, this is doubly challenging.

Gradually the ground shifted. Things were made and taken away, materials were tested and sometimes pushed to their limits. Spray paint was used for things that were intended, and a few things that weren't. Ideas resurfaced in subsequent sessions, to be tried out in other ways, on new surfaces. One of the sessions that marked this change was a warm summer evening when almost everyone was outside experimenting with spray paint, and besides the accidental redecorating of the youth club paving area, we produced tags, posters and ideas in an atmosphere of possibility and companionship.

If failure is such an essential part of the process of creativity, then there needs to be space built in for it to happen, and then safety nets to catch and make sense of the results. But also, most importantly, there needs to be time. Having weekly sessions where things could fail and be retried was essential – the luxury of time in which to learn at different paces. This was balanced by the necessary pressure of the project timescale, and with the question of where it was all going. The young people came up with the answer through their preoccupation with the identity of the youth club, and by extension, themselves. What makes this place a community? Through spray painting and stencil experiments the idea emerged of having a logo, something to pin their identity to. Naming their 'version' of the youth club was an essential part of this, claiming these particular times as theirs. 'Youthie' – a word that mixes the stereotypical 'fear' of youth with a joyful ending, something playful, a nickname turned into a real name.

Once the idea caught hold, the design process was a volatile mix of offering and arguing, voting and discussing. Out of it emerged a logo, and a hoodie for everyone that was decorated with this new sign of belonging. The energy spilled over into making something to mark the territory of the youth club, and together we designed and spray painted a frontispiece for the bar, with everyone taking it in turns to use the Youthie font to display their name.

The architecture of a community was always in place, but this project offered a way to mark it, to make it visible and thus hopefully more sustained, and to be there to start a process that marked a sense of membership and belonging. In the end, our role became that of background facilitators for something we'd helped set in motion, something that morphed into a project led by the intentions of the participants. So despite the sadness of saying goodbye to this environment which we'd been let into for a short while, it felt right to leave. The young people had reshaped the framework we offered into something that fitted what they and the youth club wanted and needed.

*Marina Castledine*

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*Are we, as gallery educators and artists, always prepared to work with a spectrum of individuals, readily adapting for those who may not want to be part of a group, those who cannot write, those who don't want to sit still or talk up and, perhaps, using that tension?*

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*Circuit* has made me ask questions about whether we're ready for vulnerable young people to be part of our core group. Do we have the resources for that? We were so happy that young people had joined from our youth partner, but what I hadn't anticipated was the support that they would really need.

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## Walton Youth Project

*Artist Sarah Marsh worked alongside Abigail Christenson, Curator: Young People, Tate Liverpool, and Walton Youth Project (WYP), an organisation which supports young people back into education, offering a flexible curriculum and a supportive environment. The activity was centred around WYP Takeover - free half-term activities for the public led by the young people.*

How do you engage young people with art, who are not engaged in education or other social or cultural group activities with their peers? What do you do when the group dynamic is disrupted and the young people are not inclined to trust their ideas to the group? We struggled with these issues on our journey with the Walton Youth Project, and although this partnership has been active for a couple of years, this project prompted us to work more effectively together, working jointly on challenges we faced.

During the initial meeting between Sarah Marsh and the group, the young people commented that they wanted to 'show they were not

just naughty kids' and 'make something that other people can interact with, not just something to look at'. The first meeting was open and full of potential, and was followed by a magical session at Tate Liverpool, where each of the young people started exploring their own ideas, inspired by the art they had seen and discussed.

The young people responded physically to being in the gallery, interacting with anything allowed, putting their whole selves into their creative responses. One of the young men spontaneously began to use the materials left out to divide the space, taping up from the floor to the bars on the ceiling and experimenting with patterns, angles and space. Without knowing exactly why, he began to place Post-it notes with words on them at different points along the dividing tape. I had just popped in for part of the session and there was an amazing atmosphere of experimentation and openness.

Unfortunately, at the next session held at the youth project centre, the artist met with quite a different group. Due to external events, the atmosphere within the group had changed and their engagement was gone. Sarah and youth project manager Darren Simpson came up with some ideas together that would take on board the physicality of the young people's responses and the need for team-building activities and in doing so inadvertently managed to harness one of Darren's great strengths: working on building activities outdoors.

As a result, the next aspect of WYP Takeover took place outside the gallery. On Crosby Beach, just outside Liverpool, and populated with Antony Gormley's sculptures *Another Place* 1997/2005, the group looked at ideas of transforming objects and their environment. They had looked at and discussed Christo, among other artists, before they went out, and experimented with wrapping the statues and creating images with the material they were given. In the Delamere Forest, the young people explored different ways of



making connections between objects and began to enjoy exploring ideas of pattern and structure, after being introduced by Sarah to artists like Andy Goldsworthy. In Formby Woods, the young people had a den-building workshop.

Back at Tate, there was a further six weeks of experimenting with how to bring everything together and build on the experiences they'd had in order to achieve their aims of creating a space people could interact with and showing the public they were more than just 'naughty kids'.

A breakthrough moment came when experimenting with rolled up newspaper and with light and reflections – the WYP Takeover was born. The young people used rolled up newspaper and a basic triangle shape taken from an artwork in the gallery, Simon Starling's *Five-Man Pedersen (Prototype No.1)* 2003, to create a structure the public would be able to come and add to, and which would gradually take over the space. They shone a light through the structure and mapped out the lines projected on the walls using tape in colours chosen by the group; this then became a further activity the public were invited to take part in. Upon reflection with the team, we realised that the move outside the gallery, which was in response to the need to do teambuilding with the young people, allowed us to mobilise both the artist's and the youth centre manager's skills equally, and this joint youth work/art approach was key to mobilising the young people and getting them to have the courage to develop and own their ideas.

After this point, things moved fast. The young people naturally took on different roles, one creating a flyer, another writing instructions for the public, another two curating the display of photographs documenting their journey, and writing copy for the website, while the rest of the group prepared materials and got ready for the launch and the public workshops.

We weren't sure until the week before the event whether the young people would want to run something public, or just have their own celebration and display, so the marketing for their half-term drop-in social space and workshops was late and not too loud. But the impact on the gallery and the public was great.

It was the first time that Tate Liverpool has had a public-facing programme devised and delivered by a group of young people from a wider community partnership, young people who weren't art students and who hadn't been involved with us long-term. For the half-term workshops, Tate Collective and another group of young volunteers from Walton Youth Project got on board to support the group, and it really was all hands on deck. It had involved a huge amount of effort, and insecurity till almost the last moment, but it was really worthwhile. For those two days, it went some way to changing the feeling of what Tate Liverpool is and who it is for.



10

Umaru Saidu

## What Really Matters? Festival

*What Really Matters? was a festival held in Peckham, London, programmed and run by Tate Collective London and youth organisations that aimed to provide a platform for young people's creativity. Umaru Saidu got involved through one of Tate's youth partners, Raw Material, and subsequently joined Tate Collective London.*

What Really Matters? aimed to celebrate themes which matter most to us as young people, such as community, freedom of expression, politics and mental health. Combining a DJ workshop, an arts mural and live music performances, we wanted to provide young people like me with the experience of a large-scale, collaborative, community-based project and find out what it takes to pull it all together.

I decided to join the project because I wanted to learn more about the role of the producer. When planning the festival, I particularly enjoyed the fact that everybody contributed to the ideas of the project,

either by planning timings or discussing themes to tie the different elements together. Everybody had an input into how the festival would look on the final day. It was also an opportunity for me to perform spoken word, and I am looking forward to gaining more opportunities to perform and find out more about arts in general – I ended up joining Tate Collective shortly after the project finished.

So far being a member of Tate Collective is proving to be a valuable experience, in terms of not only working creatively and artistically, but working more in-depth with events, thinking about the effect you want to create and the impact you want on your audience. I find this very interesting and inspiring, and creatively, it has been a step up from Raw Material. I believe that this has been a useful experience and I hope it will help shape me as an artist and enable me to gain employment within the arts.



11



## When is a film project not a film project?

*This conversation between artists Hester Chillingworth and Liam Roberts reflects on their involvement in the Firstsite partnership with Colchester YMCA that resulted in the film Not the easy WAY OUT. Soon after the project commenced, it was clear that the expected outcomes in the original outline would not be met owing to the nature of the lives of the tenants at the YMCA. Everyone quickly adapted their way of working to allow the project to become peer-led.*

### On fluidity

- HC I wasn't expecting it to be as fluid and intangible as it was, I think that became really clear really quickly.
- LR In a way though I preferred it. That's very much the way we work with YAK (Young Art Kommunity, Firstsite's young

people's group), which is more of an informal social thing, having a chat, because you learn more about who they are and more about the kind of thing they want to do and about their life situation as well.

- HC I found that really interesting as it really set a clear dynamic that we were in their space, on their time, and it wasn't like, 'Oh we've arrived and we're bringing this big offer that you're all so grateful or lucky to receive.' I found the way that we had to be really fluid was really helpful because it felt like the project was really like tenant-led: the people who were there were the people who really wanted to be there.

### On filming

- HC I think it was interesting how important content was... it seemed like the priority for maybe not all of them, but for most of them, the priority was the message of the film and secondary was playing with the cameras or editing.
- LR Yes, apart from one or two who were into the technology, I think everyone else would have been happy for us to make the film. The filming itself was just a platform for them, it was great to enable them to have a voice because I don't really think they had a proper outlet for that previously, and the project gave it to them.
- HC Quite often at the end of the chat, at the end of a session, they would say, 'Oh we should have filmed that session.' What I really liked was that it didn't seem like there was an on and off for them, they weren't like, 'Now we're ready to perform our lives.' They were more open to showing how it is, so we might as well start filming at any point in the process.

LR But because of it being so loose and fluid in the sessions when we actually organised something to film, it didn't particularly work so well. For example, the occasions when we'd sit in the lobby with the camera for an hour waiting for the group to turn up and then have to decide to go and do some filming ourselves or just go home. But it was understandable, they've got other stuff going on. They're not going to say, 'It's 2 o'clock, I'm going to head down to do that now.'

HC I guess that's the difference between it being a living situation and an educational institution. I mean, running their lives is the most important thing... That's when it worked, when the project came to meet their lives.

#### **On project length**

HC I wonder if the whole 'make a film in an hour' type challenge or whatever is, well I don't know if it's better, but one thing in the YMCA project but also in YAK generally is that the continuity and longevity of projects is difficult.

LR I agree, in this context, just getting something done quickly is better than doing it over a few months.

HC It's possible that if you do these shorter burst projects where you can do them immediately, maybe they can build the possibility of longer-term projects, because people have already got a feeling of what the output might be? Otherwise you're always working towards an imaginary end result.

LR There was also the issue of working with local funders and what they wanted us to deliver - and the concern that we weren't apparently delivering. The pressure of funders

wanting us to get fifteen young people to a session, which we said would be impossible. However, then the implication is of not doing the job you're supposed to be doing. But it was benefitting the group. The real issue is that if you're trying to advertise a filmmaking project, from the point of view of a young person living in the YMCA it might feel it's more of an opportunity for the funders or youth service, and not for them. Without any dialogue, there is no way of gauging if the young people actually want this activity or not.

#### **On facilitating**

LR The only reason I was in the project was because it was a filmmaking project, as film and digital technology is my expertise. But thinking about it, it didn't really even need to be me, it could have been another artist. It was often a strange experience, where we'd go down to the YMCA and I wouldn't do any filmmaking, I would just eat pizza and listen to their stories. So it didn't seem to be specifically about sharing my filmmaking skills, although it still made sense me being there. It was almost as if we were the documentary filmmakers, but without us really making a documentary...

HC That's a really good way of putting it, we were just guiding it or shaping it a little bit but the young people were the ones doing it.



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On the Down Low recruited other young people by giving a presentation at Lambeth College about our personal pathways into the arts. Our presence as Tate Collective helped, as we made people feel comfortable and kept the tone informal. To us, the final exhibition embodied a vibrant youth culture, representative of young people local to Brixton and how they feel towards their dynamic, changing environment.

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Jan Miller Kerr

## Reflection on Pixel/MOSTYN Partnership

*Working with Year 11 students during alternative education drop-in sessions, artist Jan Miller Kerr developed a project with Pixel, part of West Rhyl Young People's Project (WRYPP).*

How do you fully engage a young person who may or may not come back to a term-time drop-in session each week? What do you do when you only have ten minutes to make a connection with that person? How do you keep building on their interests, ideas and creativity when the group dynamic can more persuasive, more powerful and planned activities can be easily disrupted?

After an initial informal meeting with group members, and to open up ideas around soundtracking, my first session's plan was based on a tightly scheduled 'Found Sound' workshop, with an introduction to the basics of using a handheld Zoom recorder. I soon realised however that I was way off the mark in how I had imagined that morning would be, especially when we suddenly took a mid-session walk to the prom! This was great to get everyone out into the fresh air, and to change the energy and group dynamic, but the whole

morning had been full of so many diversions and interruptions that I knew I had to re-think my engagement practice. I needed not only to 'go with the flow' to fit Pixel's organic approach, but also to find a completely new way of working, as a workshop built around one central theme just wasn't possible within the unpredictable parameters of the sessions. This was a problem not least because the very success of the drop-ins lies in the fact people can do just that, drop in and out at any given time - the ad hoc atmosphere itself provides the safe space for the young people to be in. The young people at WRYPP receive crucial social and well-being care, as well as mentoring by the Pixel staff, and these are the reasons the regular members do come back each week. But how could I introduce a focused, concentrated space to enable, and sustain, meaningful creative engagement within that?

As I got to know the young people over the first few weeks, I came up with a strategy after asking myself: 'If that person comes in right at the end, or for only ten minutes, what do I know about his/her interests to engage them immediately?' My original workshop plan now seemed wildly ambitious, but it was useful in showing me what was actually feasible as opposed to setting up an ideal scenario. I also knew by then who were self-starters, those with the technical ability to achieve their goals, such as the two members who immediately began the first edit of the skate video with great enthusiasm and who continued to collaborate throughout the whole project. For the others, I planned at least six 'micro-engagement projects' each week, specifically focusing on individual interests, which I could adapt as the weeks went on. As well as addressing Pixel staff needs and maintaining their organic approach, these 'micro projects' were specifically geared to limited attention spans, erratic attendance and diverse abilities, all with the aim of achieving at least one goal per session for each person. The core, personal element I didn't change or modify however was my own belief that, to really engage with



your own creativity, you have to trust your own viewpoint, your own instincts and your own unique way of experiencing the world. There is no right way or wrong way and no one else can tell you what it is.

Looking back, it would've been useful to have spent the first session just observing what actually happened rather than basing my initial plan on a short meeting with the young people the week before. My approach now would be to liaise with the staff in focused one-to-one sessions, perhaps every two to three weeks, away from the dominant 'group hub' of the drop-in. This would allow for individual voices and needs to be addressed much more quickly and directly, and perhaps the sway of a sometimes oppressive group dynamic to be held at bay, enabling more measured, concentrated participation overall.



13

Sam Metz

## A different kind of questioning

*Nottingham Contemporary worked in partnership with Crocus Fields, an organisation which provides short breaks for young people with physical and learning disabilities. Artist Sam Metz worked with the young people on three projects, using exhibitions and the building as starting points for the work.*

One aspect of working with Crocus Fields was the possibility of participants to be able to respond to artworks in a way that doesn't privilege vision, verbal interaction or written interactions and which was just being able to respond with the body. An important reason for that is that a lot of the young people, when they're working and in their day to day life, are testing the world out with their bodies, making movements that respond to the environment, tasting things or using repetitive actions, and it was important that this project did not limit those interactions.

I passionately believe that the young people have an existing creative practice and before I met them they had already been engaged in a

lot of creative work at Crocus Fields. The youth programmer and I wanted to allow different groups to view the young people's existing creative practice without it being perceived as a form of 'outsider art' or 'disabled art'.

For me, a key aspect is an ability to self-identify across a number of groups - I have a disability and I'm a creative. I want it to be framed as a creative practice and not viewed through a certain lens. I wanted the artwork created by the group to be seen as it is and I wanted to destabilise a lot of the prejudices that I think happen when a group of young people with learning difficulties enter an art gallery space; young people can be noisy and their behaviours are not what's expected in a gallery space.

One thing we did was to take some artwork created by a group of young people that are non-verbal and share it with a group of young people who are verbal, and in doing so, allowing the artwork to have the conversation across the groups, where that conversation might not be possible in a social setting or environment outside of the gallery.

It's about trying to remove the barriers that would make creating artwork problematic; it's removing the need to talk about what you're doing as your making; it's removing the need to sit still as we're making artwork; it's really simple things.

Not limiting a young person's behaviours can impact on raising their confidence. For instance, when you're working with a young person who is very loud and if those noises are repetitive in a session, these behaviours would then be perceived as disruptive, if you design the session to be such. But, if you design a session where you're open to disruption, you immediately remove the barrier, and I think that's really important.

Another thing I advocate when working alongside young people is having something you're making yourself; using the session to be creative as an individual so that everyone in the room is a participant. It means that the participants don't have to ask lots of questions about what could be done next when someone's modelling it next to them - it removes the need for constant interrogation in the session, because a lot of the young people within this group have issues with anxiety and frequent changes. Just stepping back to remove the constant need for questioning what's happening in the session, or even more importantly removing the need to question through verbal interaction, can make a big difference. Not requiring a young people with learning difficulties to listen to a really long talk about what the session is about and instead just doing the session alongside a young person can have a major impact. Support workers, especially from Crocus Fields, have been fantastically receptive to this, as it's quite a different approach. The interrogation is still there, it's just not written in a thesis; we are also not having a verbal discussion about the artwork. The interrogation exists in that moment when a young person starts to think, starts to engage, starts to physically test out through materials. A great example of this is in the young people's response to a film piece by Simon Starling. They began dancing, responding to the rhythms of the film. They are interrogating, they are just interrogating with their bodies. It's a different kind of questioning.



"THE PEOPLE WHO ARE NON-VERBAL HAVE A COGNITIVE SKILLSET WELL PAST THIS... ABLE TO WRITE ON PAPER AND USE MATERIALS TO COMMUNICATE."

"THE YOUNG PEOPLE EXPECT TO BE BROUGHT HERE... YOU EMBED IT IN YOUR CULTURE."

14

## *The Doors project*

*This collaboration between YAK (Young Art Kommunity) and young care leavers, including Charlotte Winters who now represents YAK on Firstsite's Board of Trustees, playfully expanded on the age-old saying, 'When one door closes, another door opens', incorporating the idea of how you can flip your ideas from negative to positive. (4)*

This exhibition presents a complex idea: how can you flip your ideas from negative to positive? It involves the notion of opening doors to progress the journey of your life. You should view the exit through one door as a celebration and, equally, as an entrance to a new opportunity. Our art represents certain aspects of our lives, and the law that plays a part in young people turning eighteen and the responsibilities that are bestowed upon us.

- Caprice, young care leaver

There are many issues young people in care face when they reach the age of eighteen. This milestone age can suddenly change the circumstances these young people encounter, when governmental support is reduced and the responsibilities placed on the individual increase dramatically. The interactive nature of the *Doors* installation puts the viewer in a position of fluctuating experiences, provoking the possibility of both exciting and uncertain reactions.

Well, where to begin. The project was called *The Doors*, and initially there were three of us taking part, but in the end it bubbled down to me being the constant who was involved. We came to our first YAK meeting around the beginning of the spring, feeling quite nervous. As the weeks passed there were various ideas tossed around: we didn't have a particular idea that we could stick to, although I definitely got a lot less nervous.

It then got to the point where we sat... well the others sat with me, since I am always sitting... looking at the space and talking about it. Finally, an awesome idea came out: doors! Originally there were going to be ten doors in a straight line, sometimes locked, sometimes open, with different things behind them.

This was to represent the boundary between the last night of being seventeen years old and the next day when you turn eighteen. With the way the care system is, it's almost as if something is meant to bite you on your last night of being seventeen, so the next day you wake up all boring and like to eat things like broccoli voluntarily.

Some people have a perception that 'everything lands in your lap', some people have no idea at all. But reaching eighteen in the care system is not like that. It seems to be always about things like 'meeting criteria and funding'. Pretty much everything gets taken away once you are eighteen - you are meant to be independent

and able to cope. There is minimal or no support. To a lot of young care leavers, it represents the lack of opportunities, and crossing of thresholds.

More weeks passed, and the doors idea had stuck. It was mainly me coming along to meetings at this point... The idea developed from the thought of just being doors that would open and show things behind them, to doors that would have different ways of opening, or doors that wouldn't open at all. This was to represent the lack of support and options available in the system, and the difficulties with criteria.

There then was a session with Dave who does awesome techy things. Different ideas evolved. There were simple things like a bolt on a door, to things like a machine that asked you questions to supposedly open a door but which never did; the random questions would just go round and round on a loop. There was then also my personal favourite idea, the door that was really high, so the world couldn't reach it but it looked the most tempting door and therefore the one you wanted to go through the most.

There was also a door with about fifty key fobs but which never opened; one with a peep hole; one with a blind that came down as you went towards it, showing you that you could never get through it, and one with a letterbox that made random sounds. This was really awesome; when the exhibit opened, people both young and old were using the doors. They got to experience the intense frustration at the doors not opening, which is the feeling we get from the care system.

If you go back through a door you previously walked through, would the situation you left behind still be the same, or would it change? If you encountered the same door twice, what would be different in taking the same route with the same opportunity now that time has passed?



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## Pop-up Tate

*Artist Emma Saffy Wilson, Tate St Ives, collaborated with Pop Up Penzance, an organisation that partners with local people to bring activities to empty shops in the town. Working with young people's charity Trelya, Emma took over a disused tea room, creating an 'open studio space' for 15-25 year olds. The project posed the question: without a huge marketing campaign, would young people turn up?*

### **The space and approach**

The shop was in a very prominent position on the main high street in Penzance, which is not a natural place for 'hanging out'. However, the entrance to a shopping centre opposite was more of a gathering and meeting point and we were therefore very visible.

Artist Jonty Lees and I had a few days' prep time before we opened the doors. We wondered: 'Do we "create" a space or wait for young people to create their own ideal environment?' It felt like some change

had to happen to the existing café space to avoid confusion and to also make it feel more like a creative space for both us and the young people using it.

I had initially planned to create a relaxing considered environment, maybe a sofa or at least some comfy chairs, a small library of contemporary art books and magazines and warm lighting, all I believed to be crucial to making young people feel welcome. Discussions between me and Jonty about what we were trying to create in the space were a regular occurrence in the lead up to the opening. The space had to somehow reflect that of a working creative environment while also appeal to those who may just appear curious at first, want to relax and take in what was going on.

The landlord had asked that the walls not be damaged and we had earlier discussed having newspapers in the space, a platform to spark discussion. Having brought a selection of papers, Jonty began pinning up certain sections onto the walls. Enjoying the aesthetic of this we decided to 'wallpaper' the rest of downstairs. We also covered the windows with Windowlene (to avoid the goldfish bowl feel and create some intrigue) with the thoughts that people are naturally drawn to 'doodle' on a window if steamed up or covered. This belief was immediately proven by our first visitors when they began to draw on the window; it was then pointed out by another young person that maybe they shouldn't have as our existing patterns were on there. This was the first opportunity to discuss the collaborative element of the pop-up studio; we were delighted they had responded and already made their mark.

In addition to Jonty, we had Emma Robinson on board for the duration of the project. Emma is a senior youth worker at Trelya, a youth-work charity in Penzance, and we have had nearly ten years' experience of working together. She is not only an incredible safe pair of hands but

is instrumental in several ways: picking up on cues from me or from the young people; skilled at nipping certain behaviours in the bud, in a non-authoritative way; she has similar boundaries to me and we spoke the same, often non-verbal, language – she would just let it be known by an eyebrow movement, for example, that four young people were upstairs with Jonty alone. She is skilled at being able to subtly engage with young people outside of the space, and also, like me, already knew many of the young people in the area and the whereabouts of 'natural hangouts' in town.

The 'drop in' aspect was crucial to making the space feel informal; young people were free to come and go as they pleased. During quiet times Emma Robinson and I were able to walk around town; feeling confident in detached youth-work methods was essential to be able to engage with young people on the street in a non-intimidating way.

### **Creativity**

The joy of not having any specific outcomes in terms of making was liberating and essential to this project. The pressure this took off us as artists reflected in how we could interact with young people using the space. Nothing was 'forced' and I believe the young people noticed this. They really were free to do what they liked in the space creatively.

The first day one young person expressed her love of photography. We encouraged her to take photos within the space, which were then printed on to acetate. Seeing those images enlarged and projected on to walls and ceilings proved to be a hit for the next two weeks. Almost everyone who came into the space was fascinated by the OHP, layering images and playing about with composition. It was also used in the evening, projecting on to the building opposite. Young people really enjoyed this and spent quite a bit of time photographing the results, on both their phones and our camera.

Having a video camera was a fantastic tool for engagement. Young people who maybe felt uncomfortable initially in the space or had got 'bored' not knowing what to do next were asked to film. The video was an ongoing project and was also projected on to the building opposite during the last night of the project while we sat outside and ate popcorn. Drawing on windows was a great 'pull' for some young people walking by who saw what was going on and crossed the road to watch. They were invited to join in and enjoyed the novelty of being able to draw on the windows. A great deal of the creativity was about identity: the space became the art and the young people were very clearly making their mark.

### **Thoughts**

During the two weeks I didn't always feel like I was 'being creative', yet on reflection, the very nature of what Jonty and I were doing by responding to the random happenings in the space, often discussing between us what we had witnessed or heard, became the creative aspect for us as artists.

I'm not sure if the discussions 'sink' in and what learnings take place. Who knows what might slowly filter down? It might be a tiny recognition, the day an artist's work gets used in mainstream advertising or is seen on a billboard poster advertising an exhibition, that feeling of the 'familiar': they've seen it before, they remember the discussion.

The project also proved harder for me than I had anticipated with regards to being part of an arts project outside of the familiar youth work environment where all the policies and practices are firmly established. It made me question what policies should still be embedded in the project and which could be loosened a little, to potentially allow for a more creative environment.

The unexpected learnings that took place confirmed to me also that this model of working was the way forward in engaging young people in



the visual arts. Within this model the possible misconceptions of what an artist is and what art is were gently being broken down allowing the possibilities of seeing the art gallery too in a different light.



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Helen Newman

## Make Box: Whitworth Young Contemporaries and SARC

*Whitworth Young Contemporaries artist in residence Helen Newman was involved in a collaboration with SARC (St Mary's Sexual Assault Referral Centre). SARC was the first centre of its kind in the UK to provide an aftercare service for men, women and children who have experienced sexual assault. One of the key challenges was producing a project for young people with an organisation that did not have a youth group.*

The proposal was to produce a collaborative installation which involved young people who attend the centre, but with no youth group and a strict privacy policy it meant I wouldn't be able to work directly with young people themselves. The challenge of having no direct contact became one of the key steps in creating the installation and additionally in thinking about how The Whitworth and SARC could connect through art without meeting face to face.

Taking inspiration from an open-ended 'box idea' that SARC give their clients to fill with images and words to open up conversation, and a David Batchelor site-specific sculpture, *Plato's Disco* 2015, hanging in The Whitworth, I came up with the first step for the installation called *Make Box*.

*Make Box* is a kit containing a clear plastic sphere and craft materials. A box is given to a client attending the centre, to be used during a consultation or to take home. The idea is that the client will use the materials in the box to fill the sphere with messages, photographs and drawings of anything they wish. Each contribution is then sealed inside the sphere and kept private. Once sealed, a client can decorate the outside. Each sphere will never be opened and all will be unique. The completed sphere can be kept or sent back to The Whitworth to then be added to the installation, which will reside in the SARC reception area.

So while this project was different to working directly with the youth group, the format of *Make Box* that I developed provided a connection with art for the young people involved. The aim was for the packs to act as a form of art therapy, with the hope that the young people may be inspired to visit The Whitworth at some stage in their recovery. The councillors said that clients were enthusiastic about taking part, and gave positive feedback about using the boxes as a tool to open up dialogue between them and the clients.

From my perspective as an artist developing my skills, the project still gave an opportunity to learn about working with a client to develop a project, which has given me confidence to apply for other commissioning opportunities in the future.



## Image Captions

- 1 Audience members enjoying an installation at Late at Tate Britain: Disrupt, 2015  
Photo ©Diana Agunbiade-Kolawole
- 2 Circulate young evaluators second national session, Nottingham, 2014  
Photo ©Roz Hall
- 3 Collabor8 event, Nottingham Contemporary, 2014  
Photo ©Nottingham Contemporary (Vika Nightingale)
- 4 Niall Farrelly, illustration of *Circuit* conference delegate, 2017  
Image ©Niall Farrelly
- 5 Charles Ray, *Plank Piece I-II* 1973  
Photo ©Tate
- 6 Audience at the Affinity Festival, Nottingham Contemporary, 2016  
Photo ©Sam Kirby
- 7 Diagram from a meeting reflecting on partnership work, Wysing Arts Centre & Kettle's Yard, Cambridgeshire  
Image © *Circuit*, Wysing Arts Centre & Kettle's Yard
- 8 Personal mantra by artist *Lakwena* using mirrored geometric shapes to collectively create a mural across the floor of the Duveen Galleries at *Late at Tate Britain: Mantra*, 2016  
Photo ©Diana Agunbiade-Kolawole
- 9 Phantom event - a special late-night opening as part of Museums at Night, Firstsite, 2016  
Photo ©Eddie Bacon
- 10 Simon Starling, *Five-Man Pedersen (Prototype No.1)*, 2003  
Photo ©Tate
- 11 What Really Matters? Festival, London, 2015  
Photo ©Tate
- 12 *On the Down Low*, a project between Tate Collective London and University of the Arts London Widening Participation team, 2015  
Photo ©Gaby Sahhar
- 13 GLITCH session during Diango Hernández exhibition at MOSTYN, March 2016  
Photo ©MOSTYN, Wales UK
- 14 Niall Farrelly, illustration of Residential Social Care Worker from Crocus Fields Calum Watts at the *Circuit* conference, 2017  
Image ©Niall Farrelly

- 15 *The Doors* project at Flipside Festival expanded on the saying 'When one door closes, another opens', Firstsite, 2016  
Photo ©Eddie Bacon
- 16 *Pop Up Tate*, Penzance, a Tate St Ives project, 2015  
Photo ©Emma Saffy Wilson
- 17 *Pop Up Tate*, Penzance, a Tate St Ives project, 2015  
Photo ©Emma Saffy Wilson
- 18 *Circuit* Hyperlink Festival, Tate Modern, 2013  
Photo ©Monica Cielecka

## Footnotes

- (1) Nicola Sim spent three years watching organisational partnerships develop and unfold throughout the *Circuit* programme. Informed by interviews about partnership working with over eighty youth workers, gallery practitioners and young people, and observing over 100 projects, events, meetings and training sessions, this essay presents key learning from the PhD fieldwork as a series of recommendations for arts and youth practitioners. Her PhD, 'Like Oil and Water? Partnerships Between Visual Arts Institutions and Youth Organisations', is available at: [eprints.nottingham.ac.uk/etheses/](http://eprints.nottingham.ac.uk/etheses/).
- (2) See Jonathan Gross, Anna Bull and Nick Wilson, *Towards Cultural Democracy*, King's College London, 2017.
- (3) *Circuit* defined 'hard to reach' as the following categories: having a long-term disability (physical, sensory, hidden, learning); young parent; young carer; homeless; gypsy, Roma, traveller; looked after child / care leaver; refugee; asylum seeker; home educated; in youth justice system; not in education, employment or training (NEET); in hospital / long-term physical or mental health needs; having a parent / carer in receipt of state benefits. Each gallery set its own diversity targets relating to categories including age, gender, ethnicity and these 'hard to reach' characteristics, dependent on their local context, communities and priorities.
- (4) The installation asked the audience to contemplate the crossing of thresholds as a progression - where the exiting of one door is seen as a celebration and equally an entrance to a new opportunity. *The Doors* was created in collaboration with artists David Norton and Hester Chillingworth, and was part of the *Circuit* Flipside Festival at Firstsite, Colchester, to celebrate National Care Leavers Week 2016.

# Motivation for Diversity and Change

Whose voices are represented within  
cultural institutions?

*Circuit* set out to develop and change ways of working with and attitudes towards young people in cultural organisations. Debate around organisational change, and conditions that could enable it, increasingly became the focus of the programme. To some extent, the emphasis shifted from the participation of young people, to initiating wider change that could better support benefits for young people in the long term. Galleries considered the role of young people, partners, Learning staff, other colleagues and management in contributing towards this.

Arguably, the scale of *Circuit* produced a certain degree of senior support and buy-in across each gallery. However, it took time to explore new ways of collaborating between teams, to help to shift working with young audiences from solely within Learning departments to becoming a wider organisational responsibility. This happened to different degrees and in different ways at each gallery. *Circuit* aimed to underpin it by encouraging everyone to reflect on their current ways of working and identify their motivations, options and priorities for change.

Some staff did note that organisational confidence grew in the active roles young people can play within organisations, which could be beneficial to both sides. With this came an increase in the valuing of their opinions. However, it had to be acknowledged that there were not always structures in place to allow new perspectives to be listened and

responded to. Galleries supported different ways for young people to be in conversation with the organisation – influencing through governance structures, discussion with management, by joining the workforce, and through programming. But debate continued during and beyond *Circuit* about the usefulness of the collective categorisation of ‘young people’ – a term that defines a ten-year age bracket made up of individuals with a multitude of views, backgrounds and interests – as a homogenous group. The programme itself, however, considered whom participants were representing and who was still not being heard.

Some galleries looked at existing and potential audiences’ perspectives of what the gallery represented and could offer and/or what was preventing people from visiting. This was used to inform their programmes, use of gallery spaces, marketing and responsiveness to different audience needs. To ensure that a breadth of demographics was engaged and represented, each gallery set itself diversity targets that were relevant to its own contexts and communities. Data collection and analysis helped to capture who was involved, identifying gaps in provision and tracking change. Within the programme, there was a desire not just to increase diversity as a tokenistic gesture, but to become more inclusive, and to embrace the positive dynamics of difference and to represent this within galleries. There was an aim to embed these values beyond the programme.

As with many arts projects, the finite nature of *Circuit* raised questions relating to the sustainability and long-term impact of short-term funded projects. In the coming years further research will be undertaken to see how the galleries sustain the ways of thinking that *Circuit* helped to foster, beyond being part of a funded programme. As *Circuit* concluded, there had been, in some cases, a shift in the prioritisation of young audiences and consideration of the investment needed to have an impact on the role and position of galleries as relevant public institutions of the future.



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## A catalyst for change

*Anna Cutler, Director of Learning and Research at Tate, led on the conception and strategic delivery of Circuit. Through her role at Tate, she aims to generate high-quality educational provision that is rooted in research and is committed to positive, long-term change which is profound, sustainable and inclusive.*

Within the UK there is currently a widespread conversation about the need for change in our social and cultural fabric. Much of this conversation concerns power relations and the many forms of identity politics therein. This is not 'new' to the extent that this conversation, particularly concerning identity politics, could be said to have had a similar moment in the 1980s and has maintained an undercurrent for decades. However, what is different from previous conversations is a call to action, to actually 'make or become different' rather than speak of it.

This conversation has necessarily moved into questions of institutional and organisational relations within and across institutions themselves

as well as with the public. It doesn't take too much effort to see that organisations and institutions, galleries and museums (and much else besides) look like the people that built them in the time of their making. Of course, there have been changes over time, but dominant cultures and discourses, ideologies and behaviours are embedded in a way that enables such values and a fixed 'refrain' to persist. It might be said that change, for those not benefitting from these values, can seem an endless uphill struggle that would take an atomic blast to shift. Over time interventions to address the need for change have occurred, but these have had a tendency to attend to one aspect, one area or one 'thing' in any structure. What is clear is that partial intervention is never enough, and for sustained change to happen there needs to be a deeper cut across many strata to have lasting impact. Double digging is required and a lot of effort needed to leave preconceived ideas behind and look through a different lens, or perhaps to look through the lens of difference.

As some of the most marginalised groups in any culture, young people are an example of those who benefit the least from normative values and current power structures. They are often the recipients of the effects of dominant ideologies and the current refrain writ large. It is therefore of no surprise that within this new conversation, young people have found a space in which to call for action on their own behalf; they represent one of the many possible lenses to look through that may, most urgently, need attention and alert us to the generational changes that are shifting the cultural discourse in our time.

As public institutions we have a responsibility to respond to this conversation if we wish to be able to fairly represent 'all' publics rather than the current status quo, and this actively insists that we consider different organisational models that achieve greater diversity in the engagement with young people. The terms 'diversity' and 'difference' are referred to in the *Circuit* programme 'as a means to cover a wide

range of identity politics being negotiated and discussed by young people today. This links to ethnicity, gender and sexuality, as well as to social and economic status, and different levels of privilege.' I'd like here to present an idea which explores how *Circuit* may influence institutional thinking that implies action across strata, and how a meta-idea seems important to how institutions might then reframe and restructure the parts to create a new whole.

The following idea is based in the concept of 'for and to' and was made explicit in a conversation within the *Circuit* programme itself in which two positions were being argued. The first position was that as an institution we held responsibility 'for' young people. Being responsible 'for' someone or something brings with it a range of associated aspects, from a sense of emotional burden to that of privilege and power (an 'us and them' scenario), and as such can have a totalising effect.

Within the argument was the sense that there was a need to 'look after' the young people and steer their actions and decisions, but it became clear that this necessarily limited the young people because to be responsible 'for' them created a paralysing effect. In a sense, with young people becoming a variable to be contained or controlled. They would not be able to take risks (too dangerous as they become 'our' risk that we cannot control); they cannot be trusted (in case they fail unreasonably, which would be our risk and represent our failing); those responsible 'for' the young people could not be generous as this simply increases the risks already described. The overall result of this approach is a loss of respect in the young people's own capability and ability to take on responsibility, not to mention the way in which the young people were being spoken 'of' which is, by definition, not an open or respectful exchange.

The alternative perspective represented a responsibility 'to' the young people. If the aim was for young people to gain experience

and learn through creating their own activities, to take ownership and experiment in a safe environment with guidance and to share this through activity with the public, then to be responsible 'to' the idea that the young people should be able to meet the aims set, they would have to take risks and control. They would have to take responsibility and authority would have to be handed over to them. In equal measure the young people would then have a responsibility to the public and the institution, and responsibilities would be shared and carried out as a common, rather than an authoritative concern. Even if born of 'good' or protective instincts, 'for' takes on a power that maintains attitudes and behaviours; 'to' insists on respect and invites a call-and-response that may step into the unknown but on a shared journey of mutual trust.

The significance of this exchange in relation to the need for changing systems and structures in terms of diversity and difference is manifold and deep. The change in perspective from a paternalistic idea of 'for' and the open and more equal concept of 'to' opened up a series of implied actions, including changing the way we were thinking, to practical and systemic shifts. The concept of 'to' entirely reframes the ways in which an institution may work with young people and removes hierarchy into an exchange of equal respect. 'To' therefore shifts the conceptual lens from the outset, demanding a dialogue, rather than prescription or dictation. This requires a capacity to listen and to respond and then to hand over responsibilities in which the young people may represent themselves and their own diverse identities. It also requires a change in processes, access to the wider institutional conversation, constituting visibility and presence 'at the table'. The removal of the totalising responsibility 'for' means that there is a closer relationship for young people to the public and institution alike; a relationship that is not mediated by the institution itself or represented by those who may have formerly taken on responsibility.



Pragmatically this means a new way of thinking and behaving across any institution, including: enablement of programmes that speak to the interests of 'others' (young people) rather than in the interests of the institution per se; a form of communication and structures to achieve this; a different form of marketing to express this and a longer process for dialogue and negotiation to establish this, as well as effectively removing 'the indignity of speaking for others'. As such, *Circuit* may have the catalytic effect of prompting a call to action, to actually 'make or become different' rather than to speak of it. Without overclaiming, I see the sparks and realities of this change beginning to unfold.

We focus on getting young people into the gallery,  
but forget how to make them stay.

We try to change young people's attitudes to fit the gallery,  
but we don't change the gallery to fit the young people.

We try to make people feel open and free in the name of contemporary art,  
but forget that rules and signage can reassure people they're acting within the rules.

The gallery staff are a resource to be used, but many young people don't utilise this unless under the obligation of school projects.

We teach art in terms of the historical, sociological, and political,  
but forget to ask people to relate to the visual and the personal.

Don't tell them, ask them.



# Organisational Change

*Rosie O'Donovan*

## Changes to Kettle's Yard's programming approach

*Rosie O'Donovan, Learning and Engagement Officer, Kettle's Yard, felt that their involvement with Circuit came at a critical moment for the gallery in helping foster new ways of working with young people. Alongside this was the impact it had on colleagues and members of their young people's group, Circuit Cambridge.*

In 2013, we were an organisation at the start of huge change, with a new director, a capital build project about to start and significant other staff changes. *Circuit* galvanised our thinking by exposing us to new ways of working, collaborating and evaluating. The *Circuit* Unlock Cambridge festival (2015) gave us confidence in the scale of our ambition and our ability as a team; alongside the opportunities to work with inspired and committed young people, this has helped form the way we now see our future.

As a small organisation, the work with the young people has been flexible and adaptive and the impact of *Circuit* on our programmes and

for staff was effective and immediate. Shortly after the start of *Circuit* we knew that it was going to challenge the way we worked. In meetings, Circuit Cambridge (the name we adopted for the gallery's group) were keen to work closely with staff, and in internal gallery meetings Kettle's Yard staff were beginning to identify opportunities for their involvement.

Staff from across teams showed a huge generosity of spirit towards the programme, with opportunities for involvement that were not simply the tried-and-tested, but new areas of work for the organisation. For example, Circuit Cambridge curated Helen's Bedroom, a room in the Kettle's Yard House. Kettle's Yard House has had a fixed unchanging hang, left almost entirely as it was when the founder, Jim Ede, moved out in 1973. Helen's Bedroom, although not curated by Jim, has always remained 'dressed' as if it were. This would be the first time it was curated by an external group and represented a significant change in thinking and also a significant 'risk' in programming.

A real success of the resulting Grace and Speed exhibition at Kettle's Yard (2015) in providing a real-life, quality experience, was the input of a variety of staff to Circuit Cambridge sessions, including curators, archivist, technicians and the director, and the opportunity to create this key aspect of the Kettle's Yard programme. The experience included sessions with staff covering research, art history, conservation, curating, installation and interpretation. A Circuit Cambridge group member commented that, 'they've shown a lot of faith in us and I think everyone in the group really appreciates that.' The comment demonstrates that the young people appreciated the quality and ambition of the projects they have undertaken; crucially, the importance of sharing conversations, input and the expertise of gallery staff helped the Circuit Cambridge project to develop.

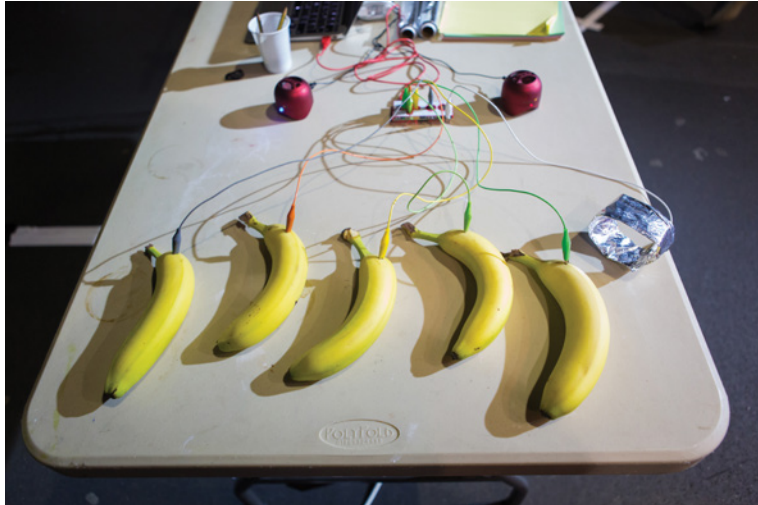
There was no evidence of nervousness about the young people's ideas and execution of projects - instead there was strong backing for

providing a framework that allows young people to realise their ideas to deliver high-quality outcomes. There was concern, however, from staff that their interactions were leading the group to a more traditional Kettle's Yard display, as Guy Haywood, Assistant Curator, commented:

I was suddenly slightly concerned after the session yesterday that I [had] steered them away from what they were originally imagining - my suggestions obviously are going to be towards a more standard Kettle's Yard-style display, but there's nothing stopping them from proposing something completely different, or being more creative in the way they display the works.

The collaborations with the Circuit Cambridge group were seen as hugely successful, both as a process and with the thoughtful and sensitive outcomes. Staff were spurred on to think more creatively in their own programming and became more invested.

Kettle's Yard's organisational confidence in the *Circuit* programme and subsequent organisational change to integrate Circuit Cambridge into core activity was highlighted as we worked to redefine our mission and values in advance of our reopening in 2018. We wanted to outline how these kinds of collaborative programme, creatively co-produced with our audiences, would shape and drive our future programming. In autumn 2016, the programming team (an integrated team of curatorial, Learning, community and archival staff) developed a new set of programming principles. In these we committed not only to supporting emerging talent across our programmes, but also to values of co-production, of ensuring quality both of process and of product, and of promoting equality of access and participation. These values have now extended beyond our work with young people to our work with all audiences and peers, to how we describe ourselves as an organisation and the way we approach our work.



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Why is it considered 'brave'  
for directors to embrace  
a programme like *Circuit*?

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Thoughts from delegates at the *Circuit* conference,  
Test, Risk, Change, March 2017

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## Ideas and bravery

*Reflecting on how to embed organisational change across an institution, Sally Noall considers the early challenges she faced as Programme Manager: Young People, Tate St Ives and the importance of dialogue, collaboration and being flexible enough to shift direction when necessary.*

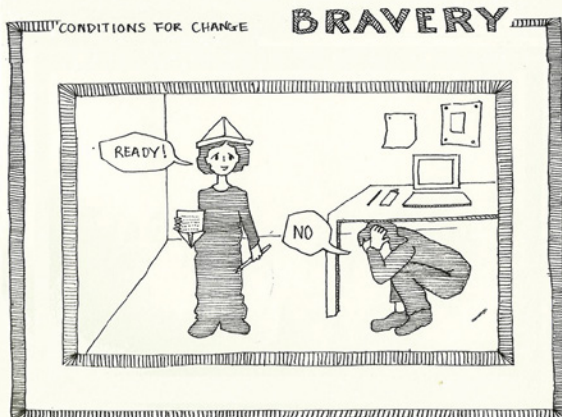
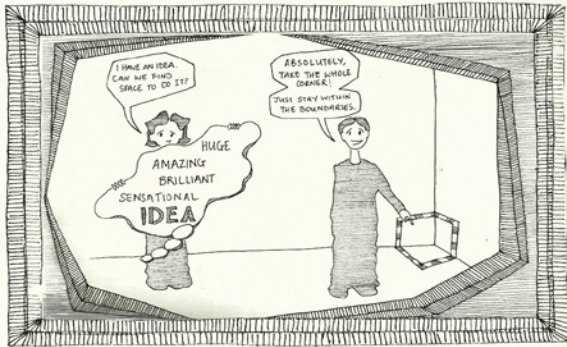
Yes, I did presume if I was being brought in to manage a programme with organisational change as a key aim, then that would have been considered beforehand; that a need for and a willingness to be part of that change across the organisation would be understood. I think I was surprised. And I feel in a very different position now as to how other people and programmes view *Circuit* and its value. In those first months I questioned why I had been brought in, because if change is a key element of my role but everyone is resistant towards it, then do you even want that? It's great to invite people in to change things, but you've got to want to do that as well. Change can't just affect one small area, it filters out across everything

- whether that is our own programme meetings or teaming up with public programme or visitor services. It really requires buy-in from everybody. However, the more work we have done, the more respect and backing we have had within the organisation. And that is just as valuable, because it starts to feel embedded.

I would say it begins within dialogue then eventually goes up to the Artistic Director. I feel confident enough to begin that process and if we could come up with a collaborative idea we could take that up higher as a proposal. If we didn't quite agree, then that would be different and would need escalation upwards. Also, sometimes decision-making is not always clear-cut. I might have responsibility to instigate change or dialogue and have good relationships on which to do that, but I don't have authority to implement decisions. There is a bit of a gap in that authority sometimes. You might need decisions to come from the top down. Suggestions of what we might do without can often stall in the face of practical or other challenges. And so much of this is about capacity. We are all stretched. If we had more capacity, we could think more about how we work together more effectively.

I am aware that for me, I need to acknowledge what is working and what doesn't need changing. And thinking about change with young people is interesting. Because you can own the best plans in the world, but you have to respond and change depending on who is in the room and their responses at the time. So it might become something completely different. In those situations, the ability to change, and change fast, really works. But there are other situations where you need to consider what you hold on to. So it might be something I would personally like to see shift, but if that is working for the organisation or another team, we might need to keep things as they are; it's about being flexible, but confident enough to change things when it's right to do so.





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*Circuit needs to be 'let in' to the gallery. The people in charge need to welcome it and allow it to make a change, and enable all the people that are part of it to make a difference.*

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Abigail Christenson

## Exploring democratic practice

*Abigail Christenson, Curator:  
Young People, Tate Liverpool, gave  
an introduction at the Circuit  
conference reflecting on exploring  
ideas of democratic practice in the  
context of collaboration between  
galleries, youth organisations and  
young people, and how that can  
bring about change.*

Like many of you here today, in January I participated in the Women's March in London [21 January 2017] and one of the chants I heard several times was: 'THIS IS WHAT DEMOCRACY LOOKS LIKE!' On that day, the meaning of the term 'democracy' seemed pretty clear. In the different context of today's conference, as we think about democratic practice within the institutions of youth sectors and galleries, we might turn that assertion into a question, into the beginning of a debate: what exactly can democracy look like within an institution, and within an art gallery? And what forms can and does democratic practice take?

'Democracy' as a term is contested: to some, it is simply the voice of the majority; dissenting views must acquiesce, with national

sovereignty (rather than partnerships between countries) of utmost importance. To others, democracy is a tenable experiment of how to live together, while questioning 'who speaks for the people?'

The EU Referendum [23 June 2016] offered a version of democracy which many find unsatisfactory: the opinion of 52% of the electorate was interpreted as simply the 'will of the people' and other voices, many of which belonged to young voters, were sidelined or ignored. That flawed democratic practice can easily be contrasted with the ideals of *Circuit*, which is built on a continual re-examining of programmes to support a multitude of diverse voices and a multitude of diverse platforms for art.

Besides striving for more diversity, inclusivity and a re-distribution of resources and access, other features of democratic practice exemplified by *Circuit* include: encouraging participation and freedoms of expression and choices, with young people authoring their own cultural productions, and feeling safe and supported in what they say and do; the fostering of collaboration and partnerships, rather than striving for individualism and competition among institutions in the belief that together we are stronger, and, finally, transparency, accountability and responsiveness as policies were tested and evaluated along the way, with the 'checks and balances' and the questioning of power led by young evaluators.

Today we will examine how that has worked and what challenges remain.

As racism, xenophobia, hate crimes and nationalism are on the rise, attempting to trump equality and diversity, it is of utmost importance that we act now to ensure that all young people are listened to. May we as change-making institutions address and correct persistent forms of inequality, and the subtle and not so subtle forms of exclusion and privilege in the arts and civic life.



Cathriona Burke, Abigail Christenson, Deborah Riding,  
Steven Hyland, Francesco Manacorda, Andrea Nixon

## We Have Your Art Gallery

*In 2015, Tate Collective Liverpool were invited to co-create core gallery programme ideas for the 2016 spring season. The collective worked with architecture, design and art collective Assemble to develop their ideas, which involved negotiating with gallery senior management, aiming to give the collective an equal voice in decision-making.*

### **Kidnapping**

DR Part of the Blueprint Festival programme [2014] was a Q&A between Tate Collective and the Executive and Artistic Directors of Tate Liverpool. What came out of that conversation was a desire for young people to be given a high-profile space, to be given a gallery, to do what they wanted to do with it. There was a precedent within Tate, as there is in other galleries, where young people work with curators and they curate exhibitions, quite often from collections. But they are guided by curators, they conform to curatorial conventions



and they work within the practices of the gallery. Tate Collective wanted a bit more freedom than that; they wanted to do something different.

The senior management team and the directors were up for this, and with the ambition to be very democratic, they set up a steering group and some terms of reference, which young people were invited to become part of. But what they were inviting young people to was a board room, a meeting table and a dialogue that couldn't be equitable, so what happened was diluted and the ideas that came out of those discussions were quite different from how they had originated.

At this point we invited Assemble, an architecture and design group that are very much involved in community and socially engaged practice, to become part of the project. I think they were thinking in terms of helping Tate Collective design an installation, but the first thing that struck Assemble was that this was a very undemocratic practice and they wanted to shake things up. And so they staged a kidnapping.

The kidnapping happened off-site, at an arts organisation called Metal, and all of Tate Collective were brought there. Unbeknownst to them one of the members of the team had been kidnapped and was hidden away. They were given set tasks to try and find this member as a team-building exercise; but what this ultimately grew into was a kidnapping of the gallery.

#### **Ransom notes**

SH This was the start of a process known as We Have Your Art Gallery, with Tate Collective the captors, Tate Liverpool and all of the usual expectations of the gallery that come with it, the

hostages. Through a scavenger hunt and meal, Tate Collective and Assemble discussed what they knew about Tate Liverpool, so that we could better 'know our enemy'. They researched and dissected, thought of everything that Tate Liverpool was not, and soon developed a list of demands that challenged Tate Liverpool's established ways. The demands were put to the gallery directors and curators. These demands went from the silly to the serious; from being given a free meal any time you visit, to being a place to learn from art and artists.

Tate responded to each demand with questions and, as with any negotiation, some compromises. Tate Collective followed up with further questions. The demands were combined, refined and redefined by conspirators. There was anonymous online voting. Negotiation went on within the collective. Eventually, with everyone on the same page, demands were narrowed down to two. On neutral ground at the Bluecoat Gallery, Tate Liverpool and Tate Collective finally came face-to-face to make a final decision. And the final decision was: an open art school, a place to create rather than merely contemplate.

**Tate**

**we have YOUR Art GALLERY**

**if YOU EVER want to see it again,**

**YOU will listen to OUR demands!**

**We want:**

**1. for the Tate to be Open 24  
hours**

**2. to be able to touch the  
artwork**

**3. for the Tate to make a  
manifesto which tells us  
why the Tate matters to  
Liverpool**

**4. show the best artworks in the  
community centres, schools and  
pubs**

**5. make a plan to show us how**

**Tate will support art practice in  
Liverpool**

**6. YOU to show us that YOU believe  
in us**

**7. to learn from art and artists**

**8. a party room with comfy  
chairs**

**9. A FREE MEAL EVERY TIME WE VISIT**

**10. places to take naps**

**11. to hear applause every time  
we walk in**

**YOU have until 1700 on Friday**

**16th October to reply**

Dear Tate Collective,

We know this is very important to you and we understand that your list is key to the fulfilment of your objectives. We all want the future of Tate to flourish and the museum to be a place where you feel at home and at ease in experiencing art and culture with others.

Unfortunately, we are unable to grant you all of your requests (partly due to regulations that we are not in a position to change), so we wondered if we can together identify those that we can work on and define which the key priorities are.

In the meantime, we have responded to each demand below:

- 1 We can talk about opening the museum over a 24-hour period but need to explore costs – these will have to come out of your budget – and investigate how this can be managed with staff, health and safety requirements, unions etc. To do so, we need to know if this is for one night only.
- 2 This is a difficult one. Usually we cannot allow this because of conservation issues, but there is a precedent set by touch tours and there may be some works that we could arrange this for within certain contexts.
- 3 Can we work on this together and with others? We don't think Tate necessarily knows why it matters to Liverpool – we know why we would like it to matter to Liverpool – but if you want a manifesto of why Tate matters (now) to Liverpool, we need to ensure we write it with the city – i.e. a good number of citizens not just Tate staff. What do you think?
- 4 This is difficult to do due to the same point illustrated in point 2. With more time we could build a framework where we could do it (we did it with film director Mike Figgis few years ago) but we would need to be working on it at least a year in advance for negotiations with Collection Care to be successful.

- 5 We are happy to talk about this, especially as we can do this together – would this be a good start?
- 6 What sign do you need to be convinced? Shall one/both of us come and visit you to discuss this in a location of your choice?
- 7 Always happy to do so. Would you like to set up a temporary school for staff and members of the public where artists come and teach and art is used as learning tool?
- 8 When and for how long would you want this?
- 9 Not possible for every visit but we can arrange some scheduled lunch/dinners as a way of using your budget to host people.
- 10 We do have some spaces where this may be possible.
- 11 What are you after exactly? We may have some ideas for this. If it is acknowledgement and crediting can we find a different way that would satisfy you?

On our side, in order to start talking more in detail about the proposed areas above and agree next steps, we want to ensure that:

- You seriously consider building a public activity in the fourth floor or elsewhere
- You agree to help us in re-imagining how the museum can be in relation to its mission to bring contemporary art to everyone
- You take seriously our request to co-design models for more open institutions together

We would like to hear back from you by Friday 23 October, once you have identified your priorities and expanded your ideas on those particular demands. We look forward to hearing from you.

– Francesco and Andrea

## Negotiations

SH The ransom note methodology, by creating a distance and laying down of Tate Collective's ideas, meant that the ideas were retained throughout the process rather than washed away among a mass of meeting minutes. It was a significant challenge to the power dynamics which are usually in place at the museum.

## Working together

CB Assemble are artists of some standing with an academic background, with a whole language that speaks to curatorial staff; but because they are working with the public and with different age groups, they also effectively communicate with people about what they want and are able to listen.

And the reason why I think Assemble might transform the process is because they are the artist's voice. They are the right people to do that job of articulating, questioning and driving forward. And after the first meeting, they suggested the way they would like to work with Tate Collective: rather than be given a brief to be commissioned to build something, it was to mentor Tate Collective.

Assemble were saying - if you work out an honest statement about what Tate as an organisation expects, wants and needs from this and if the young people can work out what they need, we will bring those two together.

## Ideas

DR What I think was really effective was that this process retained the voice and the ideas of the young people involved. Their ideas didn't get diluted, nothing was

ameliorated by staff members or the organisation. The specific ideas they contributed were very much evident.

## Art Gym

SH From an art school sprang forth *Art Gym* - a dynamic reshaping of the art school idea. Artists invited by Tate and Tate Collective - a mixture of local and internationally renowned - made proposals for stations, workshops or talks. Tate Collective developed the programme and took it to Assemble along with our ideas. They consulted and further conceptualised. Assemble assisted with the design of the space and we talked through creative and practical matters. Assemble condensed Tate Collective's visual ideas into a plan. This plan and the programme were then presented to Tate, and then began the process of putting everything into place, ready for the exhibition to open to the public in March 2016.

## The process

AC It felt more like an even partnership, well, a partnership, a real working together between the collective and the staff. For me it seems obvious that there was a greater sense of trust. On the part of the staff, trusting in the quality of work that Assemble do and the collective does. How you work, what you come up with, your sense of responsibility too, that's kind of what I witnessed and it was at times really, well it was very inspiring.

FM I think the point has to do with this idea of process, and designing that process properly. And I think the other learning is... the fact that we stretched the team to understand that certain mechanisms that are applied to exhibitions cannot be applied to projects like this, so that's been pretty good as a way of building trust in whatever will happen next.

SH This idea of the unknown was hard for some departments within the gallery, as they felt as though they had nothing tangible to talk about or present as something that would take place in the gallery for visitors to see. What became clear by the end of the project was that visitors, professionals and funders were interested by the process, and that going forward, staff will be less afraid of not knowing what the result of the process might be.

### Legacy

FM Co-creating part of the programme was a unique opportunity for Tate Liverpool to lead on conceiving a user-generated, co-designed museum - a model that we believe in the future will be fundamental to any cultural organisation. The festival-like series of events, discussions and exhibitions hosted in this framework, will exemplify how a museum can operate as an open-source institution that facilitates exchanges with its audience rather than one-directional transmission of content.



Gaby Sahhar

## Opportunities, representation and space

*Over several years' involvement in Tate Collective London, Gaby Sahhar has come to take a lead role in curating events including Late at Tate. His practice mixes painting, performance and video, and his often autobiographical work explores queer identity in relation to gender within capitalism – themes he has been able to bring into programming at Tate.*

When you're a young person growing up and you're still trying to figure out your identity, whether that be your sexuality or gendered identity or another, you can often find yourself not feeling represented in mainstream society, your school or your social circle. So where do you turn?

Artworks. Artists and galleries. I know I did. I felt like I could confide in artworks growing up, as I could see similar issues executed by artists to those I was experiencing within my own identity through my adolescence and even now. Art that tackled the norms of everyday life made

me realise that I essentially wasn't going crazy; to find a space that would support this creativity and madness was really important to me growing up.

Sometimes I feel like I have learned more through Tate Collective than [when] studying fine art at Goldsmiths. More young people are let down by universities owing to a lack of teaching and rising fees in this climate of educational uncertainty.

The work Tate Collective does is amazing, yet I feel more can be done. Cultural organisations should work towards providing permanent work/social spaces for young people to work and network. Little adjustments such as opening the bar after hours for example, for creatives to meet. After all, we do like a drink and to party and that's often how we meet.

Young creatives are so determined now, more so than ever before. Everyone you speak to nowadays is running some sort of project space or startup for something, including me. Yet we need institutional space and support offline and online to help us grow. Art exists online in so many different mediums nowadays. We should utilise online spaces to access hard to reach young people who are not able to come to Tate owing to geographical boundaries or because they are just not in the know about what's on. Online spaces have people experiencing, speaking and connecting about art in different ways, and as cultural institutions, we can help facilitate this by connecting young people together. Creating an online community of practices which is conducive to discovering and exploring the work of young talent – in short, a Tate art Instagram app connecting people. We need to start documenting the events we curate in our Clore studios in real time live on our websites, in order to have a higher reach of people and to archive our work in an accessible way. Or providing a Google Campus-like environment at Tate that would be a non-hierarchical space.



As scary as that may sound, we need a strong creative hub for new emerging talents; this would be a great start.

We need to take more risks with young talent and we need to represent it properly: representations within Tate archives and on show on Tate walls, for instance. This would have a positive effect within creative circles. We, as young people, would see ourselves represented in permanent collections and therefore come to Tate more to discover about our peers. This would help break down gallery boundaries and demystify the art world, making it a less intimidating space to enter. We need to help future generations of creatives break into the art world, to make it demographically and conceptually relevant for future generations.



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Donna Lynas

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Before *Circuit*, Wysing Arts Centre had limited contact with young people, outside of working with schools and colleges. We'd had less experience working with young people from a diversity of backgrounds. Working with Circuit Cambridge enabled us to see the world through the eyes of these young people and gain an insight into the challenges that contemporary society is throwing at them.

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Sally Thelwell, Ruby Sherwood Martin, Pat Farrell,  
Olga Gribben, Jack Makin, Esme Ward

## Changing the culture at The Whitworth

*Whitworth Young Contemporaries and staff from The Whitworth reflect on the complexity of working together; they comment on how the learning that came from this experience had an impact on the whole organisation, as well as on the gallery's public profile.*

ST Co-production is a process that the whole gallery has to work with. The young people come up with ideas of what they want to do. And then we have to liaise with the different teams across the gallery to see if it's achievable, and the other teams in the gallery have to work differently as well. I think The Whitworth as a whole has had to adjust, which hasn't always been easy, but I think it's been worthwhile.

RSM The fact that we held an event on The Whitworth's re-opening night in 2015 was amazing. The fact that we were given that opportunity to showcase what we were doing. It felt like we became a part of the gallery when it reopened... I think it's changed the public perception of The Whitworth,

because it values youth culture and the opinions of young people.

PF With The Whitworth, I've very rarely ever come up against resistance to stuff I'm trying to do or that the group are trying to do. I've come up against different realities of working, different necessities, and come up against very different mind states, and these can be different from our own and we can learn from that. I feel like having had people who work in my kind of way just in the gallery on an equal footing has by proxy changed the ways of thinking of some people round here. Basically, we've been here and we've been able to demonstrate that we can do what we do pretty well, regardless of how we got here, which is good.

OG As a gallery we now trust young people. I think there was a feeling before that, 'Oh we can't let young people do things because they won't turn up, it won't work'..., but now I think we really do know - because of all the wonderful things that have happened - that we can trust young people who will come and do remarkable things in the gallery. They have completely changed the culture of this gallery.

JM It's definitely changed a lot of the staff's approach to dealing with young people. There seemed to be quite a lot of prejudice - you know, if you don't look like you're meant to be in the space, then you get all eyes on you - I think we've probably all experienced that at one point or another. And it's just great to see us really welcoming people in and really sharing that experience of the gallery.

EW One of the key legacies has been that we are more open as an organisation. So when the gallery was closed and we worked

with young people from all over the place in different communities, different spaces, we said we were never more open than when we were closed. Actually, that sense of openness continues. I think we're open to ideas, to all these young people, to the energy, to [different] ways of doing things. And that's great because it brings those people into the organisation, so another legacy is you walk round this place [and] you will see young people here participating on their terms.

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Funders sometimes  
have a different methodology  
and language to those  
'on the ground'.

What is the core change needed  
within our organisations  
so that we don't always grasp  
at funded projects?

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Thoughts from delegates at the *Circuit* conference,  
Test, Risk, Change, March 2017

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## 'Authenticity' and youth arts funding

*Georgia Colman, GLITCH  
Programme Assistant at MOSTYN,  
believed that the programme  
genuinely affected lots of young  
lives positively, including her  
own. She wanted to respond to the  
Circuit aims and voice her hopes  
as a young creative who believes in  
long-term changes to be made  
in her home town and in the wider  
art world.*

The *Circuit* aims as I understood them:

- Give the reins to 'young' people in order to rejuvenate audiences in contemporary art galleries
- Allow a creative outlet for 'young' people to express themselves and put forward their point of view. Prompted by the riots in 2011
- Create a programme that was totally inclusive and actively aimed to reach young people on the 'fringe'. Something I feel we achieved at GLITCH and feel very proud of

- Create a lasting impact and legacy, meaning achieving lasting change in galleries or solid learning for future programmes of a similar kind
- Change attitudes and opinions towards young people (although this aim I had issues with – isn't youth culture's founding principle the lack of care about older people's attitudes and opinions?)

### 'Cool'?

Remember when you had to go to a party at your parents' friends' house when you were a teenager? The party had all the right things. Loud music, great, abundant food, mood lighting, friendly people. Hell, the house was much nicer than any of your friends' houses and the party had certainly had more money spent on it; but you were never really comfortable. In some ways I left the *Circuit* programme feeling like *Circuit* was the parents' friends' party. Although everything was there on paper, it was often not authentic to the new generation, never quite comfortable in the space, always too polite and at times just not... 'cool'.

Groups of young people with vision and drive were already out there, creating – but the problem was, we weren't funding and establishing relationships with them; we were starting from scratch, on our terms, inviting individuals to a formless group. As an arts graduate in my mid twenties I often wondered, if I didn't work here, would I come? Sometimes the answer was yes, more often than not it was no. That's the feeling I'm trying to analyse here.

It is sometimes said, 'A camel is a horse designed by a committee.' With the *Circuit* programme we brought together people from all different tribes and interests at different points in their education and careers. While positively mixing people together, this watered down the strength of the projects that arose from GLITCH.

A group that does not know its identity cannot make a decision without a 'leader' figure prompting them; this ended up being a member of staff, which in turn took away the peer-led element we were looking for. All this stripped the programme of its authenticity and 'cool'. It became a youth group.

### **Manifesto for funding youth arts with the previous aims**

- 1 Fund young startups - have an application process (this is important, as it assigns responsibility and maturity from the outset). Assign them mentors.

I asked myself throughout the first year of the programme why we weren't getting art students from the surrounding area into GLITCH sessions. I eventually interviewed two of them. They were worried that GLITCH was like a youth group and that their seriousness as artists in the eyes of the gallery would be affected by their joining. If we had had pots of funding, and an application process, it would have set up a professional working relationship from the outset, and legitimised the relationship between groups of young artists and the gallery.

This way of working would have chanced on the fact that once a group of young creatives was picked up and funded/mentored by the gallery, then the things we needed - feedback, sharing and inviting in harder to reach young people as well as activity within our galleries - would have come naturally.

Of course this is radically different from the core group model, but it has come through observations of exciting groups of people popping up over North Wales, who would have been assets to the gallery. 'Noddfa' Bangor, led by young artist Llyr Alun Jones, already has double the social media following of

GLITCH collective, having been around for less than a quarter of the time. If we as galleries had been responsive to funding those kinds of organisations, perhaps now we would now have really strong relationships, and be sharing in the mutual benefit of a larger audience to promote to and invite in.

- 2 Do not force them to work in your space.

Buildings and institutions have attached to them a certain implied code of conduct (kind of like your parents' friends' houses). No matter how much you smile and greet and gesture, the effect of a building is powerful and can't be got around easily. The atmosphere felt like school. We swung constantly from setting tasks (after which the group would appeal for greater autonomy) and leaving the brief blank, in which case the table went silent and the ideas stagnated. We often, because of practical issues to do with insurance, space and clashes, had to turn down ideas that naturally resonate with that age range and 'sterilise' them to a certain extent. The big exception to this was the GLITCH Festival in which we created a skate park within the gallery. The festival worked because the whole space was 'owned' by the group.

- 3 Allow authenticity to naturally develop the things we need as institutions to measure success.

Social media posting, sharing and audience profiling will happen along the line, and will be much less awkward when done on behalf of organisations that are truly 'owned' by the young people. Do not force them to fill in reports, essays, tick boxes, blog posts etc. Asking a young person who just wants to go to a gig to fill in a ten-minute survey does our organisations damage. We become 'corporate', and frankly, annoying.

Yes, we need to measure whether or not the funding is being used appropriately, but first we need to give it a chance to work.

- 4 Through mutual respect, form working and sharing relationships with these organisations/groups/bands etc. for one-off events/exhibitions in the gallery. In this vision, every major contemporary art gallery will have an 'adopted' gallery in the local area run by young people.

One of the biggest gripes has been that there is simply no space within the organisation that can be owned by the group. No space where they can come and use equipment freely, no space where they can set down their tools. I observed that roughly half of our members joined because they wanted to make.

Of course we want activity within MOSTYN, but this could come through events, shows and workshops 'guest hosted' by young creatives, who would act as influencers and bring their social networks with them. We had success with this in the GLITCH Festival with Noddfa's open mic stage, for instance.

- 6 Remove age restrictions.

I was in the age range for two years of the programme and was unable to invite my friends, who are all 25+, to come to our events. Several times I was told to turn away people who were outside of the age bracket and that felt wasteful, detrimental and a bit embarrassing. Young people aren't interested in putting on events for other young people their age - particularly in North Wales, age is not as tribal as it once was. It shouldn't matter that an exhibition was made by 15-25s; all that should matter is whether or not it is any good.

### Concluding thoughts

All of this is not to say that during our time in *Circuit* we didn't achieve great and lasting things. We established working connections between artists and young people through the exhibition project *&: On Collaboration*. We successfully integrated young people from our partnership projects into our core group, boosting their self-esteem greatly and making them comfortable in the space. We held a truly unprecedented festival for the area which commissioned several young creatives and really brought the gallery alive. What links all these successes together is the fact that they were all about individuals and their projects.

Once we stopped trying to work as a democratic group, and allowed groups of interest a portion of funding to see their particular ideas come to life, we suddenly saw a lot more self-starting activity and the feeling that this was something exciting grew. Now imagine if we had worked like that from the beginning. I think if these things had happened they would not only still be running today, but they would be getting stronger every day - and this potentially could have created an authentically cool sister organisation that would have promoted MOSTYN directly to our target audience in a way that was based on mutual respect.



# Voice

Raluca Moraru

## Youth, change and honesty

*Test, Risk, Change, the Circuit conference, was opened with this provocation by Raluca Moraru. During Circuit, her journey saw her move from Collabor-8 Collective member to Youth Programmer at Nottingham Contemporary. Drawing on her experience, she invited everybody to think about how young people can be agents for change within the cultural sector.*

I would like to very briefly introduce myself - I am Raluca and I work as a *Circuit* Assistant (now Youth Programmer) here at Nottingham Contemporary. I have been involved with *Circuit* from 2014, initially not as a member of staff but rather as a young person - to be more precise I was part of Collabor-8 Collective, which is Nottingham Contemporary's young people's steering group. Being part of Collabor-8 Collective and *Circuit* gave me a real sense of purpose and belonging, which I found difficult to find elsewhere at the time, as a young person who has just finished university and wanted to work in



the arts sector where the opportunities were very little and the support limited. What really struck me about *Circuit* was the focus on ownership and its aim to give young people a voice – but not any voice – their voice, unfiltered, raw and authentic.

I started working professionally on *Circuit* about six months ago and I really valued the opportunity to be part of a programme that gave me so much. Becoming a member of staff has really opened my eyes to the challenges of delivering a youth programme that is responsive, ambitious and meaningful, but at the same time open and accessible to young people from diverse backgrounds. Diversity is something that we talk about a lot in the art world, to the point that it sometimes becomes this abstract concept that we really struggle to make sense of. Diversity is about acknowledging that everyone is different, respecting the value these differences bring to everyone's life and ensuring everybody can access the same opportunities. So, for cultural organisations to have their practice informed by diversity is not progressive, nor is it ambitious, it is simply fair. It is how things should be – it is a representation of us as a society. One of *Circuit's* biggest achievements, for me, has been the fact that it brought such an influx of new, pertinent and interesting voices into the cultural sector in order to inform not only how youth projects are run, but also how art institutions can better represent diverse communities and diverse voices within their practice.

This is the start of a really important conversation and I would like to invite you to continue this conversation in your discussions today. Just a few questions to spark ideas: on a practical level, how can we ensure the partnerships between the youth and cultural sectors continue post *Circuit*? How can cultural institutions make sure their work is always informed by a diverse youth voice? And ultimately, what does this diverse youth voice look like?

Now, outside of my job here, I work for a social enterprise called Communities Inc., where I spend a lot of time looking at government policy and one thing

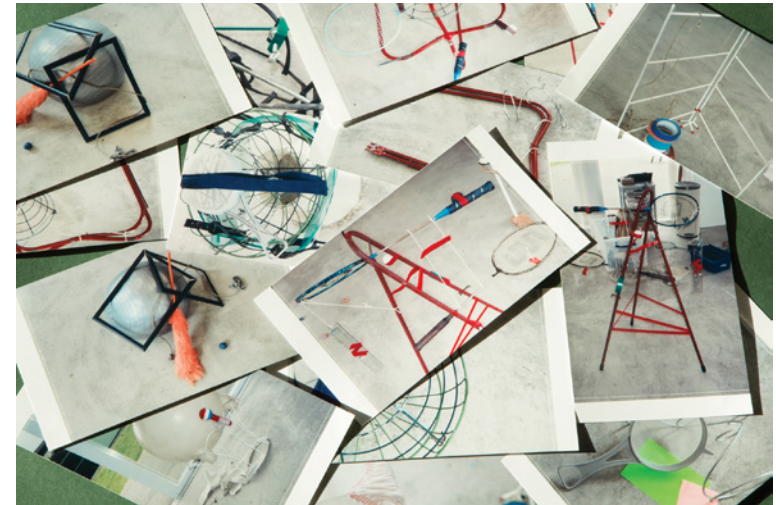
that has become very obvious to me lately is that the youth and the youth sector are becoming a very topical subject for politicians. For example, a lot of the government's post-Brexit hate crime policy is centred around young people and involving them in tackling inequalities. I think this is fantastic because we need this momentum and conversations to happen at the highest levels to move things forward. However, is it fair to put this amount of pressure on young people to be agents for change? What skills are they equipped with to tackle these inequalities? We live in turbulent times, socially and politically, and within this context the younger generation are expected to be activists, to be forward thinking and have all the answers.

So my provocation for you is to use today as an opportunity to think about what role art institutions can play in supporting young people to rise up to these challenging times and discuss how the cultural sector needs to change to stay relevant for diverse young people. To take this one step further: is institutional change even achievable, taking into consideration the complex structure of art galleries and the uncertain nature of funding? Those are all very big questions that I am sure a lot of you have asked for years and I don't think any of us expect to have the answers today – however today is a great opportunity to talk about these topics in an honest and open fashion.

For the team here at Nottingham Contemporary, honesty is something that has been at the core of *Circuit* since the beginning, and has been a multi-faceted value that helped shape our work. When working with young people, being honest and transparent is crucial in forming sustainable and fruitful relationships. Drawing from this, I think one of *Circuit's* greatest achievements is empowering youth practitioners to look at their practice and, when needed, to have to courage to say: this hasn't worked, let's change it up. I consider that the realisation that we can be open and we don't have to pretend things always go right is huge and so meaningful.

To sum things up, yes, honesty is important on an individual level and as a sector, but honesty is also vital today. I think we have all been to events before where people hesitate to challenge or voice their real opinions and that is not what today should be about. Today is about honest conversations and it's about looking inwards and outwards to really grasp the progress that has been made and all the hard work that has gone into *Circuit*, but also to make a commitment of working together post *Circuit*, as this collaboration between sectors can be a catalyst for change.

I would like to invite all of you to be open, not too politically correct and make your voices heard.



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## Is the term 'young person' negative?

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There was a shift point where I realised I had a voice and that was a powerful thing. You're not just a number or statistic, you actually make a difference.

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*Jas Lucas, a Collabor-8 Collective member at Nottingham Contemporary, was part of a discussion about the term 'young people'. They were the only one out of a group of ten collective members who saw the term as a positive description.*

I understood where the rest of the group were coming from when they said they had an issue with the word 'young' being used to describe those on the higher end of the 15-25 age range.

The majority of the group agreed that it made them sound 'inexperienced' and reminded them of school. They also said it 'undermined everything we do'. My view is that we should keep the term 'young person' and turn it into something with more positive connotations.

Others said they would not refer to themselves as a 'young person' and said they don't want to be labelled by their age. However, as another member pointed out, we need 'something to write down' in order for people to know who's involved and who events are targeted at.

We discussed the possible use of words such as 'community' and 'collective' and, although the response to this was positive, we agreed the word 'young' would have to creep in somehow for things to make sense, for example 'young community' or 'young collective'.

This discussion/debate may sound like a never-ending one, but it's so important to question the language we use with the aim of getting as many 'young people' involved in creative, social events as possible, to break down the stereotypes some may have about galleries and artistic spaces.



"FIRSTSITE HAVE BREACHED THE GAP - THEY GENUINELY CARE AND TREAT YOU AS A PERSON."

"A DIFFERENT WAY OF GETTING MY VOICE HEARD, AND I HAVE BUILT ROOTS."

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## The trouble with youth voice

*This article is an extract of a paper  
Steven Hyland, Tate Collective  
Liverpool member, contributed  
to the British Education Research  
Association Conference in 2015.*

At this point I want to pose the question: what is youth voice? Most young people's groups within art galleries are, like Tate Collective Liverpool, aged 15–25. Is this youth voice representative of all young people in the local area? That's something I often wonder. I would describe the ideal youth voice as a collective voice from people of different ages, backgrounds, ethnicities and interests.

As a commitment to diversity is an important aspect of what we do in Tate Collective Liverpool and *Circuit*, I often question the validity of my input as I'm already so engaged in the arts; I'm personally pretty well catered for without having to voice an opinion to change something for my benefit. I can see how this can work the other way too. People who are not as used to an arts environment as me, and people who are closer to 15 than 25, could feel as though their age and lack of experience mean that their input isn't as important and won't be taken as seriously. Even I felt like this when I first joined as a twenty-one-year-old arts graduate.

It's the voices of the younger, less experienced people that we need more of if we are to open up galleries to even more young people and for them to feel as though it's a space for everyone and this is one of the key aims of *Circuit* – so I try and consider things from other young people's perspectives as well as my own. Only so much can be done by imagining, and for that reason I try whenever possible to bring out the thoughts of people who are less comfortable in an art gallery setting, younger, less experienced, or have a different background to me.

There is a natural tendency towards wanting to be professional, particularly once you are over the age of twenty. After all, there are occasionally staff members who are of similar age. Are the young staff members' views thought of as being part of a youth voice? I suspect not and instead say that they are seen by everyone as being a professional opinion. People with arts backgrounds and hopes to develop a career in the arts, do they follow what they have seen before them in what other professionals do? Can a youth voice be something that is heavily influenced by established practices? People who have been with the Collective a long time – do they have a better grip of the gallery as a whole and through the process of time have they become institutionalised? I think there is a place for people who are seeking that step inside a profession, people like me. We can act as representatives of a youth voice but shouldn't take our own voices to be representative of all young people, nor should anyone else take them as that. When in a small group, how do you get the greater range of opinions you're aiming to represent?

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We were formed as nineteenth-century institutions. This means we have a lot of history and also some baggage to carry with us and many habits, feelings and ways of being that need to change because we now operate in a twenty-first-century world. It's our ethical and social responsibility to be listening actively and be in conversation with people, especially young people, so that process of an uneven playing field of access to the arts begins to shift.

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## Alternative consent form

*In response to her experience of Circuit, member of YAK (Young Art Kommunity) and Firstsite Trustee Charlotte Winters created a permission form to demonstrate the frustrations of young people within the Circuit programme. This form mirrors the format of the paperwork given to 'young' participants or their guardians to sign at the start of projects.*

In a lot of senses, the programme was given to young people: it was them shaping the programme with their ideas, and therefore their own and their peers' learning. However, although the perceptions and attitudes towards young people have started to shift, there are still a lot of restrictions and occasions where they are treated like young children. Some of these scenarios and processes do not even seem relevant or seem really over the top. This means the young people are allowed to shape the programme only as long as it stays within the perimeters of what the organisations want.

***Circuit* programme:  
I'd like to take part and have my photo taken**

To be completed by parent/guardian if under 80 years

- I hereby determine my full and ultimate permission accepting any chance of damage to myself, including fatality, knowing I have signed away my life on this form for this programme
- I accept not following the instructions for this activity increases risk to myself or others
- I give permission to allow any incriminating photos to be used for the purposes of *Circuit* and for humiliation
- I hereby sign to abide by the laws around nose picking
- I am in the gallery to conduct myself professionally in the ways obviously used in this environment
- I will be as creative as possible and give it my all, knowing my ideas are very important in shaping the programme
- I will pass my ideas through the people necessary to get them approved allowing any changes they want

**Please complete the following,  
ticking relevant circles**

I am over 80 years and agree to:

- Participate in the activity
- Mugshot taking and use
- Relevant behaviours outlined above

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Next of kin name: \_\_\_\_\_

(Please note they have to live in a hobbit hole, have 3 eyes and hairy toes).

Next of kin contact details: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## Starting out

*New roles were created in each gallery as part of Circuit, often bringing in staff who were early in their career. Alice Thickett, Youth Programmer at Nottingham Contemporary, navigated how to become part of the wider team, and how her own voice, and that of the young people who she worked closely with, was able to be heard within the institution.*

When young people who want to work in the arts enter the cultural sector in a job role, they are filled with enthusiasm, naivety, excitement and anxiety, and this is relevant not just because I work with young people but because when I came on board at Nottingham Contemporary I was still in the 15–25 year old age bracket. *Circuit* was an action research project, and part of that for me meant learning about work life while working.

Looking back, I can see how crucial the support and freedom I had at work has been in allowing me to develop my priorities from having a

job (any job, quick quick) in the arts, to truly advocating for participation in the cultural sector.

This shift in priorities has not been an easy or smooth transition, and programming for a huge project while also trying to understand the intricacies of office politics can only be likened to how Dorothy felt when she saw the real Wizard of Oz – there's a lot of work involved to get there, the occasional reality check is needed and the learnings will reveal themselves in time (usually after a long sleep).

I feel incredibly grateful that I could speak honestly about these frustrations with my line manager. Allowing me to air my thoughts in a non-judgemental environment meant that I could better understand my concerns and start the problem-solving process quicker. This honesty extended to the young people involved in *Circuit*, which enabled us all to stop worrying about hidden agendas, get on the same page and positively move forward.

Because of this, the youth programme moved quickly. One day I would be asking for a meeting about a national report and the next a concern about a tweet. When I asked to change my working hours because of the young people's availability, permission was not only granted, the decision was applauded. It has always been clear to me that even if the organisation isn't ready to make the change in practice that could potentially take years to make, I was still given the leeway needed to flex and respond when necessary.

But responsiveness isn't just about moving quickly, the quality of the response is important too. Despite my age and comparative lack of experience, my manager responded to my enthusiasm by listening to my ideas and subsequently trusting me to embed the programme immediately. Responding to my need to prove myself and gain respect in my new role – but still providing me with support – meant



I had a firmer foot in my new environment, and was in a much better position to respond to the needs of the young people around me, and programme in a much more authentic way.

Authentic peer-led practice can be difficult in an organisation that has much broader overarching aims. In the lead up to the Affinity Festival (our *Circuit* festival), a young team and I were absolutely convinced we knew best, and we were passionate that we were speaking for a genuine youth voice. Although negotiating roles was difficult at times (we didn't always know best), the director and managers generously stood back to allow us to own the project, letting us be a voice for young people and less for the priorities of the gallery. This isn't the only example of their generosity: time after time I have been given space to put my own name on work, present in meetings and voice my own opinion. Being able to take ownership early in the role meant that I could, in turn, give space to the young people in the collective and still know that my ego was sufficiently sated!

I feel this is when the shift in my thinking started to happen, when I realised that this job was not only for my career growth, but for the young people accessing the programme and all those that hadn't yet. I believe I will look back on this particular shift in priorities as being fundamental in my career and also my personal growth and is something I could not have gone through without the values we identified through *Circuit* and implemented as a team - flexibility, generosity, honesty and responsiveness.

I have been empowered to give others a voice, to try to change practice and to enable other young people to do the same. I am very grateful for my manager's time, support and utter belief in my abilities. Identifying these values and being treated with respect has meant that I can be a much better employee and programmer, and have learned how I too can be a supportive manager in the future.

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One morning, as I walked through our noisy office, I noticed someone I didn't recognise. She wasn't staring at a computer screen or talking on the phone. Instead she was absorbed in sketching. I said hello and discovered she was a member of our *Circuit* group who had asked to spend time in the office. For me this was when *Circuit* arrived at Kettle's Yard. This modest, but quietly radical activity was to signal the transformative change to come.

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## Fresh Perspectives: Tours at Tate Modern



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*Fresh Perspectives was designed to offer a new outlook on the Tate collection, devised and delivered by young people from Tate Collective London. It was managed by Laura Turner-Blake, Curator: Young People's Programmes, Tate Britain & Tate Modern, and Shan Rixon, artist.*

Fresh Perspectives invited young people, aged 15–25 years, to design and lead public tours at Tate Modern. Lead artist Shan Rixon supported the group to research, structure and lead tours, which were relevant to young people's interests. Putting young people at the face of the institution, the project aimed to raise the profile of Tate Collective and improve Tate's offer for young people.

Following a pilot in the first year, the project developed into two parts:

### **Part 1**

Physical tours which coincided with the opening of the new Tate Modern extension

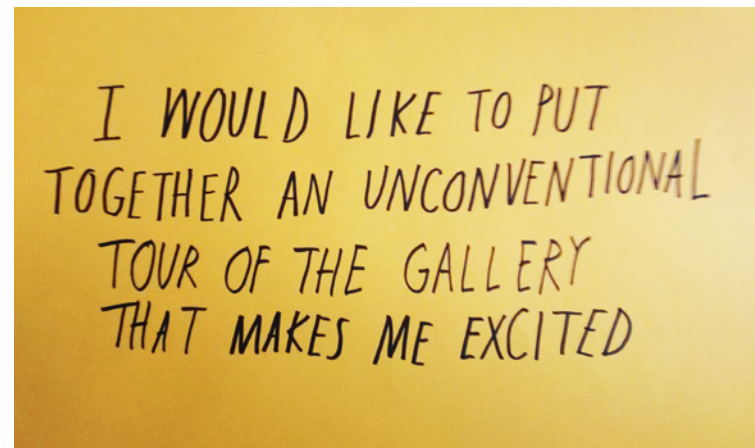
## Part 2

Tour content repurposed into digital content to reach a wider audience online

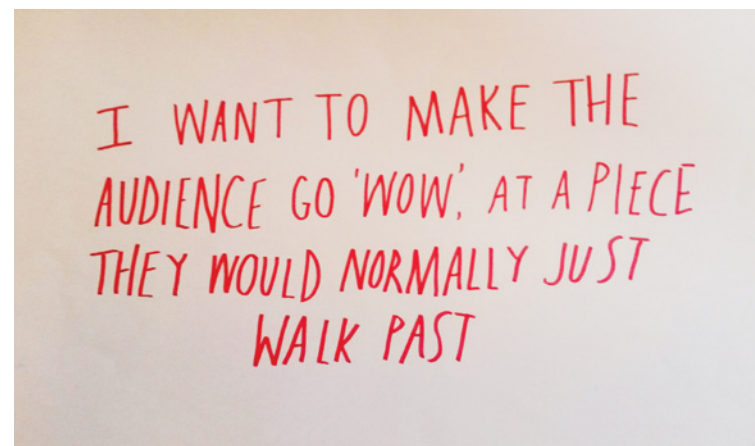
Fresh Perspectives provided the opportunity for members of Tate Collective to learn new skills. The project included presentations from Tate staff, group discussions and peer review around topics such as public speaking, engaging audiences and creating accessible content. Building on Tate's existing offer for young audiences, the project profiled new viewpoints through alternative formats. It also sought to change attitudes and behaviours towards young people.

Young people were supported to push boundaries in terms of introducing their own ideas and presentation formats. This encouraged young people to express their individual styles, take ownership of the research process and make informed decisions about their tour content. Tours covered themes such as feminism, questioning how we should behave in a gallery, the artist's process and the spaces artists occupy. Fresh Perspectives stood apart from regular tours and the audience commented on young people's enthusiasm, originality and unique viewpoints; one of the Tate Guides commented that it was unlike what they would usually do, a 'tour de force'.

The project was in keeping with wider organisational goals to celebrate the opening of the new development at Tate Modern, which created new opportunities for collaboration. The Young People's Programmes team worked with the Volunteers and Digital teams to share resources, skills and expertise. Within the context of a large organisation such as Tate, this supported cross-departmental understanding and further collaboration. For example, the original Fresh Perspectives tours were reconfigured from thirty minutes into a 10-Minute Talks format so they could become part of the Tate Modern opening weekend in June 2016, a high-visibility moment for the gallery. Visitor responses to young



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WALK PAST

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people sharing their personal interpretations and unique insights to the Tate collection were overwhelmingly positive.

Working with the Digital team to produce video content of Fresh Perspectives ensured this success wasn't short lived and all the time, energy and commitment involved was translated into a permanent offer online. Tate Collective were supported to tailor their talks for online content, informed by their own research, personal references and individual tastes.

Through researching, structuring and leading tours, young people gained new insights into the collection and were able to share this experience with their peers and a wider public audience. Given the opportunity to review and reflect throughout the process, they were able to inform the project as it evolved. The project's cyclical nature of do - reflect - change and so on ensured the project progressed forward, rather than repeating mistakes.

In terms of next steps, young people could be supported to play more of a leadership role in devising and delivering such programmes. Young people could work in partnership with an artist to plan and lead sessions more democratically. They could devise frameworks collaboratively and also be encouraged to bring a critical eye when working with a historic collection, for example, in highlighting some of its biases and absences.

Alongside wider institutional priorities, the staff, time and budget available are determining factors for the future of projects such as Fresh Perspectives. Key to their success is considering what young people can gain through taking part and to ensure it remains mutually beneficial for them and Tate. Asking the young people what they want to do next, while championing art and its value to society, is an ideal place to start.

# Audiences

*Sally Noall*

## Making voices: Pace and tone

*How can an organisation align itself and keep pace with its different partners and visitors? How can it communicate with and welcome its audiences? Sally Noall, Programme Manager: Young People, Tate St Ives, reflects on these questions.*

In collaborations, partnerships, audience and peer-led activity, a common pace is necessarily created. Without it you are halted. A shared pace is hard-worked for, with each stakeholder bringing their own pace and stride. Working paths are rarely fully aligned across external agencies, but rather converging and diverging at different moments. In collaborating, we join together for a short time towards a shared aim, then shift apart to pursue our own path, at our own pace.

One series, an off-site workshop, a single visit, a phone call, a timely email reply, is a success in that moment. It can take weeks of attempts, and failed attempts, in communication, to finally meet face to face with partners.

The size or duration of an alignment is not quantified or determined by effort: it can take less work to deliver a series of events than it can to produce a single, co-produced workshop.

A volunteer youth leader who gives two evenings a week to run a group makes extra effort to attend a weekday meeting, to fit with our gallery working hours. A teacher commits an hour to meet, knowing that the work they could be grading will go home with them that night.

This is working at full pace.

A young person attending school has an evening job; another is working full-time, in a low-paid role, another is a student, another unemployed. All funding their travel or train fare from limited income. All committing half of all their Saturdays to share and learn with you, to visit and attend programmes and events.

These define the dominant pace.

It is the organisation that must shift in pace, to step with the dominant pace of its audience, partners and participants. Internal pace is external presentation: pace is who you are, and your pace is your relevance. Audience, participants, partners, are already shifting their pace in connecting with a gallery. When we step into a gallery this is our audiences' offer of their own pace and duration; offering the pace of our presence, of which our ideas shift and our thoughts are voiced. Pace in our mannerisms and actions, and pace in our footsteps and dwell spaces.

Three years of on/off conversation finally made a project happen. A youth group disbanded owing to cuts in service and, much later, was reformed and rehoused. We aligned pace weeks before funding ended. We delivered a project and committed to seeking further funding for a future project. We will diverge and find shared pace again, in another guise.

When it works well, an exhibition, an event, a workshop, a programme, a museum, matches with the pace of its visitors: dwell points and flow synchronise with audience movement and pause. The experience acknowledges differences in pace and provides layers of engagement and choice:

*Where have you been?*

*I was reading that big panel on the wall.*

*Is that all? I've already been around and seen everything.*

*Is the ticket queue too long? How many steps do you take before you see a work of art? Did you pick up a booklet? How was the coffee in the café? Did you see that weird interactive thing? Can you follow it on social media? Are your feet tired, is there somewhere to sit?*

Pace is key to balance, and to lose pace is to risk losing equality. Once out of stride, when one outpaces another, someone is travelling ahead and someone is left behind. You are no longer on the same journey, but divergent.

### **Tone**

Tone is an expression of self – of an organisation or of an individual; an acknowledgement and determiner of your presentation, of where your edges are, and where edge is sharp and defined, or blurred and flexible.

Tone is status assertion: authoritative, submissive, egalitarian or indifferent. As easy, inviting and welcoming as it is hierarchical and diminishing. Tone reveals the self and defines your expectations and limitations in, and of, your relationships. What you are willing to give, and what you are not.

There is a negotiation in speaking with new audiences, discovering new relationships and the form which they take through a negotiated discovery of voice. For an organisation, whom is your tone appealing to, who is passive, and to whom is your tone a barrier?

Dialogue is two-way, but the emphasis is on the organisation. With information overload, people have the choice to listen or not. An organisation needs to make its message worth listening to, expressing content through language and tone of voice.

How to balance this tone of voice across different audiences? How do you speak to an audience which values and utilises emoticons as a significant part of their daily language? Is it desirable to use emoticons and match them in their own language, and if not, how do we find a language just as potent in its message delivery?



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It sounds simple to get young people into the gallery by holding, say, a huge party, but it isn't. Nottingham Contemporary can be a space which welcomes different youth subcultures to interact, from sport to gaming. It's not about forcing interaction with art. It's about showing that galleries are spaces that provide a platform for creativity to be appreciated. If they subsequently connect with works they encounter in the galleries, then all the better.

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## Mystery Shoppers

*Andrew Vaughan, Learning Manager, The Whitworth, worked with young people from 42nd Street as undercover visitors, to understand how young people with mental health difficulties experience the gallery. The Mystery Shoppers project also aimed to provide staff with a deeper understanding of the vulnerabilities and issues that these visitors may face.*

On any day, a significant number of the 11-25 year old gallery visitors may be experiencing anxiety, depression or other emotional issues. When working with specific target communities, such as young carers or young people with disabilities, this number is likely to be higher. It is important to understand how these young people experience a cultural space and what staff can do to make the visit as enjoyable and beneficial as possible, to encourage repeat visits and deepen engagement.

For some of the young people we worked with it was the first time they had been to the gallery. Areas they investigated included interactions



with staff, the experience of walking through the door, the facilities, and how staff reacted to anxiety-related problems. Their recommendations included:

#### **Information about artwork**

- Look at how information on artworks is presented to stimulate interest
- Provide information in accessible formats
- Work with young people to create ways to give young people the information they want. This might be an audio tour, a highlights booklet or a printed key. Young people wanted more detail about what they were seeing and didn't feel confident looking at a piece with just the name and date of an artwork

#### **Interaction with young people**

- Make staff easy to spot in crowds
- It takes a lot for a young person to ask for help, so offer it!
- Take time to talk to young people. A simple exchange will encourage them to come back

#### **Environment**

- Give clear warnings around photography, flash and noise
- Provide a quiet room on busy days and advertise it at the entrance
- Quiet isn't always relaxing. Consider programming music at certain times in certain galleries (for example, an hour of pop music every Friday). This will make spaces more accessible for some people

#### **Food and drink**

- Provide a wider range of healthy drink options for young people
- Consider introducing a young person's menu (that is, something similar in idea to a children's menu).

#### **Website and social media**

- Use social media as a conversation with young people
- Review the website with young people and help web visitors navigate your site by identifying who they are and sending them to pages with targeted information

#### **Young people's events**

- Hand out programmes at special events so people know what is happening and when. Surprises aren't always fun
- Plan for crowds at young people's events and include spaces and activities for people who need quiet time
- Start with music at the beginning of events so that there are no awkward silences

#### **The shop**

- Greet people individually when they enter the shop
- Introduce product lines aimed at young people and children
- Show prices clearly to reduce browsing anxiety

Rachael Coward, Sophie Ryder

## Working with Wookey: *The Drift*

*Members of Tate Collective St Ives collaborated with choreographer and performance artist Sara Wookey. Sara's work explores inserting performance in public spaces and the interruption of the normality of moving or acting within a space. Collective members Rachael Coward and Sophie Ryder undertook a research project with Sara at Tate Britain, in preparation for a series of live events to be hosted at Tate St Ives.*

On arrival at Tate Britain, it became apparent that we weren't going to be looking at the work on the walls as we might have expected; we had an ulterior motive. Instead, our focus was based on the gallery visitors and to explore their role within the institutional setting. We were particularly interested in how visitors would navigate around the gallery space, as well as the patterns and 'instant choreographies' that formed. We also had to adapt a mode of thinking to include ourselves within our research; after all, we were also visitors to the gallery.

We adopted the roles of observers, in order to unpack the behaviour surrounding the institutional stereotype. Our aim was to identify the rules of behaviours, and the codes of space, both visible and invisible. We are all familiar with gallery rules: no running, do not touch, no photography. But does this signage prompt certain behaviours? Words are underestimated. They subconsciously construct our day-to-day life, whether it be through road signage or commands in the gallery space. People might choose to ignore them but they are still aware of their presence, and this affects the way that people behave in the knowledge of them.

What is the difference between rules, allowances and accidental encounters? Do we experience something differently when it is spontaneously presented to us, in comparison to the business of manufacturing an experience for visitors? Is it better to be instructed to look at something, or is it better to stumble upon it and face the experience with no prior knowledge?

Floor and wall markings direct the flow of visitors. They act as two-dimensional boundaries despite there being no physical barrier for people to cross. Visitors are reluctant to encroach a distance of 1.5 metres to approach an artwork, so they find themselves leaning in to take a closer look – why not take a step forward? Their approach towards the space is dictated by the pace of other visitors, and the invigilators that observe them; are you judged for walking too quickly through a gallery? Furniture becomes a refuge; visitors feel the need to take a rest after prolonged amounts of time on their feet. Voices are in hushed tones; whispers scarcely pass between their lips before they seek out the approval of a nearby invigilator. Interactive work becomes an invitation for communication, and finally voices become pronounced to liven up the space.

Children see the world as their playground; they are yet to be formally constructed for the expected behaviour of an institutional space,

therefore they are 'uneducated' in the rules. To them, visible barriers such as tiles on the floor become irrelevant, only physical barriers become noticeable. It was refreshing to see the full potential of the gallery space being utilised.

Through our research, we have compiled a typology of classic institutional stances and poses held by members of the public. Are these stances taken automatically or are they adopted to reflect the body language of others? Would you see these outside of the gallery walls?

The role of the gallery is one of care; to take care of the visitors and to take care of the artwork that it houses. But which is more important? From our experiences in Tate we have discovered an underlying approach of thinking towards visitors in the gallery space; by taking on a similar role to that of the observational invigilators, we have identified certain behaviours dictated by the invisible and unspoken rules of an institution.

Tate Collective's work with Sara Wookey culminated in a series of performances in Tate St Ives called *Drifts*. The aim: to create a performance inside the gallery toying with the conventions of visitor behaviour.

### **The Drift**

A group of people move silently through the gallery spaces, acting as a single body as they move together. Their movements exaggerate and at the same time question the actions of the visitors; why not move at speed? Why not sit on the floor? Speed, height, gaze and stance are all explored; *The Drift* evolves as new leaders continuously come forward and then disappear back into the group.

There is a silent invitation to join, but are you already part of the performance as a viewer? The group are mimicking your movements

after all. But are the visitors aware of this? Do they realise they are the subject matter of the work? That they are as equally in the spotlight as *The Drift* itself; and that their actions counter one another?

Space is utilised to the maximum; the floor becomes a refuge to sit, to kneel, to lie down. The walls become just as important as the artworks; *The Drift* approaches and engages with both. *The Drift* observes as it is observed. It is a transient performance with no given start or end; like a flock of birds the group flows together and then disperses.

No two *Drifts* are ever the same.

## What am I looking at? Disrupting the gallery space



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*Tate Collective London members, including Jessye Bloomfield, sought to challenge traditional behaviours and perceived boundaries in galleries through breaking the silence and welcoming audiences to see spaces in different ways.*

For Late at Tate Britain in 2015, we responded to the conceptual themes when programming. April's theme Question allowed us to really play around with breaking some of the perceived boundaries in the gallery space and to question conventional gallery etiquette. Our theme in May was Disrupt, and so it was clear we needed to build on the performances we'd already staged and add a new layer of intervention to help engage a new, young audience. We decided sound would be a great way of pushing through the barrier of silence within galleries, so we chose to work with THE REC, an experimental choir based in London.

While April's performances were focused in smaller spaces, this time round we staged a piece through one of the largest spaces

at Tate Britain, the Duveen gallery, which runs across the entire ground floor. Performers stood among Christina Mackie's ambient sculptures swaying rhythmically before transforming their movements and crawling along the huge space all the way across and down the main staircase.

We worked with dancers from the Next Choreography programme at Siobhan Davies Dance. They moved around the space together as a trio, and responded directly to the works of art on display. Sometimes their responses were playful as they moved around mimicking paintings and sculptures, as well as beautifully reflecting more abstract works of art using movements of brushstrokes or curves of sculptures to inform their physical movement.

We performed again using weather balloons in one of the historic galleries, this time with THE REC choir, who created mechanical and obscure sounds that tied in with the rhythmic sounds of the performer's breathing and the bicycle pump noises. The addition of sound added a new layer of texture to the performances and we clearly sensed a difference in our audience.

We brainstormed what we felt were the biggest barriers within arts institutions for young visitors and realised that the space itself can often carry a hostile reputation. Despite working at Tate and being familiar with the gallery space, we all admitted that this sense of intimidation still sometimes affects us. When we programme Tate Collective events we normally use artworks as starting points for inspiration, but using space as a starting point has opened up new methods of working. We've come to realise the importance of dissolving social script within the gallery space so that visitors can feel uninhibited to enjoy and engage with the collection on the walls.

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*I always thought galleries weren't  
the place for me because  
you know, any kind of media will  
tell you, galleries are for middle-  
aged, generally white people,  
they're not really for everybody  
to go and enjoy, it's sort  
of a middle-class thing. That's  
what I thought of it before.*

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## The death of Michael Jackson and the 'Right here, right now'

*In the context of the longer lead-in times and lengthy organisational processes, Sally Noall, Programme Manager: Young People, Tate St Ives, considers whether responsiveness, relevance and reactive programming are possible in galleries.*

Museums and galleries are competing for attention in a world super-saturated with the visual, aural and sensory, both real and virtual. We can feel instantly and culturally satiated as fast as we can Google Michael Jackson or Mona Lisa, and without ever having to move location and with minimal investment of time, energy and cost.

The 'King of Pop', Michael Jackson, died on 25 June 2009. Within three hours the EMP Museum, Seattle [renamed the Museum of Pop Culture (MoPP)], announced their tribute of memorial activities beginning the following day. Within twenty-four hours they had delivered an event at a local music spot, exhibited Jackson's iconic glove and jacket, showcased his music videos on-site and created talk-back stations, a

pavement chalk memorial and an opportunity to share reactions online. Wow. Working in a gallery/museum as coordinator of a Young People's Programme, I admire the feat EMP achieved in planning and delivering such an immediate response, and in return making EMP relevant to and valued by its community.

Two women, who met while standing in line waiting to watch the memorial on the live-feed at the museum, said that even though they could have watched the memorial at home, they were grateful to have a place to go and wanted to be in the presence of other fans.

Immediacy itself does not signify relevance, but we struggle to be relevant without a timely response; that is, to identify and address current issues, ideas, technology, progress, interests and challenges as they happen and avoid pondering, procrastinating and proceduralising (I made that one up) beyond the point in time that is relevant. In programming for young people, immediacy is a challenge I come across frequently: what's the hit? What will they take away from a session that will bring them back for the next one? How do we balance an immediate satiation with longer-term engagement and enquiry and create hunger for more? What's the interest for the right here, right now?

Responding is not simply devising stimulating sessions, but programming for change, so that any session can directly and immediately incorporate the unexpected ideas and interests of its participants. If we align with our visitors, understand, ask and share their current concerns and invite these as our guiding principles, we work towards creating a fresh and valid learning approach. The challenge to the institution is to implement ways of working that are familiar to young people and fit with their needs. How can we be instant, reactive and embrace the same timeframe as the fast-shifting world we inhabit? How do we keep up, contend with or mirror the choice, accessibility and instant

visual, aural and sensory satiation fulfilled by media and consumerism? Art can be slow and seeping but our engagement has to begin with the right here, right now, to capture attention long enough to encourage a change of pace.

As an example of swiftness, and the dangers of not acting in such a way, the Los Angeles County Museum of Art was funded by the Irvine Foundation, along with twenty-seven other galleries in 2006-11, to explore their own relevance within their communities. Anticipating a rise in technology, the museum worked towards a participative virtual record and response, only to discover the fast-moving world of technology outran the capabilities of the museum, and resulted in an innovation that was scrapped in 2012 as technology surpassed the pace of the museum's response. To work with immediacy asks a lot, including:

- That we embrace action research so that staff and visitors are encouraged to interpret, engage and take risks, but without the encumbrance of time-consuming processes
- That we trust ourselves to spot the challenge, evaluate, react
- That we discover and support a new skill set for the future; skills of creative thinking to change, adapt, respond, react and proact
- That we incorporate the experience of staff, the research of institutions and the interests, questions, knowledge and expertise of our visitors

There cannot be suggestions of particular, practical solutions applicable to specific situations, but rather a wider learning approach that can be applied as appropriate across many situations; we have a lot to discover about working in this way from our young communities. Immediacy is a challenge posed to museums and galleries, not only from our young people but from the fast-evolving and changing

worlds of the real and the virtual. A challenge posed to us from future generations of museum goers, who may not even be aware, who may not even be born yet. It's a challenge to the future of museums and galleries, and one of relevance. To really embrace the young age group, we need to find common ground and to understand what is fixed and what is changeable for the institution and for the young people we want to engage with. And when we come across an area that is fixed and not-for-changing, this is precisely the moment we should not answer, 'We don't do that,' but a pose a question to ourselves of, 'Could we do that?' And then we need to act on it, and fast.







## Late at Tate Britain: Audience research

*Late at Tate Britain became part of the Young People's Programme in 2015, enabling young people from Tate Collective to have central input into the programme. Sabine Doolin, Audience Research and Insight Manager, used it as a case study for to consider audience development targeted at a younger and more ethnically and socioeconomically diverse audience. Her reflections are informed by research conducted by Sphere Insights, led by external Circuit Evaluator Angela Diakopoulou.*

Targeted at a diverse audience of 18–25 year olds, and with a mix of music, participation, interventions, discussions and debates, Late at Tate Britain aims to create an open, relaxed and welcoming atmosphere in which young people can engage with, explore and enjoy the Tate collection as an accessible way into art.

We ran six events and conducted audience research to find out who was coming and to better understand the before, during and after of a visit. The research used a mixed quantitative and qualitative methodology with 824 face-to-face surveys at the events, thirty in-depth friendship group interviews, one focus group and several in-depth telephone interviews.

### **Who is coming? – shaping identity**

Late at Tate Britain attracts different visitors to the usual Tate Britain audience. They are younger, more ethnically diverse, more local and more likely to be on a first-time visit, showing that Late events can play a significant role in attracting a new and different audience. The events also changed young people's perceptions of art galleries as being interesting places to visit and Tate Britain as being relevant and more contemporary than they might usually think.

An interesting aspect emerged during several of the conversations: how young people are shaping their identity. Young people go through developmental changes in adolescence and early adulthood. Generally, they develop a personal sense of identity around issues such as gender, physical attributes, sexuality and ethnicity, and explore issues such as, who am I? How do I fit in? How am I competent? Intellectual interests gain importance and self-involvement. We discovered in another piece of research that self-expression, collaboration and the development of self-worth are important too. Young people develop peer relationships, make new friends and emphasise their own peer group at these events. In the digital age, social media is an important way of shaping identities, and the research showed how attending events and communicating digitally contributed to shaping this process.

### **Before the event – drivers to visit**

Word of mouth is the most dominant source of how information was shared. Talking with young people we found the key drivers to spreading

word of mouth: relevance in terms of look/style, as well as where they find information, is the starting point; a combination of clear facts yet intriguing copy, something new yet with the credibility of a familiar brand generates interest; and uniqueness induces a 'fear of missing out' (FOMO) and makes the spreader of word-of-mouth look interesting. One participant commented: 'Something exclusive, because then you feel you are the carrier of good news... the limited time, this is the only night.'

In our print and online communication, the programme and images of young people speak for themselves and provide authenticity, which makes more explicit explanations redundant. Including an age range, for example '18-25', was considered okay; a line such as 'by young people for young people' divided opinions, as for some it added relevance but for others it sounded patronising. That the programme was by Tate Collective was interesting, though required more explanation as not everyone is aware what Tate Collective is. Appealing design is playful, informal and needs to be eye-catching to cut through, rather than appearing too perfect.

Uniqueness that promises a good story to tell drives a visit. Intrigue and uniqueness are key to turning interest into an actual visit. Visitors told us they are looking for live or one-off moments - something they can only experience now: 'If it's always there I wouldn't go.' Curiosity is also part of the deal; they want to be surprised when they are there. Something interesting to do, to be seen doing and to tell others about is also a key trigger, relating to young people shaping their identity: 'Almost part of going out at night is having a good story to tell the next day. You can say, "Oh I went to the pub" like everyone else or "I went to a night at the museum."'

The programme and the free entry then close the decision to attend: 'The mixture of art, music, film and activities' is a key reason to attend,

particularly for those who initiated the visit. This is followed by 'my friends going', for those who are on a visit initiated by others, and 'the art exhibition/free displays on show'. Live music is also a draw. Experiencing art while socialising in a museum and the opportunity to be in the gallery after opening hours encouraged attendance and is often perceived as a novelty. An opportunity to project a positive personal image was a key driver and that the event was free: 'The overall experience it promised... the whole package... had live performances, it was a proper event, you could see this is going to happen here, this there... I like this creative energy and going past paintings, the live aspect, also the opportunity to meet people, networking in a socialising manner, it was cool.'

#### **At the event - an authentic experience**

The experience of attending Late at Tate inspired and removed barriers. Visitors enjoyed the variety of the experience, the buzz and the socially and intellectually stimulating environment. Contrasts and interactivity were valued as was the welcoming and relaxed atmosphere. This atmosphere made it different from a regular gallery experience and removed some of the barriers to visiting such as fear of incompetence and of not fitting in. The programme and social dimension made the gallery feel un-intimidating: 'If I was to see someone at Late at Tate and started talking to them nobody would bat an eyelid which is quite cool'; 'There was nothing to be scared about. It was an event, like any other event you got to.'

Visitors enjoyed feeling empowered to interpret or comment without being an 'expert'. Importantly, the experience was thought to be authentically representing youth culture: 'Everything is an experience, it is just creating that atmosphere... it opens questions to explore and how you interpret things on your own... it is not how you are taught about it at school, that you should definitely be experiencing things in a certain way but I wasn't.'

The programme is considered authentic and relevant to young people's interests. The peer programming by Tate Collective is successful in providing relevance and authenticity both in attracting the desired audience and a positive visit experience: 'You can tell they have young people working on it. It is not old people working on it. They have people who are in tune with our culture.'

Opportunities for improvement are around orientation and context. A desire for more information about the artworks to facilitate access to the collection and clearer orientation show that we need to keep in mind that we attract new visitors who are not familiar with the building and the collection: 'More description about what we are looking for. I am such a philistine. I would like to understand what the artist is thinking' and 'I like tours because it gives me context... I don't have time to read before I come to the museum. In order to get meaning I need context... If there are a lot of young people in the group I feel more comfortable, if there are a lot of older people in the group who know what the paintings are all about, I feel more uncomfortable.'

#### **After the event – staying connected**

The research shows an interest in a different way to engage with art; it also underlined what we found in the Source and Space research that events are often at the start of a relationship. There is an opportunity to communicate more of the gallery's permanent offer and what else there is for young people at an event. We also saw a desire to join in and stay connected with Tate/the Young People's Programme: 'When I came I thought it would be cool to get involved with an event like that and I did not find a way of doing that. And if I am to get involved, it is that word of mouth again, because then all my friends would know about it.'

In terms of frequency, they wanted it to be as infrequent as it is (as opposed to fortnightly for example) – again, as it adds to the exclusivity and related FOMO that are key visit drivers.

While Facebook was a key communication tool before the event, during the event Snapchat was more popular and Twitter and Instagram after the event. However, on Twitter respondents were more likely to follow people (friends, artists, news, media) than organisations ('...feels more personal...'). After the event pictures and clips are appreciated, reminding of the event and adding to their identity: 'If your photo was on the Tate website you are cool.'

#### **Summing up – changing perceptions**

Tate Collective programming Late at Tate changed young people's perceptions of art galleries as being interesting places to visit even if they might not be particularly interested in art in the first place: 'It is changing the impressions we have about museums. It is not something you will do on a school trip and have to listen to the guide and be bored, you can have fun there and find something interesting for you' and 'Very rarely I decide, "It is Saturday morning, I will go to a museum."'

## Representing 'young' artists



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*Whitworth Young Contemporaries (WYC) and Learning Manager Andrew Vaughan reflect on the representation of artists under the age of forty in gallery collections, and the impact this could have on audiences.*

The amount of young people that attend The Whitworth has grown during the lifespan of *Circuit*. It seems that young people are visiting. We know this from data collected and through visual observations. But evidence is suggesting that they are not making a conscious link with how visual arts spaces connect to contemporary lifestyles.

The visual arts perhaps are not perceived as having the same cultural coolness as other more 'youth-friendly' art forms. We tried to unpick this idea with Whitworth Young Contemporaries and one suggestion was that embedded within visual arts culture is a deep-rooted hierarchy of value and worth. Value statements about an artist's credibility are linked to the historic artistic canon, often centred around talent, training, networks, commercial galleries and financial indices.

At the gallery, an internal anonymous blog set up to capture organisational attitudes of staff and WYC members echoed this. The question 'Where is the space for us and our work?' was posted by young people to the site, with responses including:

Can young people aged 15–25 really show their artistic ambition in a space like The Whitworth? Do young people have to have a formal training to do so before being taken seriously as an artist? Young people's artwork is definitely worthy; perhaps we need a space to show the 'best' of this age range... Whitworth Young Contemporaries 2016?

We are not a community gallery – we should show the best of international art as inspiration. We should encourage making but in a Learning context and signpost places where people can make and exhibit art. It might sound harsh but I don't want amateur art in a professional space. There are plenty of other outlets for it.

Significant national collections like The Whitworth rarely accession examples of artists' work when the artist is aged under thirty. We absolutely should be showing the best international art as inspiration, but we also must consider the consequences of consistently asking young people to connect to and engage with art and exhibitions only made by a generation above themselves.

In many other more youth accessible arts genres – photography, music, dance, theatre – there is a less of an age-specific criteria to acknowledge top-level talent and quality. With this in mind, how can we expect our young people to consume the best of what's on offer in the visual arts, especially when housed in significant public spaces when the art is not made by their contemporaries or their peers?

It would be almost unthinkable for young people aged 15–25 to only attend the best in music gigs performed by 'forty-somethings'. I believe that art gallery environments could run the risk of alienating its younger audiences if we don't question this.



# Marketing

Valentina Orru

## Do you speak marketing?

*Programme and Communications Assistant at Tate St Ives*  
Valentina Orru combined her understanding of marketing and learning to promote the young people's programme with the aim of ensuring that the voices of Tate Collective members did not become lost.

The biggest challenge, as well as the favourite part, of my job is to sit between two very different teams: Learning and Marketing. A lot of my work is about reporting actions to both teams, switching from one language to another, keeping the conversation relevant for everybody and at the same time making sure not to lose any of the values involved - and also, of course, keeping young people's voices in the conversations too.

SWITCH Festival and working on a marketing plan for it was a great opportunity for both teams to test the benefits and the challenges of working closely together from an early stage of the planning process. For me, coming from a marketing background, it has been very

interesting to think about how to talk about marketing in a learning environment and using a learning vocabulary, and how to approach different tasks while ensuring that this joined-up thinking is kept alive and effective.

At the beginning of our Festival Lab, we had a fantastic session with Rachel Escott, *Circuit* Marketing Consultant, in which Tate Collective St Ives was asked to think about the different audiences for SWITCH Festival. We identified five target audiences and made collages of fictional characters, with each of them representative of a different target. Having a visual reference and applying a creative activity to describe and reflect on a concept such as 'audience segmentation' was key in this process. This helped us establish that the targets are real people with different interests, needs and perceptions of art. Even with this knowledge, keeping the link between marketing, audience and programming wasn't immediate, and we tried to keep referring to those targets throughout the planning process. That has been very helpful for when we were reflecting on the marketing strategy for SWITCH; but my question at this point was: how do I keep Tate Collective engaged in the marketing choices and activities?

The first step was to think about the visual identity for the festival: a poster that embodies the values behind SWITCH as well as being relevant to our audiences. We asked some members of the collective to draw their ideas that we then passed on to Tate Design Studio. At the beginning this approach didn't work very well; as is often the case with communication across departments, the group felt their ideas were lost in translation. Then we had a visit from Julian Goll, one of the graphic designers, who, after taking the group's initial feedback on board, revised the design concepts. Being able to have a face-to-face conversation was a very important part of the design process, and gave the group the chance to share ideas directly with Julian and get a good understanding of how the design studio works.

Another key marketing activity for SWITCH has been the online promotion across social media channels. The group's first idea was to set up a new channel for the festival. But, as digital marketing teaches us, to set up a page and generate a good following is hard work, and needs to be justified by a long-term aim. Good marketing practice has meant focusing energies into our existing channels, but at the same time finding a way in which the group can actually share their voice on them. Following the same approach we used with the design, we organised a social media training session for the group with Jen Aarvold, Tate Senior Digital Producer, and Leyla Tahir, Tate Collective Digital Producer, together with Tressa Lapham-Green, Communications Assistant at Tate St Ives. The training was not just to help gain practical skills, but also to develop a sense of ownership towards the channels.

Thinking about different approaches of getting the group involved in the marketing process has been a very good opportunity to test new cross-departmental ways of working, and at the same time has contributed to developing more awareness around what we do in our Young People's Programme and how it can impact across the organisation. Developing new ways of collaborating across departments has enabled the group to build confidence and play a role within the organisation. Indeed 'change' is one of the key themes of SWITCH!





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## Interrogating tensions

*Working closely with Whitworth Young Contemporaries on marketing, Sally Thelwell, Youth Engagement Coordinator, considers how they navigated the associated frustrations and compromises of working within the brand of an institution.*

Marketing has been an area of tension throughout The Whitworth's *Circuit* journey. At the gallery, we have a very tight brand identity which can impact on the way we promote and market Whitworth Young Contemporaries (WYC).

This tension was highlighted while we were planning WARP Festival with many of the suggestions made by the young people being rejected as not on brand. Some of the group members felt that restrictions put upon them were too severe and prevented them from being creative. They argued that the brand prevented the voices and identities of the young people being heard. Unfortunately, these tensions have never fully disappeared as the gallery consolidates its overall brand. It has been a case of trying to explain to the young people our reasoning behind it.

There have been some compromises and shifts in thinking. For example, the WYC website is hosted away from the gallery's main site, allowing us to have more creative brand licence when reaching out to younger, more diverse audiences.

For WARP Festival, an image created by one of our young people was approved as the lead photograph with the overall gallery brand placed over it. The image was far removed from the original proposals that WYC thought would be needed to reach out to new audiences. However, the end result was surprising. As the image became more familiar throughout the campaign, WYC felt greater ownership and pride. The group realised that we were reaching out as The Whitworth, not as a satellite venue or organisation. An easy to recognise brand had helped young people to see that it was The Whitworth they were part of. Feedback by young people that came to the festival commented that final brand design gave a stamp of approval and quality assurance to the event. Other, more playful strategies were also employed to connect to new audiences through an online marketing campaign that was able to maximise WYC creativity through a glitched film and age-appropriate social media posts.

## Focus groups at Nottingham Contemporary

*'How can we make as many young people's voices heard as possible in our programme?' was the question asked by Collabor-8 Collective and Marketing Assistant Becky Timmins. A series of focus groups were developed in response.*

One of the most meaningful ways in which we have engaged with young people across Nottingham during our *Circuit* programme has been through conducting focus groups. Though often associated with commonplace brands aiming to expand their customer bases, there is clearly lots to be gained from directly asking for opinions.

The idea for running focus groups came from a member of Collabor-8 Collective. Upon discussing ways to reach more young people in our city, and specifically thinking about how to adapt our programme for them, one member of the group said, 'Why can't we just ask them?' And so that's what we did!

As simple as it sounds, we did identify a number of potential issues that could arise, and thought about how to prevent them from happening.

We decided collectively that it would be far more valuable to talk to groups of young people who were familiar with one another, such as youth groups, as we wanted them to feel as comfortable as possible. Also, we wanted the actual act of attending the focus group to have a social element, rather than feeling like a chore. This made identifying young people in areas where we had little previous engagement much more simple. Crucially, we paid each young person involved for their time, to reinforce the fact that we genuinely valued their opinions, and how these opinions could inform our programme and wider gallery practices. Additionally, we scheduled focus groups prior to Collabor-8 Collective events, enabling the young people involved to get a taste for the programme once the focus group had ended; the collective felt this was vital to building relationships with more young people and to gaining their engagement.

In total we held six focus groups during programming for Affinity Festival between January and June 2015. The structure of each focus group differed slightly, but each followed a similar template:

#### **Warm up activity**

- What's your favourite colour combination? (or another neutral question)

#### **Introduction**

- Members of Collabor-8 Collective explain the *Circuit* youth programme at the gallery and its different elements
- What we are going to ask you: feedback and opinions on our programme and marketing

#### **Questions**

- Have you been to Nottingham Contemporary before? What did you think about the gallery before you came?
- What do you like to do in your spare time? What are your hobbies?

- What is the best event you have been to recently? What was good about it?
- What things influenced you to go to the event?
- Leaflet activity – which is your favourite leaflet? What do you like about it?
- Whom do you think our leaflets are for?
- What kinds of activities would you like to see/would you come to at Nottingham Contemporary?

The learning from these focus groups was not only enlightening, but additionally influenced our approach to programming and marketing Affinity Festival. The idea to programme two days with distinctive feelings music-wise came directly from focus group discussions, as well as a variety of other activities that we programmed. Working as hard as possible to make the gallery feel like a total space for young people during and after the festival was a point of discussion that arose in numerous focus groups, leading to the idea from Collabor-8 Collective to create a 'house party' vibe during Affinity.

One of the most useful outcomes of running focus groups was the way in which it affected the collective's view of their programme. At least two members of Collabor-8 helped to run each focus group, and following this they would feed back to everyone. Through this process, the whole group have become really audience-focused in their approach to programming, and are totally fixated on what young people across Nottingham want, as well as what they would like to see or do with the programme.

Feedback on our marketing materials and Collabor-8 branding shed light on what we needed to do with the festival visual identity, with key points raised in the focus groups directly influencing the branding process for Affinity Festival. I think one of the successes of this process was evident in the diversity of the audience we attracted for the festival.

In addition to gaining useful insights and opinions, the focus groups above all facilitated conversations between young people from many different walks of life. In our increasingly digital age, it's a precious thing for young people to meet others in person and interact. Running the sessions really shed light on how valuable this is, and the positive impact that voicing their opinions can have on the young people involved.

*Rachel Escott*

## Marketing and audience development

*Circuit Marketing Consultant Rachel Escott supported galleries to develop their marketing strategies. This included sharing techniques, running workshops, advising on festival marketing and producing a set of learning and recommendations from the programme.*

### **Learning and marketing workshops**

Workshops brought Learning and Marketing teams together to explore marketing principles and theory through the lens of audience development. Marketing at the service of audience development involves understanding and talking to audiences about their needs and motivations first, from which comes insight into what type of provision, programme or activity would have a chance of gaining their attention. With audience-appropriate programmes in place, it is easier to judge the programme- and audience-relevant communications channels and the strongest messages to use in the actual marketing activity:

- Gain an understanding that young people are not all the same, and are not one single new audience to attract

- The need to get to know young people through research, observation, asking and reading. To realise differences and the types of activity that would appeal to each group
- The ability to recognise what is the most appropriate channel and activity for the different young people you hope to attract, rather than make assumptions about what 'youth' communications channels are
- The value of setting clear targets for each event or activity, for example 'how many' and 'what type of young person', to focus on what the programme should be and who you want to communicate with. And the value, therefore, of monitoring the audiences to find out if it worked
- Use monitoring and qualitative feedback from different sources to reflect on what happened in order to improve delivery and focus next time round
- Staff in Learning and Marketing specialisms each hold part of the key: Learning staff are often much closer to the target audiences, and can have conversations and observe and gain feedback in ways that Marketing often pay a lot of money to obtain! Front of House staff also have unique insights into behaviour and preferences
- Reflection sessions should bring together insights from many different gallery specialisms as well as from young people

### Responding to context

Throughout *Circuit* I worked one-to-one with the galleries via phone and email using marketing plan 'toolkits' to help them prepare overarching strategies. These encouraged them to deconstruct and analyse for their own individual settings:

- Think about the entire offering for young people (from hanging out using gallery Wi-Fi or toilets to attending talks and workshops) and points of appeal

- Gain knowledge of the type of young people currently accessing the offer
- What is the wider 'audience environment' of local or regional young people from whom you would identify your audience targets?
- Research the appropriate communications opportunities open to you

I encouraged the galleries to understand what aspects were strengths or weaknesses of their offer, and what external factors could be threats or opportunities to be taken advantage of. There was an association between this work and work carried out to understand and set diversity targets in the gallery. As Rachael Woodhead, Learning Curator at Tate St Ives, commented:

We have learned that a deeper understanding of your audiences and how to market to them strengthens your programme. This seems obvious but the exercise we had to do in 2013 of producing a Marketing toolkit and plan together, rather than taking on board Marketing's plan, made the Learning team really understand who we were trying to target and what a challenge it was. This made us rethink our programming to focus on more local young people and look at a seasonal way of working that responded to our local audience's rhythm.

Encouraging the galleries to think about diversifying their youth audiences was another moment of hard work and deep thinking. At first, galleries tended to be caught in the glare of national or Arts Council definitions of diversity, such as ethnicity, gender, disability and other protected characteristics. The *Circuit* national plan also had established categories for diversity, such as the 15-25 years age spread, Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET), job

seekers, educational attainment etc. These groups go beyond what galleries' marketing interest would normally monitor, and again there was a divide between Marketing staff, who might have known how to get local population insights from Area Profile Reports or Neighbourhood Statistics, and Learning staff who use things like free school meals, Special Educational Needs and other criteria more often. More importantly, it took a while for the gallery teams to take on board the idea that diversity should reflect their own local population (what percentages of different characteristics are seen in the local youth population and how closely do they aim to mirror that?) and their gallery's circumstances, capacity, and audience development and viability goals. Once galleries had the confidence to set diversity (and other, for example numbers) targets relevant to their own contexts, the value of this exercise in focusing attention and being more targeted with their resources became clear.

### Learning and recommendations

The process of working with *Circuit* galleries to develop marketing strategies for diverse audience groups fostered a shared collaborative approach to looking at their offer and recognising the learning that is possible from working across the various organisational departments. The key learning points and recommendations that arose include:

- There is a need to develop the granularity of understanding about and how to adapt to different target audiences. And to foster an overt understanding that young people are not one single new audience to attract
- Recognise when your organisational look, brand or tone might contribute to alienating young people, or just not catch their attention. Be clear what the boundaries are for developing a youth-centric look and feel – and why

- There is a value to face-to-face network marketing, as well as to using social media. Different approaches will be best in different contexts or with different types of young people
- There may be a clash or lack of understanding between different professional teams within a gallery. Early team-building and collaborative working practices can help achieve impact earlier in a project
- Young people can bring energy and authenticity to the marketing, and even a surer hand about what channels will work best. They instinctively 'get' what audience development-led marketing is all about, without knowing the marketing terms or technicalities. Help them build up empathy skills to understand the differences between themselves and other young people 'not like them'
- Employing young people in a supported way can help bridge marketing and programme support roles, while remaining close to target audience
- Clarify early on (overall as well as event-by-event) who exactly your own target audiences are, taking account of your gallery's own capacity, existing relationships, valuable advances and local context and relevance
- 'Reaching out before drawing in' is a valuable mantra. Many galleries reported their ambitions only started to be realised once they went out to meet young people and talk to them in the young people's own spaces or in neutral pop-up spaces
- Write into contracts for commissioned artists and performers that a certain amount of social media or other promotion to their own followers is to be carried out in relation to an event
- It is crucial to have the next steps of the journey for any youth audience segment ready before an event is held. Don't let connections go cold by not getting in touch for a couple of months with a new offer. While true for all emerging audiences,

it is especially true of youth audiences whose lives, interest and sense of self all evolve very fast at this point in their lives, and whose attention can therefore move on very quickly

- Keep practising the ability to think about the interaction through the eyes and thoughts of different young people, then provide the facilities, activities, information or emotional support accordingly
- Word of mouth communication and social media have been the most successful methods of communicating the gallery offer and of sustaining relationships with growing audiences. However, there is still a need to explore deeper into the question of who seeds word of mouth and personal communication, to understand how to extend and experiment with these channels to promote greater diversity. If word of mouth promotion is purely organic or left to itself, messages will of course only get passed around among known networks. Some galleries returned to what they first thought of as old-fashioned or paternalistic methods of communication, such as going through non-peer advocates (teachers, lecturers, parents, group leaders) to get the messages out, as well as more youth advocates, for example, people with some social capital among young people in their areas
- Key effective channels are: word of mouth; building relationships with teachers, lecturers and staff in partner organisations, so they fully understand, are enthused by and proactively pass the messages on; leveraging the followers of music acts, artists and other programme partners, for example, local fashion shops, to spread the word about events; core group members going out to places where less engaged young people are, and handing out flyers along with chat; have a mass-participation social media-led campaign, such as a competition, for early engagement

- Concentrate on the mechanics of marketing very early, and be flexible, as involving busy young people in decisions extends usual lead-times significantly
- Dedicated marketing members in the youth group can learn, with professional staff guidance, to understand new audiences and the best ways to connect with them by mapping areas of the programme and messages that would appeal to key target groups
- Plan strategically to engage 'hard to reach' audiences, through involving the community/potential audiences in organising the festival as well as targeting publicity to them. Focus groups can help inform and provide feedback on branding and programme development







## Image Captions

- 1 Skateboarders perform at *The Plaza* exhibition, MOSTYN, 2016  
Photo ©Mark McNulty
- 2 Back cover of zine *You Feel Like a Threat Don't You?* Artist Ruth Ewan and Tate Collective Liverpool produced a zine that focused on a critique of spaces in the gallery and beyond as [being] hostile to young people. Collective members authored a series of statements as critiques of the gallery and their 'welcome' into the space  
Image ©Tate
- 3 Cherish Maxwell, work with peer-led group, Tate St Ives  
Photo ©Tate (Ian Kingsnorth)
- 4 MaKey MaKey workshop at *Circuit*. Unlocks Digital event, using everyday objects as replacements for keyboards and other forms of technology, Wysing Arts Centre, 2016  
Photo ©Wysing Arts Centre (Claire Haigh)
- 5 Sally Noall, illustration to investigate organisational change  
Image ©Sally Noall
- 6 Niall Farrelly, illustration of *Circuit* conference delegate, 2017  
Image ©Niall Farrelly
- 7 First set of ransom notes from Tate Collective Liverpool and the response from Francesco Manacorda and Andrea Nixon, Tate Liverpool, as part of *We Have Your Art Gallery*, 2015  
Image ©Tate
- 8 Installation at Tate Liverpool, part of the Blueprint Festival, 2014  
Photo ©Tate
- 9 Crowd at Late at Tate Britain: Stand Firm, Tate Britain, 2017  
Photo ©Tate (Dan Weill)
- 10 Performance at the young people's private view for *After Hours: Conceptual Art in Britain 1964-1979* exhibition, Tate Britain, 2016  
Photo ©Tate (Dan Weill)
- 11 Tate *Circuit* Report launch event, 2017. Still from the film *Make Your Place*, 2017, directed by Colin O'Toole  
Photo ©Tate (Dan Weill)
- 12 Circuit Cambridge studio takeover event, Wysing Arts Centre  
Photo ©Circuit Cambridge
- 13 Niall Farrelly, illustration of Charlotte Winters at the *Circuit* conference, 2017  
Image ©Niall Farrelly
- 14 Performers, part of Flow Group workshop, Firstsite, 2014  
Photo ©Firstsite
- 15 Aims set by a member of Tate Collective London when developing Fresh Perspectives, Tate Modern  
Image ©Joey Yu
- 16 Installation by Dubmorphology, part of Late at Tate Britain: Recall, 2016  
Photo ©Tate (Dan Weill)
- 17 Members of Tate Collective St Ives taking part in Sarah Wookey's performance of *The Drift*, Tate St Ives, 2015  
Photo ©Tate
- 18 Cherish Maxwell, Young@Tate, Tate St Ives, 2014  
Photo ©Tate (Ian Kingsnorth)
- 19 Projections at Late at Tate Britain: Generation, exploring themes of family and belonging, 2016  
Photo ©Tate (Dan Weill)
- 20 Examples of *Circuit* event information design, 2016  
Photo ©*Circuit*
- 21 Projections on local buildings at SWITCH Festival, Tate St Ives, 2016  
Photo ©Tate (Ian Kingsnorth)
- 22 Audience member at Firstsite, 2016  
Photo ©Firstsite

Young  
People's  
Cultural  
Production

What skills are needed to support young people to take the lead?

During *Circuit*, each gallery ran a 'core group' of young people, whose role it was to plan and deliver activity for their peers. Indeed, a significant amount of emphasis was placed on young people from different backgrounds coming to the centre of organisations through the production of events. The aim was that through creating opportunities for collaborative, informal learning, young people would influence the public-facing programmes of galleries in a direct and sustained way, at the same time as gaining practical skills and personal benefits for themselves.

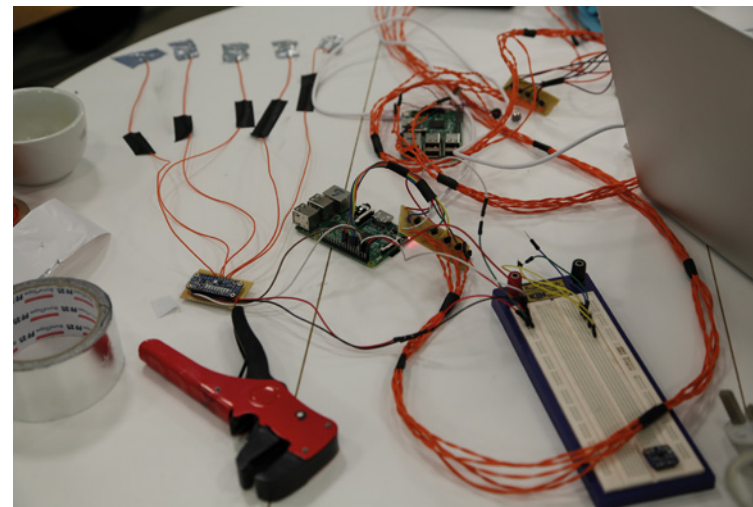
Young people at every gallery experimented with new programming. While every site developed its peer-led group to suit its own context and structures, clear findings emerged nationally relating to the new perspectives that young people could bring. This was particularly evident through multidisciplinary and thematic programming, its impact on audiences and how it can challenge institutional norms. Some groups did influence exhibition programmes, though differences remained in the approaches and aims of Learning and curatorial practices. Each gallery ran a festival, the scope of which triggered cross-departmental working on a wider scale, and often raised the profile of the gallery as a relevant destination to younger audiences in their community.

However, the responsibility of producing events did present challenges, and how much autonomy young people could have was sometimes

called into question. Where did accountability and decision-making ultimately lie? Much was learned about the skills and approaches that can help staff to facilitate effective peer-led working. A balance had to be found between encouraging new ideas and risk-taking, while operating within the limitations and structures of an organisation.

The social, emotional and cognitive benefits to young people were notable, including increased levels of confidence and motivation. Additionally, the level of commitment required to produce events was significant, and staff had to be able to support different levels of need among groups and individuals. The social aspect of the groups was fundamental and galleries tried to create different access points for people to get involved to support this, as well as presenting more formal development opportunities.

For some young people, producing cultural events was seen as a pathway to build transferable skills to help them build a career in the arts sector and beyond. Galleries explored ways to support personal and professional development, focusing on the benefits to individuals, not just on the outcomes for the institution. They tested approaches to open up formal, paid opportunities to a more diverse range of young people, with the longer-term aim of influencing the pathways into and workforce of the cultural sector.



## Culture by young people

*Circuit Programme Manager,  
Wysing Arts Centre & Kettle's Yard,  
Tahira Fitzwilliam-Hall considers  
peer-led programming and the  
conditions for developing relevant  
events for and by young people.*

*'The festival felt like people were listening to you.'*

These honest words by Rebecca S., a former member of Circuit Cambridge, evidence the impact and ownership that was formed in Rebecca's experience of producing culture. Treating the young people in Circuit Cambridge as individuals with their own ideas, supporting them to become active collaborators and creators, and surrounding them with ambitious art and artists, led to the young people becoming confident critics and creators of culture. Artist Rasmus Nielsen from SUPERFLEX, who co-produced a festival with our young people, articulates this well:

It takes patience, momentum-building and a gang of people who are focused on trying something they never did before. Circumstances, institutional support and funding definitely helps, but the success of Unlock Cambridge is based on the

commitment of the young people in the *Circuit* group. Their crazy (at times) ideas and willingness to take them all the way.

At the start of the programme and at important points throughout, we asked the question: what effect will young people, as opposed to staff, leading the programming have on the nature of our young people's events?

One of the outcomes of peer-led programming and the increase in young people's ownership was the championing of the 'social' space; by this we mean the characteristics of constructed space, time, attitudes and behaviours that occur when curating specific conditions for an event.

Before *Circuit*, our young people's projects very much focused on programming for short-term engagement, that is, irregular workshops, summer schools – either public or targeted – which were programmed by staff. Attendees would have a similar experience of the venue whether as an adult or school visit, with little alteration to the space or atmosphere. Through working with young people as producers we tested, evaluated and completely revised our consideration of atmosphere, space, 'look and feel' and the social element of projects and events.

Young people led on a range of participatory events – screenings, practical workshops, talks, exhibitions, performances, digital workshops. Evaluation from the programme shows us that this varied approach, which championed the social, along with a collaborative approach to marketing and social media, were key to supporting different levels of engagement that are determined by the young people and their lived experience, rather than the gallery offer.

Highlighting the social elements of the young people's offer was key to supporting different levels of engagement and suited more diverse

audiences. But it was the young people programming themselves who had the most impact in this area, with many of these considerations and conditions for events coming through them.

Our young people made sure there were 'hang-out' spaces at their events and decided on a strategy of delivering *Circuit Unlocks Socials* every six weeks. The socials were a successful way of creating new entry points to new audiences as:

- The 'social' aspect made it clear to young people that these were low-pressure events for being with friends rather than having to participate
- The light-touch, non-prescribed engagement was a perfect starting point for members of the group to trial their own ideas for workshops, or present their practice (rather than waiting until a larger more high-profile event)
- They were free, held outside of normal working hours and easy to get to, being next to the train station or where transport was provided
- Each Social explored a new art form
- They all involved individual making
- Artists were present
- They happened midweek and did not compete with weekend plans

Developing and delivering *Circuit Cambridge* projects, both for young people and staff, and experiencing the events as an audience were often by nature communal experiences; one *Circuit Cambridge* member commented:

Delivering the tour was an incredible experience, unlike anything I had done before as far as performing to a group of people and guiding them through the busy city centre (even

through shops!), and maintaining a kind of character in order to take them on the journey we had designed. Although the day was tiring it gave me a great feeling of confidence, afterwards thinking how I would never have considered myself a performer and yet that is exactly what I have now done.

We also considered and learned from the conditions that supported this successful peer-led practice, conditions that aim to support real decision-making, autonomy and democratisation of culture. These include: creating a safe environment; collaborating with ambitious, experienced artists and providing support artists; encouraging an 'anything goes' creative policy; encouraging agency and taking creative responsibility; time and evaluation: successful programmes don't happen overnight, and youth programmes require adaptability and this happens best with time and reflection; and the dedication of organisation/staff, with young people programming.

Within these conditions we identified strong frameworks of working with young people and have built our programmes on a series principles to implement:

#### **Making/DIY**

- Utilises existing skills among young people and staff
- Holds attention, particularly over the course of a longer-term project, and fosters a sense of ownership among young people
- Creates a genuine brand with an authentic young person's feel
- Creates opportunities to develop new skills and builds up confidence

#### **Dividing production (but coming back together)**

- Be realistic about how much a young person can contribute and how much support staff and organisations can give
- When working with a large group undergo initial groundwork

to create a shared vision for the activity/event, and then divide into relevant teams

- This way of working allows a shared vision while ensuring both individual and group contributions
- Decisions are easier to make
- Forms a bond within the group, giving opportunities to celebrate each other's achievements
- Allows clear roles for non-Learning team staff

### **Being ambitious**

- Start with big ideas as this helps young people develop formats of their own within these big ideas
- Mix up your approaches to activity to try to engage a wide audience - both among young people producing and young people as audience
- Acknowledge that everything is interesting if someone is passionate about it
- It's easier to scale down than scale up
- Have artists ask questions of the young people's ideas, rather than the other way around

### **Recognise the value that 'engaged' young people bring to the programme**

- Celebrate the role that engaged young people play in being supported to guide and facilitate the engagement of harder to reach young people
- Foster mentorship and skills exchange among young people

### **Partnering**

- Creates a network of local cultural organisations that endorse young people's cultural contributions
- Creates a network for young people who are involved in your programme to tap into outside of your organisation

- Allows you to be realistic about the expertise you have in-house

The process-led framework for project development and programming allowed young people to develop artistic formats of their own that worked. Andrew Nairne, Director of Kettle's Yard, noted that the group were inventive and non-conservative in their programming of their festival, Unlock Cambridge:

It is quite common that a project is strong but poorly organised or, alternatively, well put together but thin on content. The *Circuit* festival felt both beautifully organised and extremely original, culturally rich and of course great fun.

Through the process of programming Unlock Cambridge, our young people's group tried, and subsequently tended to avoid: too much artist commissioning and instead encouraged collaboration with artists - young people may feel less ownership if they are not collaborating or don't have a say in the artistic production; scheduling planning sessions for larger projects to happen over the summer/during holidays as you are competing for attendance, and as a consequence, low attendance puts added pressure on the staff and young people who are available; typecasting or making assumptions about how to engage harder to reach young people in peer-led practice.

We learned that engaging with young people through multi-art form activity that relates to current issues and cultural forms helps support young people to realise their ideas. Their energy for contributing to their communities and making creative work has changed our approach to projects and events. Our young people developed and presented (in a very genuine way) programming that appealed to other young people and this generated an increase in young audiences and engagement.

From an alternative tour of Cambridge to a walking workshop, art in a church, jewellery, and GIF and glitch art workshops, the events that the young people developed were unique.



## Defining peer-led practice

*Peer-led practice was a central concept within Circuit, but the definition of what it was and how it should be approached was surrounded by debate in each of the galleries. Mark Miller, Circuit Programme National Lead, considers the challenges of adopting peer-led working and where it might sit within the wider institution.*

# Peer-led Practice and Facilitating

At the beginning of *Circuit*, several organisations had not worked with young people in a peer-led capacity consistently. For some, it was entirely new. For everyone, it was time consuming and demanding. It prompted swift skills development for all involved and a shift in the ways an organisation thought about how it might accommodate a more dialogical relationship with young people.

It has been challenging for organisations to define the best methods that enable young people to work within a democratic collective collaborative frame of peer-led practice, and to do so as their own ideas, practice and skills are in development.

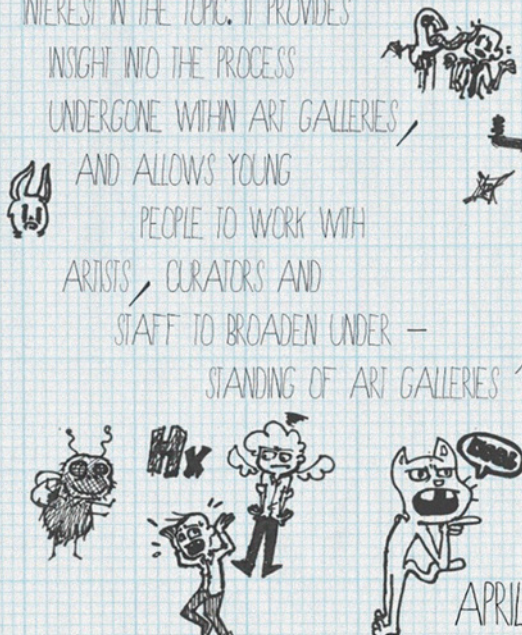
These challenges have included understanding the role and the potential to lead and develop programmes within organisations. For many, asking where the decision-making stops and starts, as well as what is meant by 'control' in a hierarchical structure, was all part of the complex landscape that required ongoing attention. The issue of negotiating democracy within existing hierarchical structures generates many challenges, but has shown itself to be core to realising young people's autonomy and maintaining the authenticity of their ideas. This runs in parallel with negotiating diversity within non-diverse organisations. Furthermore, these are significant issues for all institutions more broadly and raise many questions about how they can be changed. It is clear that a programme such as *Circuit* can identify and address such issues, but cannot reasonably be expected to solve them.

Peer-led practice has been questioned, doubted and critiqued on many levels. This includes questions of the possibility that young people can genuinely develop programmes or truly contribute, and whether or not young people make real autonomous decisions or have to fit in with predetermined outcomes. Possible answers to these questions are complex. For instance, if the individual facilitator of peer-led practice finds difficulty in relinquishing influence and taking risks, then the level of decision-making by young people will naturally be substantially reduced. Equally, it may be that the young people's views are not consistent with the gallery's views and this becomes a challenge for the values and ethos of the organisation.

In addition, there was a mixed understanding of 'control' within the parameters of the various strategies of each *Circuit* programme. Finding the most productive method, within the institutions, to accomplish the aims set out was not consistent and each programme's approach was entirely context dependent. Indeed, some confusion surrounded the very meaning of 'peer-led' within different institutional

structures and how this would operate within a targeted framework of building access for new audiences, and learning through collective and collaborative 'doing'. Essentially the questions of practice with young people were raising questions of a more fundamental nature regarding institutional practices themselves.

“CYLCH IS A PROGRAMME  
THAT PUTS YOUNG PEOPLE  
IN CONTROL, GIVING THEM  
THE DRIVE TO TAKE AN  
INTEREST IN THE TOPIC. IT PROVIDES  
INSIGHT INTO THE PROCESS  
UNDERGONE WITHIN ART GALLERIES,  
AND ALLOWS YOUNG  
PEOPLE TO WORK WITH  
ARTISTS, CURATORS AND  
STAFF TO BROADEN UNDER-  
STANDING OF ART GALLERIES.”



APRIL

**CYLCH;**  
AN OPPORTUNITY FOR YOUNG  
PEOPLE TO ENGAGE WITH THE  
WORLD OF ART, MAKE FRIENDS,  
EXPRESS THEIR CREATIVITY, USE  
THEIR IMAGINATIONS, AND  
DEVELOP THEIR IDEAS AND SKILLS  
TO MAKE THINGS – AN EXHIBITION,  
A PAPER MACHE HEAD, AND – OR A  
DIFFERENCE – AS  
PART OF A TEAM

– JESS

## In conversation: Late at Tate Britain

*Late at Tate Britain has been hosting cross-arts activities since 2001. In 2015, as part of Circuit, programming shifted to support Tate Collective having a central role in planning and running events. Laura Turner-Blake Curator: Young People's Programmes, spoke with Adrian Shaw, Late at Tate Programmer, who had to find ways to alter his approach to facilitate peer-led working.*

LTB What has *Circuit* meant for Late at Tate Britain?

AS *Circuit* has helped redefine what Late at Tate Britain now is, as previously there was a completely different target audience; it was a completely different institutional animal. *Circuit's* values have completely changed Late at Tate. It would be unrecognisable from pre-*Circuit* to what it is now, so it has had an impact in the sense that it is still a multi-platform event, but what it is, whom it's for, how it's programmed,

how it's so self-aware, its identity and how it sits within the institution, all those aspects were very unfocused before *Circuit*. Of course, some of these changes have been made possible with the extra resources, budget, time and staff that were made available. It's been a chance to really think about what the event is, and rigorously redefine it, with the time and resources to really look at the model and re-engineer it. In that sense, *Circuit* has had a major impact.

LTB How did Late at Tate Britain transition to a peer-led model?

AS I had played a key role in developing the Late at Tate model and had been involved in it for many years, so naturally I had my own way of doing things where I was in full curatorial control. I had never worked in a peer-led way before and didn't really know what it entailed. Initially I was resistant to *Circuit* and the idea of peer-led. Also, the *Circuit* evaluation framework is an unwieldy document, so I was concerned that it would slow me down in some way and that I would lose some control over the process. But then, as I got more involved in the aims and values of *Circuit*, I realised the guidelines gave me a very robust best-practice model to work with. I began to think about different ways of working. I began to think about what working with young people actually really entails: why do we do it? What is it for? And a lot of the ethical questions that originally I was asking about working with certain disenfranchised audiences, there were a lot of questions that I'd not really thought through and this framework allowed me to do that.

So the transition involved a personal shift for me as well as a shift in methodology. I quickly realised from working with young people and with Tate Collective that my original approach of doing what I'd always done, which was just

having some kind of autonomy, curating an event where Tate Collective might be production assistants, that this approach was never going to work. From spending time with Tate Collective at various meetings I realised that I didn't know anything about this audience and that it didn't make any sense for me to be trying to curate events for them. The only way I could do this was by becoming a 'space maker'. This entailed relinquishing some of my power and control and instead using the skills and knowledge that I'd learned over the previous fifteen or twenty years, and passing that on. This allowed a knowledge exchange that gave the young people a chance to curate with their own voice.

Initially Tate Collective members had participated in events as more of a consultation group, however, I wanted to really empower the young people to have a more in-depth curating experience, an 'on the job' experience. The model is still refining itself and over the last two years I think we've been getting closer to the point where Tate Collective are thinking about programme content more deeply, as well as approaching artists and meeting with them to develop ideas together. It's no longer just about them as a consultation committee and then turning up on the night and becoming production assistants. I think this was quite a radical shift. There aren't many places that would give full autonomy to a group of young people, some of whom have never programmed before, bearing in mind this event has to deliver and it's a high-profile moment for Tate Britain. In terms of the peer-led model, it's very time-consuming and requires a lot of effort and commitment. From my point of view, it's something I've found myself protecting. It's very difficult to keep an authentic voice, to get young people into a space and to create an environment of trust and to allow them to speak freely and develop ideas.

LTB What is the value of peer-led practice in the context of Late at Tate Britain?

AS I think it's interesting because what I'm seeing happening now is two-fold. You've got the young person who has the opportunity to develop, which we're really thinking about in the fullest sense. I think we're having an impact on the young people themselves, but then also [the impact] on the institution and making it relevant, and plugging Tate collection into the cultural landscape – being able to ask urgent questions and make the art relevant. All those other things around cultural democracy, democratisation of art, that's something we're thinking about a lot when we're working with a group like this in the peer-led way. This is project-based learning; it's not the singular view of one person, which would have been a single curator. Working in a peer group is naturally discursive. That's a word I've been using a lot, and it struck me right at the beginning; you've got this open-ended discursive discussion going on, this energy, and I can see that that is a model. If that's at the heart of something, then it also means that the content you produce in some way becomes more of an open-ended discussion with your audience.

The way curating can work is that you take a complex idea, you package and distil it into a homogenous idea and then that's the one you present; ending up with 'this is what young people think about this'. However, when you're working with young people that approach doesn't make any sense because young people don't agree on anything and it's the sparks of energy from contested ideas that are of value – suddenly you realise that, okay, this is a space for conflicting ideas to exist, and you can hold those conflicts, that you don't have to resolve them. That's what I found interesting about working with groups in

this way. I think if you get it right with peer-led practice, you can infuse the night with these different voices, [creating] a framework where questions don't need to be answered. I think the way we're working with Tate Collective now, the way they're working with content and the artists, who are also their peers, [means] we've got this extended peer-to-peer learning going on, where the driver becomes Tate Collective and the peer group. I feel that peer-led practice as a model does offer a way of creating spaces, and offering ways to think about what the museum might be for in future, who it is for and how might it be used.

LTB What do you think the young people are gaining, if anything, from their involvement?

AS It's a very rich experience; being involved in a Late at Tate event includes working with artists, project managing and curating. It's also a chance for young people to explore their own creativity. I'm very keen now to make sure that I know exactly what the young people are trying to get out of it, and then hopefully I can try and help them achieve personal goals. They do have an enjoyable experience but at the same time I am also keen that they not only develop their skills but also learn new skills in the process. We do post-event evaluations and I'll listen to what's being said to make sure that we try and address any learning or developmental needs in future events. We're trying to create a risk-free environment for these people to work in so they feel that they can experiment creatively. I think working in an environment like this can be very rewarding for young people and they [also] have a chance to take ownership of events. At the end of the process the young people have achieved something together and have also developed themselves. They've also had a great time.

LTB What would you say have been the key challenges and how have these been navigated?

AS Looking at it outside-in, the people whom you've got to get buy-in from [are] people like me, the insiders or the stakeholders, so getting institutional staff on board can be a challenge. Then, of course, you've got to get buy-in from the institution. Late at Tate Britain is a major high-profile event. Working in this way is potentially a risk because the event has got to deliver in terms of audience numbers and certain KPIs (Key Performance Indicators). The main challenges around peer-led delivered events are deadlines. If I was working on a Late at Tate that had a two-month lead-in, within a week I'd probably have the content nailed. Whereas with peer-led practice you've got different workloads and different departments working in different ways, which all require eight-week lead-ins. So that has been a challenge. Income generation matters too. Before working in this way with Tate Collective, the restaurant was open at every Late at Tate. It had sixty tables making £100 a head. The bar was selling Prosecco and champagne. The audiences that we're attracting now don't have that kind of disposable income, so there are challenges in terms of getting the offer right, and there's still some way to go on that.

All in all, you've really got to sell the value of what you're doing. *Circuit* has its aims and values, they're very worthy, and we believe in them, but it's how you actually communicate that across the organisation. We feel we're investing in the future; it's long-term and it's strategic. It's visionary, in a sense. We're imagining a future, we're looking ahead. We're thinking of Tate Collective as the future curators and future leaders, future museum staff, so our impact is not

something that can be translated as easily under the current conditions – these kinds of neo-liberal times when you're looking for measurable outcomes and hitting targets. A lot of the outcomes that we're working with are not measurable. If you're thinking about things like civic and social values or the long-term impact on young people, for example, these things can be hard to quantify. I'm passionate about these things and I believe that institutions like Tate will only have a relevance if we actually think in these ways, but they're a long-term view and there's a lot of short-termism at the moment.

LTB What would you say are the main benefits for Tate?

AS If we're interested in questions like: what is the museum of the twenty-first century? What does Tate Britain look like? Who is it for? What is it for? What is it doing? Working in this way, thinking about the collection, working with young people in this way, is making Tate Britain relevant. And I think that for me is the fundamental benefit. You could argue there is a business case because if the gallery is more relevant, then it's more visible to wider groups and demographics. London is incredibly diverse yet the audience to Tate Britain is monocultural, so immediately there is a business case to making it more relevant. Access is not just about it being free, it's about all those other more nuanced things. It's about feeling welcome in the space, it's about being in front of an artwork and not feeling stupid and not feeling you've got to look at it this way or that way. We've created an environment that's welcoming. It allows people to explore the gallery in a way that's relaxed, so they're open to surprises and to being challenged. We're allowing the art as a catalyst for open-ended discussions and complex debates; we have managed to get that nuanced balance. You've got a bit of fun, but at the

same time you can see art in a different way. If we're hoping for people to come back, or to be engaged on a deeper level, you've got to go that little bit deeper and get people to think about the collection, think about art.



A good youth group is one that supports each individual in the group and makes everyone feel included.

Genuinely peer led  
 Expertly steered  
 a good youth programme gives opportunities for the young people to shape the programme. It's flexible, adaptable and evaluative.

- inclusive - supportive - welcoming - fun - inspiring - mature - encouraging - diverse - open - social - peer led - equal - imaginative - practical - innovative

experimental  
 - gives young people a chance to connect with others they might not necessarily get the chance to do so in everyday life - gives young creative people a place where they feel they belong that it's a positive thing to open their minds - gives young people a sense of purpose and provides them with skills that are otherwise hard to come by, that will help them with their further studies/future careers.

well supported and managed by staff and well resourced - with money & good people





Sally Noall

## Making voices: Rhythm

*Sally Noall, Programme Manager:  
Young People, Tate St Ives,  
responds to the rhythms  
of working with groups of young  
people and their connection  
to peer-led working.*

### Rhythm

A cyclic rhythm, by its inherent characteristic, must complete a cycle twice to begin to be identified as such; to identify an annual cycle and rhythm takes at least two years. Rhythm requires a memory of what has come before, each pause and punctuation in relation to the last, and next.

If the pace of two parties aligns for more than a few beats, then a rhythm can emerge. Rhythm is repetitive: when to repeat, when to hit a beat, when to change; when to pause, ensuring that even in pauses between beats we find a synchronicity.

Young people who attend a group may regularly disappear over summer-time. If you also observe that they return again in autumn, you have identified their rhythm. An identified rhythm presents as opportunity:

if summer is a time of other interests for your regular group – and here the surf and beach are a pull – then who is looking for something creative to do when the sun shines? Identifying why young people scatter – summer jobs, home counties, the beach, holidays – gives clues as to who else may be around.

At Tate St Ives this translates into a seasonal programme, with a Summer Project aimed at young people aged 15–18 years old who are less likely to work in seasonal jobs, who live locally, and so remain in county. Refining this model across three summers reveals an optimum three Saturdays in summer on which to programme. Trialling and testing session content has taught us that the young people we reach this way want to attend for a defined period of time (the ‘summer holidays’), and that they value a conclusive end-point to their project. It’s an irregular, but repetitive, pattern, honed through three years of charting, mapping, data collection, trial and evaluation.

Identifying this annual rhythm feeds related programming and actions: local schools recruitment visits before summer break sets marketing and print deadlines, which in turn sets programme deadlines. Programme and production become synchronised and rhythmic and a basis on which to plan ahead.

Rhythm becomes your underlying structure, delivering with regularity the same stride as your audience. Knowing your rhythm demonstrates an understanding of your audience, and the structure of rhythm creates moments for engagement. From this structure, peer-led working can inform content.

A peer-led approach can feel chaotic and less constructed by its nature; projects are built with the group during sessions and emerging content is unpredictable and less able to be shaped in advance. Underlying structures enable the organisation, and its staff,

to support participants in discovering their individual learning, skills and interests by providing a framework on which to place developing activity. The rhythm and underlying structure is supportive of emergent and divergent outcomes, underpinning programming with a framework from which diverse content feels cohesive.

*Sally Thelwell*

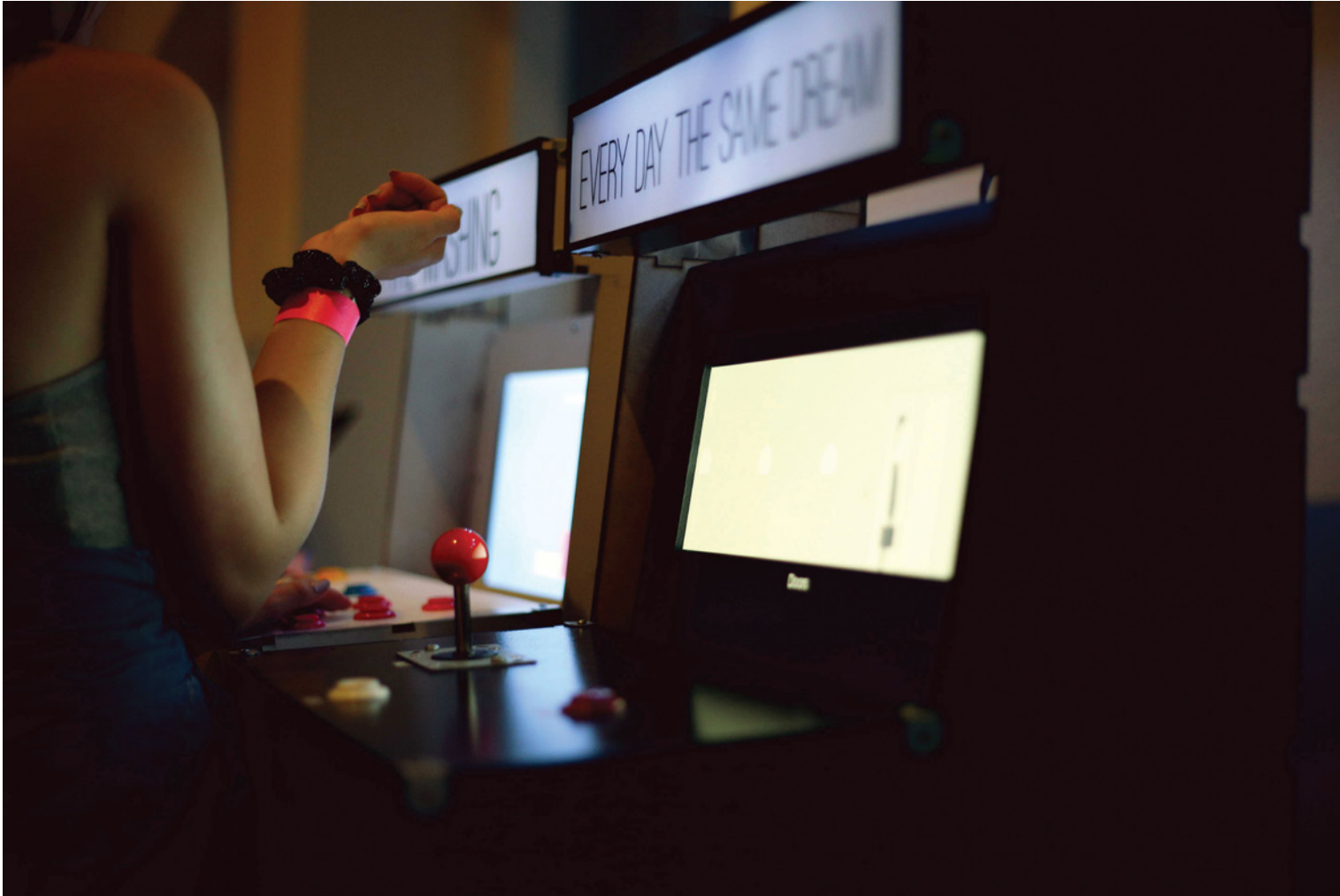
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*A process-based approach is often widespread within the arts, but it can be difficult for young people to navigate. The gallery may not be fully sure at the beginning of a project about what it wants and this can be confusing to young people who don't have access to the bigger picture.*

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## Cultural co-production

*Vicky Clarke led Whitworth Young Contemporaries (WYC) group working with them to programme events including WARP Festival. The process was defined as 'co-production' and was a new way of working for Vicky. As well as developing new skills herself, she sought to establish an environment for participants to feel supported, aiming to represent the views of the group authentically with colleagues across the wider institution.*

### **My role**

The experience of working alongside young people to co-produce the *Circuit* programme was unlike anything I had previously been involved with in my career. As an experienced project manager and creative producer of art and live events, the task of co-producing with the youth collective required a new set of skills and raised lots of questions around authenticity/responsibility and representation/articulation. My role evolved, transformed and blended between lead artist, project

manager and youth worker; it was extremely rewarding and challenging, risky, hilarious and above all fun, positive and meaningful.

Operating as somewhat of a 'translator' between the gallery staff and the youth group, the dual position of articulating the young people's artistic ideas and often strong feelings to the staff team, and conversely feeding back from Whitworth management to the group, was a delicate undertaking. I felt a great responsibility to represent the youth group to the gallery authentically, and present their creatively ambitious and often wild ideas with honesty and non-bias. My role was to facilitate their ideas, help shape them into something that would be achievable, in a way that related to The Whitworth collections and *Circuit* aims, but without dampening their ambition or drive. I found a good tactic was just to be honest and if something wasn't achievable to explain why. This sometimes involved feeding back challenging or difficult decisions to the group, for example if an act or artistic live concept couldn't be realised due to logistical, operational or budgetary reasons. Explaining and discussing was all part of learning what it was like to operate as part of the gallery, and to ensure that the group were part of that dialogue.

### **Non-hierarchy and social**

WYC were a seriously talented and culturally savvy bunch of young people. With visual artists, poets, actors and musicians all at different levels and ages, it was important to establish an environment of equality and non-hierarchy, as well as a culture of respect. For myself I valued the young people as artists themselves and wanted to help them develop as confident cultural producers, who could learn key skills that would help them in their future careers. It also had to be a sociable and welcoming experience for individuals.

### **Artistic inspiration and influence**

The starting point for many production discussions was art. The WYC events always worked to a theme, inspired by Whitworth collections.

Taking inspiration from the gallery and running sessions amid the artworks increased the young people's familiarity with and confidence in being in the gallery space, so that they gained a sense of belonging to the building.

Inviting guest artists and producers from many different fields to join us was essential to exposing the group to the many different artists, ideas, art forms and happenings around Manchester and develop their awareness of the city's cultural offer. Some highlights included the arts market event Carbooty, producers like Jude Jagger from Manchester International Festival, musicians The Mouse Outfit, local radio station Unity FM, and Noise Festival, which supports emerging talent. I wanted the group to see real world active artists making artworks and putting on events from club and festival promoters, music collectives, digital artists, fashion and dance groups. Whichever field they were from, we discussed their career paths to that point and the essential skills required for their work. At every session we encouraged the youth group to share any events or activities they knew were happening in the city over the next week at partner venues or in the young people's own networks.

#### ***Circuit* aims, audience-focused and youth partners**

With the transitory nature of young people joining and coming in and out of the group, I found it important to reiterate the *Circuit* aims every couple of months. I was aware of 'not operating in a bubble' and that we were producing events for the wider youth audience in Manchester who weren't necessarily the same as the core group and may therefore experience barriers coming to the gallery. We discussed our audience often, undertook outreach and focus groups for our festival and invited youth partners in for skill-sharing, including the youth leadership organisation RECLAIM, and youth centre Moss Side Powerhouse.

#### **Balance of sessions**

It was important to mix up the sessions and create a balance of discussions, skill-sharing, practical creative work, going on trips,

brainstorming and researching to maintain momentum and interest for the young people attending. It was important to vary the dynamic and focus of the sessions, but also to have a monthly plan so the young people could see what was coming up. Also important was to give the young people a choice of what to do, an opt-in policy so they had a say on the direction things were going in and the types of session being planned etc.

#### **Making work**

Producing artwork was, for WYC, essential to the success of the events. For WARP Festival, the group worked with art collective Walk the Plank to decorate our live art shed worlds, created costumes with collective Volkov Commanders and designed and decorated their own ghetto blaster bikes. This was an important element of the co-production and the young people as artists and producers; bringing an increased camaraderie and pride, this also aided artistic collaborations outside of the group.

#### **Discussions and communication**

I adopted the usual youth work/artist facilitation strategies of group discussion, starting with provocations or areas of focus for the group to discuss and give feedback. I set research tasks that were sometimes exploratory and involved going off into the gallery for artistic inspiration or creative tasks using design-thinking approaches where we were thinking and discussing while making and building. It was important to mix these approaches to keep the sessions interesting, but also, as a facilitator, for me to remain flexible and change things when an approach wasn't working.

One challenge was navigating the sheer amount of ideas and content. Brainstorming ideas was always interesting, but with so many different tastes, styles and influences it was easy to get lost in a rabbit warren or suffer from content overload. Filtering and making connections was

a skill I quickly developed, especially for WARP Festival where every week there was a deadline or decision that needed to be finalised.

### **Social media and online tools**

With young people not coming to every session or new people coming on sporadic weeks, it was important to keep the conversation going using social media. Pinterest was a good tool for a virtual mood board. This worked well in the sessions where the group could upload imagery and research areas to share and discuss, using this as a visual prompt, but it proved hard to get the group to do this away from the sessions. It was our Facebook group that we started for WARP Festival that proved to be the best means to communicate, share ideas, take votes and gain quick responses; this was the most democratic and instant social platform we found to communicate as a group. If the gallery were asking for a quick response, I could put this to the group instantly so they would have input outside of the weekly sessions.

### **Job roles and admin, teams and research areas**

Skills, talents and interests within the group were diverse. For co-production WYC were involved in major decision-making in terms of operations and logistics to focusing on particular areas, whether this be music or live art programming, technical/operations/logistics, marketing and social media, workshop or evaluation. For WARP Festival we needed to split the group into teams and feedback on developments week by week. WARP had followed three major WYC Presents gallery events and so the group had by now experienced a variety of different job roles, meaning that when WARP arrived they were able to specialise in an area they particularly wanted to learn and have down on their CV, such as main stage artist liaison or stage tech support.

### **Young people identifying as artists and curators themselves**

A strong element to WYC was the young artists in residence who played a vital role within the group, leading their own artistic sessions

and discussions at points throughout the project. It was important for the wider members of WYC to see these young artists, who were the same age as themselves, being paid to produce work and operate in that capacity. The age band of 15–25 years was quite a broad one, and within that it was clear to see some of the older WYC members becoming inspirations and mentors to the young ones. It created a unique space.

### **Key learning**

Split into teams and invest in young team leaders to galvanise others in the group; give young people responsibilities and challenge them; within the organisation it's clear when gallery staff are onsite, so find those individuals who want young people to shadow them and challenge the ones that don't; maintain momentum through varied sessions; look outwards from the gallery – switch perspectives and think about your audience and accessibility; make sessions sociable and fun; spend time on the individual needs of the young people – find out their ambitions, skills and any gaps in learning or training they may wish to develop; being authentic at every point in the journey is very hard to do and asking for young people's input for everything is sometimes impossible – it takes time but it is worth it; young people are honest, so if you don't do what you say they want to know why and hold you to account; establish a framework where young people can come in and out of the project as young people have busy and often stressful lives; allow for contingencies when organising large-scale events.



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Let youth programming  
become programming

Authentic peer leadership needs  
to be established. This can  
only happen through re-evaluating  
of gallery hierarchies

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Thoughts from delegates at the *Circuit* conference,  
Test, Risk, Change, March 2017

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Rebecca Scott

## Ducked Off! (and how I was supported to take the lead)

*Rebecca Scott was a member of Circuit Cambridge at Wysing Arts Centre & Kettle's Yard for several years, planning and running events with the group. Being supported to lead events impacted on her confidence, and during the Unlock Cambridge Festival she developed one of its central activities – Ducked Off.*

I joined Circuit Cambridge thinking that it would be a good opportunity to meet people with similar interests and get involved with the art scene in Cambridge, but what I did not yet know was the skills and confidence I would gain. When we first started to come up with ideas for the festival, it was exciting: anything was possible and no idea was too absurd. This was partly due to the artist we worked with, Rasmus Nielsen from SUPERFLEX. He created a relaxing environment of possibilities and helped us to think about what we wanted the festival to say. What voice we wanted.

I came up with the game idea Ducked Off. We all became strangely obsessed with ducks throughout the planning sessions of the festival.

At first, my idea seemed quite bizarre, but at no point did the staff team discourage me. Instead they found ways to help me realise my ideas.

One of the realities we faced was that we had a budget and a short time scale to organise the festival, so some of the original ideas had to be rethought into what was actually possible. Originally for Ducked Off I was thinking of a game similar to a life-size version of Angry Birds, where we used a massive sling shot to sling ducks at blocked buildings. After meetings with an artist, whom I also helped to choose, Elaine Tribley, the whole game was rethought and became more like the fairground game coconut shy. Although the scale was not as big as the original plan, it still kept its original concept while taking on a life of its own. I became completely involved in every aspect of making the game, from the signs to the model houses, posters and prizes. I really became proud of the outcome, even more so when I saw loads of people enjoying and becoming quite competitive with the game.

I often lack confidence as an artist; in the past I have found it hard to call myself one. Completing this project has given me so much confidence in my own practice, making me realise that I can make my ideas come to life and that I can complete a project.

Throughout the whole process of creating the festival we could become involved as much or as little as we wanted to. This meant that during the planning for the closing party we could attend the initial meetings, the planning sessions with artists and even some of the council meetings. A lot of confidence was put in us and trust that we would make it happen. All of our thoughts were taken seriously and the meetings were led by our ideas. One of the challenges was that not everybody had as much time as me to get involved owing to their busy work or school schedules. So a lot was left on my shoulders, especially with making Ducked Off. Although it was hard, I learned so much and was so enthusiastic about getting it finished. Even though some of



the Circuit Cambridge members could not be there, I felt supported all the time by the staff. Learning how to make it through the challenges made me realise that if you keep putting in the effort, eventually you make something amazing.

*Fatimah Fagi-Hassan*

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I have completely changed as a person because of Whitworth Young Contemporaries and that's due to the fact that my voice is valid here; they actually care about what I'm saying.

And because of that my confidence had completely changed. I feel happier now talking in crowds and talking to people because I feel like I have got a voice. And I do matter.

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## Peer-led approaches and ensuring parity



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*Following an in-depth and open discussion between members of the Circuit Cambridge group and two members of staff during a visit to Wysing Arts Centre & Kettle's Yard, Circuit Critical Friend Roz Hall reflected on what is meant by the term peer-led.*

Peer-led processes are widely understood as being key to effective forms of engagement through which young people develop skills in independent and autonomous learning. In this context, young people also develop a sense of confidence in what they themselves can achieve and the differences they can make to their world. However, what we actually mean by 'peer-led' seems to vary in subtle ways that are hard to pin down or to articulate.

We can easily agree that peer-led processes are about young people leading a decision-making process. We can probably also agree that a peer-led programme demands that there are systems and structures in place to support young people to be able to have a role in defining the direction, scope and focus of that programme.

Our roles, as people involved in supporting peer-led processes and programmes, are about ensuring that these structures are sufficient for young people's needs. Our roles are not about defining what happens or how it happens, but how young people decide what happens. This means we need to 'let go'. We need to let go of any pre-existing ideas we may have of what something might look, smell or sound like. We need to let go of imagined outputs and products, and we also need to let go of the fear we may have about what might happen. But I think it is important to stress that this does not mean that we can simply sit back and watch what happens. As Christopher Naylor has commented, 'to engage young people effectively means going into the unknown, letting them help shape the project, sharing or even losing control...', and what I find interesting about this is the idea that we need to be prepared to let go. (1)

During one of my visits to Circuit Cambridge, a really in-depth, open and valuable discussion took place between the young people involved in *Circuit*. The following extract from my journal outlines the crux of that conversation:

...the artist didn't want to be controlling, but wanted it to be based on their [the young people's] voices, but she could have been a little more directive and controlling. We agreed that this is one of the creative challenges of peer-led practice, knowing how far to direct and how far to be led by the group's own priorities, ideas and voices.

Everyone agreed that it was important that voices were managed rather than being directed, but that voices did need to be managed, as there were concerns that some voices are louder or stronger than others.

The group agreed a need to clarify among themselves, what the parameters of peer-led practices are, [both] in principle

and in practice, and they talked about the fact that there is always some kind of restriction, such as budget or other priorities, including those of the *Circuit* programme.

The group suggested that the parameters for them might be that they have a role in deciding what the focus is for projects and then hand over some of the control for decisions made throughout the process, but that they need to be clear about where the 'handover' points are and decide this themselves, for it to still be peer-led.

One person said that he was concerned that it was often difficult for the team and the artist to respond consistently to what the whole group wanted to do, because of some voices being louder than others; that there had been many ideas that hadn't been pursued or followed up, but had got lost in the discussions. In this way it wasn't necessarily everyone's voice that informed the project direction, which meant that it was led by a few rather than being informed by the whole group. As such, there may be a need for greater directive roles among the team and artists to ensure the work is truly peer-led, rather than being led by a few.

This conversation, in itself, is testimony to (and evidence of) the extent to which the young people have a keen sense of control, as this is obviously an important foundation for them to be able to discuss such issues. Furthermore, the conversation indicates the sense the group have of their own potential to inform, not just the focus or scope of the project, but the approach being used within and across the programme.

What this conversation highlighted to staff from Wysing & Kettle's Yard present at the meeting and me was the need to develop, use and

make explicit strategies to ensure parity and equality of input from all the young people involved.

This conversation was beneficial to ongoing project development and learning, as it led to changes in the way Circuit Cambridge was supported to make decisions. This example can therefore be seen to be indicative of ongoing reflective practice and an effective and sophisticated peer-led action research process.

Another consideration is that among most of the groups across the *Circuit* galleries there are young people with differing levels of confidence. The young people from Wysing & Kettle's Yard felt confident enough to voice their concerns and were secure in the knowledge that this would bring about useful development in the approach being used across their programme. Our roles, as people involved in supporting peer-led processes, bring responsibilities in ensuring that all young people feel that they can have input, including those who are differently able in terms of how they articulate their opinions, when part of the same group.

It therefore seems to me that it is important that we have enough control of the process to ensure this happens. The skill in supporting and nurturing peer-led practices can perhaps be seen to reside in an ability to reflect on each unique situation, as Donald Schön points out in *The Reflective Practitioner* (1983), to reach conclusions about where and how we need to have control, and where and when we need to let go. I would therefore argue that peer-led practice isn't as simple as 'losing control'. It is more sophisticated than that and is about knowing how to work out when to lose control in ways that actually support, as Hilary Bradbury comments in the *Handbook of Action Research* (2001): 'the flourishing of individual persons and their communities'. (2)

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## Honesty, Flexibility, Generosity, Responsiveness

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Values underpinning young people's programmes  
at Nottingham Contemporary

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## Thoughts on facilitation

*As part of her research, Alice Thickett, Youth Programmer, Nottingham Contemporary, met with Leyla Tahir and Rachel Noel, Assistant Curators: Young People's Programmes, Tate Britain & Tate Modern, to discuss what methods and styles worked for them and the collectives they facilitated. The following excerpt reflects the key questions and issues.*

### **Opportunities for core group**

We really try to develop an offer over a year-long period that is of different levels of engagement, different amounts of planning, different scales of event so that the offer is quite varied, with many varied ways that young people can get involved.

Generally, young people know that if they sign up to a project that they then can't come along to, it would be wasting an opportunity for another Tate Collective member and so they're quite aware of being democratic in that way.

### **Skills**

When Tate Collective deliver an event, being there on the night and working with the public presents so many opportunities to gain skills. We've been focusing on helping them represent and share this experience. We've started doing CV surgeries where we work with Tate Collective to translate project experience into relevant job description language.

### **Space for thinking big**

Fostering a culture where people feel comfortable experimenting and suggesting things that are different from the norm can be hard when delivering a high volume of programme; it is not always possible to be immediately reactive. As such, we're kind of a mediator between Tate Collective and the organisation. Young people have generally got all the amazing ideas, and we don't try to limit their thinking. We start with blue sky thinking - 'in your wildest dreams, what would we do?' With our knowledge of Tate we can work with the group to produce a realistic outcome. But it's really important for them to think big. Because sometimes it does push us to ask questions that we wouldn't usually be asking, and this forces us to innovate, to push practice and change the way in which we're working.

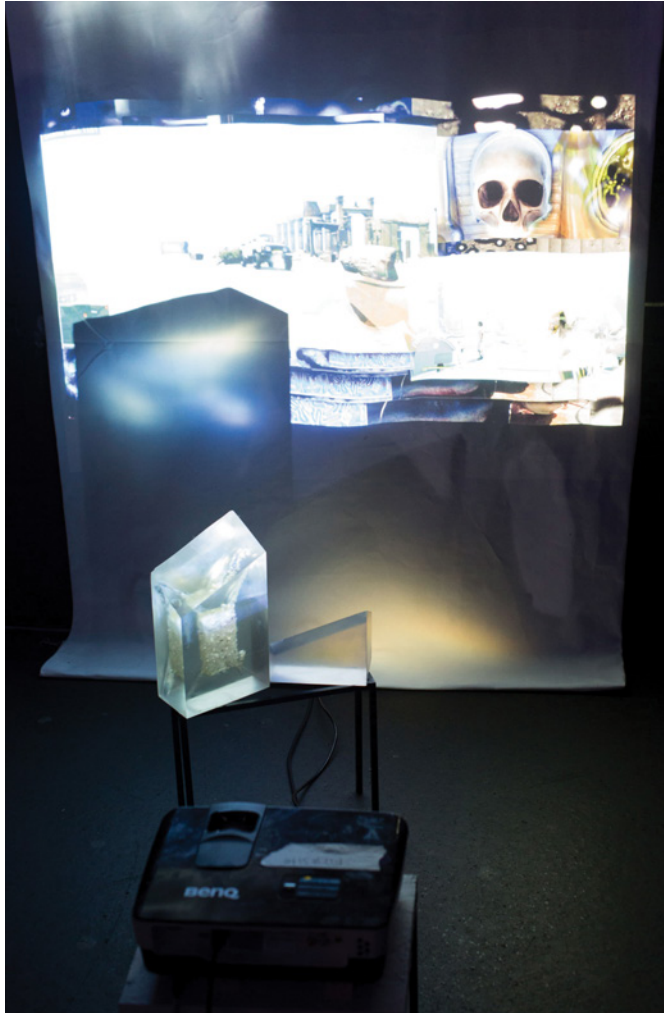
### **The social aspect**

It is important that our young people can share stuff and continue conversations outside of our meetings. We know a key part of being in Tate Collective is about being social and meeting other young people. It's really exciting for us when we hear that the group are collaborating and socialising outside of Tate Collective, because it means that it's working and it's filtering out into their worlds.

### **Relating to your young people**

Our age and lived experience means we're not that far removed from where the young people are at in their lives. We can still just about





# Exhibitions

*Poppy Bowers*

## *And Now We Are Plastic – a curatorial response*

*Whitworth Young Contemporaries (WYC) and Curator Poppy Bowers selected works from the gallery's collection to explore the temporary age of consumerism, technology and the 'selfie'. It was the first opportunity that Poppy had of working with young people in this way, challenging her usual approach to curation.*

The presence of an audience, or a public, is what brings an exhibition to life. Ways in which an exhibition speaks to people and attempts to act as a conduit of connections is sometimes not given the prominence it needs to ensure we are moving with changes in technology, attitudes and beliefs.

For me, working with the WYC group on curating an exhibition of works from the collection was a fantastic experience that offered new insights into how young people respond to artworks. In particular, it highlighted the different ways they consider the environment of the gallery space and how they, and others like them, encounter the works on display – physically and imaginatively.



The project also presented a number of challenges, both in terms of protocol surrounding the handling, access and presentation of objects and also the personal working relationships within the group.

### **What worked well**

#### **The space**

The initial conversations with the group sketched out ideas around the way the gallery space looked. This seemed of utmost importance to them from the start. They were keen to change the colour of the conventional white walls, add in comfy seating such as beanbags, alter the lighting and have music in the space. They intended to create a space that would be inviting to a young person and would enable them not only to walk around to look at works but to stay in the space afterwards, to socialise in it, to read and relax. To create a space for them to use and in which they felt a sense of belonging was for them incredibly important. This flagged up for me the need to consider how the design and layout of a space can encourage certain ways of being in the space. It also demonstrated that the existing spaces were not fully functioning in the way the gallery had hoped, for example, our desire to offer a welcoming space for all members of the public to use and inhabit.

Surprisingly, as the development of the exhibition continued and the group came to focus on the contents of the exhibition, they gradually let go of these ideas. Their intentions turned to making an exhibition that they considered to be serious in its presentation and could stand alongside any of the other conventional gallery spaces at the Whitworth rather than standing apart. The group finally agreed on standard white walls for their exhibition, with no added seating, but we did incorporate a sound work, which brought contemporary music into the exhibition space.

#### **The collection**

The group brainstormed a range of themes they felt expressed their concerns and aspirations for young people today. I then worked with them to research the types of work we had in the collection and identify works and artists that connected to their themes.

As a curator, I look at artworks through a lens that is ultimately shaped by art history, knowledge of the artist's practice as well as the historical moment in which the work was realised and in which it came to prominence. WYC did not, of course, look through the same lens. They viewed these works not in any association with their art and social historical significance but rather on their own terms, as visual expressions of the current social, economic and identity issues they were personally grappling with. This led to a nineteenth-century etching of a lady looking into a mirror becoming a commentary on the notion of the 'selfie'. Eduardo Paolozzi's *Twin Towers of the Sfinx* 1962 became a visual reference to 9/11 and the destruction of the Twin Towers in New York – a powerful event that dramatically altered the character of the society in which they were growing up. An early twentieth-century sculpture of a figure kneeling by Dora Gordine had the same title as American singer Beyoncé's 2013 song, 'Flawless', and this connection was the impetus to include it in the show. Over the course of the exhibition planning the young people became fascinated with how connections were being made over generations and gradually they came to feel a sense of ownership over these objects; they felt that they could talk about them in their own way, and that this was as important as what a gallery curator might say about an artwork.

#### **Voices**

A key aspect of delivering an exhibition is writing the interpretation. Rather than using the anonymous institutional voice we often implement into exhibition wall panels and labels, the group were keen to make this multi-vocal, by having labels written by individuals in a style that reflected

their own personalities. The group also brought different cultural references from a range of sources – grime music, poetry, social activism, graffiti. This was a much broader pool of references than would ordinarily be referenced in wall labels. Their everyday use of the internet for networking and chats, especially social media platforms, enabled the group to reach and correspond with a range of sources and people about the show, and many of these voices came into the exhibition.

### **Challenges raised**

#### **Quality-control; where does it lie?**

This was a question that was never completely resolved. To what extent do I edit the texts written by the group? To what extent do I advise on the layout of the exhibition and the partnering of certain works? If members of the group don't turn up to a meeting, don't produce the writing they agreed to or design the artwork they promised to do – am I to fill in the gaps or allow the gaps to exist?

#### **Reliability and relationships**

Although a major part of my role was guiding the group through the exhibition-making process, when it came to stages of the project where decisions had to be made, such as the final selection of works, making plinths and agreeing the title of the show, the group did appear to struggle with the expectations placed on them to make such decisions.

Within the staff team itself, there was also at times a lack of clarity over who was leading the group, who was the final decision maker in signing off copy, organising staff briefings and being the point of contact for the group on the exhibition planning. This was compounded by WYC not working to the typical rhythms of a working day, as most gallery staff tend to do. Emails would be sent late at night and over the weekend, meetings would be ad hoc and often members of the group didn't turn up when expected. This all contributed to challenging the working

practices of staff who, at times, had to be flexible and compensate for the late arrival of information.

Another challenge was the unanticipated amounts of time the group and individuals in the group required for emotional and psychological support. Generally the group members were each journeying through a stage in their life where their identities were still forming. For some it was also a challenge being placed within a network of relationships and social and professional situations for the first time. The need to support them through this was clear and it ultimately formed a large part of the time spent on the project.

#### **Why it is important**

This was the first opportunity I have had to work as a curator with a youth group on an exhibition. The experience has given me valuable first-hand experience of working alongside this age group, enabling me to learn and get to know a range of attitudes and perspectives that I had not previously encountered in a work situation. Quite simply, if I had not had the opportunity to work with WYC I would not understand them anywhere near as well as I feel I understand them now. Not only that, but I now know how I would plan to work with them in the future, by anticipating the extra time they may need for advice and support, by working to their alternative patterns of activity, and by giving them much longer lead times to produce writing and designs for the exhibition.

Testing why and how we do something is always important, especially when your role is to communicate with a constantly changing and complex public on behalf of a public organisation. The questions and approaches the group brought to the process of thinking about and interpreting objects has given new ideas about how an object can connect, as well as the need to transcend disciplinary boundaries. Working with young people as producers of cultural activity is exactly what we should be doing.

## Shifting conventions: *Gallery 1* at MOSTYN

*Cylch (later GLITCH) Collective at MOSTYN curated the exhibition Gallery 1 working in collaboration with artist Bedwyr Williams. Working with and supporting a group of young people who had little or no experience in curation was a new challenge personally for Adam Carr, Visual Arts Programme Curator, as well as an innovative step for the gallery.*

I will be honest: prior to joining MOSTYN and up until meeting with Cylch members, I would not have considered working with a group of people for whom exhibition-making was a relatively unknown task. Perhaps at this point I have now loosened up, become open to other possibilities and, some might say, open to risk. Considering it more closely, however, the whole project was very much in line with my early ambitions and current practice, in that I aim to curate exhibitions in new and different ways – in different contexts and/or establishing unorthodox frameworks for art's presentation.

For MOSTYN, it perfectly met the vision of the exhibition programme, which sets out to promote innovation, change and a desire to be pioneering. The Cylch project was not initially guided towards making an exhibition, but over time it developed into becoming a unique collaborative space to integrate young people's ideas, energy and creativity into the gallery programme.

According to tradition and convention, initiatives engaging young people, even if peer-led, are not supposed to be involved in the real decision-making of an organisation; young people do not typically participate in the process of curating and they are most certainly not placed in a position of great responsibility. Despite all of this, there was a real desire from Cylch members to be more involved in the process of making exhibitions at MOSTYN. Initially, curating an exhibition with young people might seem full of risk, even a threat. However, risk can also be interpreted as possibility, and without the possibility of encouraging the unfamiliar and exploring the uncharted, surely we would avoid the chance of learning and progressing?

I was enthusiastic about collaborating on this project and handing over some responsibilities to the group. It was exciting. What would come of this process? The starting point came about during a number of initial sessions in which we spoke about curating and exhibition presentation, including discussing ideas about presentation and exhibition design, for example artist-curated exhibitions where the idea of presentation was pushed to the limit. It was at this point that the discussion with the group seemed to find an extra gear. The Cylch group's approach to their exhibition was going to be somewhat alternative, so the members felt that the presentation should mirror that as well. What was needed now was a framework – something which brought everything together, harnessed the vision and allowed all of the group members an equal say.

During further conversations, the topic of how the media perceived the younger generation kept cropping up. The obvious choice would have been to use this as a theme and to make an exhibition of artworks based around it. However, most of the group members were not well acquainted with contemporary art. Issues around availability of artworks and loan requests could have made this process lengthy and problematic. So it was then decided that each member of the group would choose an object which said something about them as a person, reflecting their current or past interests, or, in some cases, both. Arguably, this allowed for a more personal exhibition – a more accurate portrayal of young people than one than those of another generation could consider and come to present. Objects were obtained from across the globe, from well-known companies, celebrities and online outlets, including American skateboarder Tony Hawk, Fender and Kodak. Some members decided that one object would not serve the purpose of presenting their interests. In these cases, they elected to make projects instead, collaborating closely with other people. (3)

Both objects and projects were displayed in our *Gallery 1* space, which had been reconfigured for the show – including creating its own entrance – to give the exhibition its own identity and character. The presentation has been inspired, in part, by the thought of a museum both of and for the present. The process of making the show was displayed in the exhibition as well by way of a vinyl wallpaper that lined every wall within the exhibition space. Throughout the course of curating the exhibition, Cylch members not only explored their own interpretations of art making and curating, but also the perceptions and preconceptions about themselves, as the younger generation. Members of the group gained a large span of knowledge about exhibition making, but also, more importantly, they have been able to build personal confidence. This knowledge and experience will be of use in the future, whatever roles the young people decide to undertake.

Personally, I have learned a great deal throughout this journey, especially from Cylch [GLITCH] Project Coordinator Tomos Jones, perhaps more so than the group themselves have. Thinking about the early conversations with the group, particularly about how their generation is being wrongly characterised, perhaps I have also been guilty of this misunderstanding. I did not anticipate the range and depth of what they eventually selected to represent their interests and passions. Learning was key to the making of *Gallery 1* exhibition, which I hope was transferred to the viewing audience – at least signalled in the feedback we received from the public about the exhibition, which was extremely positive.

Continuing on from *Gallery 1* and its successes, the group were involved with another exhibition-making opportunity, placing collaboration more at the forefront, and using it as its key theme. Working individually, or in pairs, the group worked on projects with one other person/group/company, external to the group and MOSTYN. Their collaborative partner is a person or group and/or a company and not an object such as a paintbrush, pencil or camera. Just as with any other exhibition, where I find myself doing entirely different tasks and speaking to a whole variety of different people, the journey of the group and the process of achieving their projects will become as important as the ‘finished’ outcome. I have often thought of the process of *Gallery 1* and the subsequent exhibition, *&: On Collaboration*, as less about art- and exhibition-making per se but more about confidence-building and the acquisition of skills that can be applied by the group members anywhere, beyond the visual arts. This underlines, perhaps, the idea that the visual arts are the last bastion of free thinking, an agent of complexity – to be many things at once – that ‘teaches’ without teaching.



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Moving beyond the boundaries of departmental roles and responsibilities remains a challenge. While curatorial involvement with *Circuit* grew through the life of the programme and there was a more open approach in terms of the interpretation needs of young people, there is scope for closer and mutually beneficial collaboration between Curatorial and Learning.

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## In conversation: *The Plaza*

*Part of MOSTYN's GLITCH Festival, The Plaza was an exhibition which built on the previous work in the gallery of enabling young people's input into the main exhibition programme. One part of The Plaza explored the skate history of Llandudno, with iconic gallery objects modified to be rideable by skateboard, rollerblade or scooter. This grew from an idea from GLITCH member William Dean, working closely with Visual Arts Programme Curator Adam Carr.*

WD At the early stages I remember there was like a Facebook question that said: 'In your wildest dreams for the festival, what would you do?' And that was a great opportunity for me, as I love a creative challenge. I came up with ten or fifteen festival concepts, one of which was a skateable exhibition, mainly because I always see *Circuit* as, how do you get young people into galleries? Originally, the idea was

for me to collaborate with a sculptor, or someone in that practice, to create a form that can be ridden by skateboard or scooter, and that idea kept bubbling up... and became the idea of a skateable exhibition rather than a skateable artwork. The name *The Plaza* was because a plaza is an outdoor concrete skatepark but also a communal space... I thought it sounded very arty, which is always a winner. The original idea was almost like a residency, where I would select a group of artists and then immerse them in local skate culture, and then they would respond with objects or works that could be ridden by the public. That was the dream.

Very quickly we realised that's not really possible, with budgets and things. So, then it was creative solutions... I stumbled upon an old skatepark that used to be in Llandudno and it snowballed into telling the history while incorporating contemporary works that somehow reference the culture.

AC I think the skate exhibition was hugely challenging, because of things like health and safety, and we were never certain about whether it would take place in the way you envisaged it.

WD I always felt I had to refer back to the original aim: I want people to experience art in a different way. And it's almost simplifying it at its core, so that when it's the hard times, you don't get too clustered in the mind, you just scale back, to, why am I doing this? And it's, okay, it's that vision of, I just want to see people interacting with art and being given the opportunity to do it in a different way.

AC What I want to say about the process of working with you on this exhibition is that it reminded me of your personal journey from being very shy and retiring and somehow listening to me

in sessions about the history of exhibition-making and really taking it in, and taking inspiration from it, really finding your lane, not only professionally, but also personally. I could see that for the first two shows, *Gallery 1* and *&: On Collaboration*, there was a lot of assistance, especially where I had to assist and speak through [your] ideas. You had the idea, you were on the phones to artists, you had the conversations, and at that point you went from participating in exhibitions to then actually working with artists. And how you used it as a vehicle through which you could make contacts with people that you'd been hugely inspired by. Maybe you could say a little bit about your process of working with artists and how you found it?

WD The big thing with *The Plaza* was always to involve serious living artists, not for it to just be a skatepark and a gallery. There was always an issue with insurance, which was something you brought to my attention – okay, [there are] a lot of moving objects that literally could be an insurance nightmare. So we always knew that we had to get works that were almost build-by-instruction, which introduced me to artist Laurence Weiner and whenever I'd look at certain artists that I admired, it would always be works that we could do by instruction, rather than having to get them shipped.

*Mark Miller, Leyla Tahir, Verity Barrett,  
Harriet Hundertmark, Sabine Doolin*

## *Source and Space*

*Spotlight Display: Source was curated by Tate Collective London showing digital artworks created in response to the display with artworks from Tate collection. Accompanying the exhibition was a social space in the gallery called Space. Both aimed to engage with younger visitors on a day-to-day basis, beyond the special events programme. Mark Miller, Circuit Programme National Lead, Leyla Tahir, Verity Barrett and Harriet Hundertmark, Tate Collective members, and Sabine Doolin, Audience Research and Insight Manager at Tate, reflect here on their experiences.*

MM Spotlight Displays were a series of regularly changing collection displays offering more depth on specific artists or themes, and drawing on the expertise of external specialists as well as Tate



curators. Source was the first display curated by young people at Tate Britain. It focused on the mass consumption of visual culture, representation and the re-appropriation of images through digital and social media.

The display questioned who it is that owns images online – the platform, the user or the creator? And asks whether ownership matters in the context of the internet. Source intended to capture and articulate how we consume and navigate visual culture – both digital and analogue – using artworks at the core of the presentation. In the gallery space, a salon hang was chosen to visually echo how images are often presented on screen using platforms like Tumblr, Instagram and Google Image Search.

Through a series of formal and informal meetings with departments including curatorial, conservation, time-based media, design, interpretation, digital, marketing and AV (audio visual), Tate Collective members were able to learn and understand the technical and logistical processes related to producing a display. Within this was the fundamental aim to facilitate young people's participation and interpretation within a constructed immersive space. There were questions and criteria that the collective needed to reconsider and revisit numerous times throughout the many months of the curatorial process, such as: what is a 'different' display? What does a display curated by young people and for young people look like? How do you represent both analogue and digital in the same physical space?

The group worked with a shared ethos and collaboratively selected artworks through an elongated but valuable learning process. The criteria for the selection of works were characterised by aesthetics – such as works that were culturally

relevant or works that captured popular content on Tumblr, Instagram and other social media platforms. Historic, modern and contemporary artworks were presented, as well as a diverse range of content, cultural references and artistic media across a wide variety of formats. The selection of artworks shifted from the aesthetic to the political, from style to questions of representation and intellectual property. Artists included Jason Evans, Eduardo Paolozzi, Sarah Lucas, Ian Hamilton Finlay, William Edward Frost, Peter Phillips, Rachel Whiteread and Allen Jones.

LT, VB, HH      We collectively considered what would attract a young audience to a gallery, display or an exhibition. We thought about what we personally really enjoyed or had been attracted to go and see, and decided on three core themes that would be key to whatever display concept we came up with: collaboration, participation, immersion.

From the beginning, we wanted to work with the idea of feeling comfortable in the space, and therefore maybe making it a social space. We also wanted to focus on the idea of being awestruck by something or blown away.

We wanted the aesthetic look of *Source* to highlight similarities between the mass display of art in a salon hang and the ability of twenty-first-century digital and social media platforms such as Tumblr and Instagram to present large numbers of images in a single location online. Working with this idea, and together with studio Put Turn Pull, we produced an interactive responsive installation exploring the link between physical and digital experiences in the gallery. We were also looking to draw parallels with the critical discussion



that was encouraged in a nineteenth-century salon and which is also commonplace through use of the comment and 'like' functions found in social media platforms. Alongside the screens showing the digital images, an interactive sound installation explored how we had interpreted the origin, meaning and content of sound, and we selected works from the collection to break down the interplay between sound and image.

It was important to us to give everyone visiting *Source* opportunities to get involved in the display, rather than just looking at things quietly in the gallery space. We asked Tanya Boyarkina from the collective to respond to the artworks through sound. Tanya created an interactive sonic piece, and visitors were able to sit on the sofas, chill out and create their own soundscape to listen to while looking.

Another way for young people to get involved was through a monthly public open call for submissions in response to six themes explored in the display. Participants' work was featured on screens embedded in the salon hang alongside the collection works, highlighting how the Tate collection resonates with contemporary visual culture. We also created a limited edition range of six handouts, encouraging repeat visits to the display to collect them all.

SD What can we learn from a display and a social space by and for younger visitors? What were our aims and what have we learned from previous activities? Tate and Tate Collective London have been successful in attracting a diverse group of young visitors to special events and activities, even leading to having to close Tate Britain because an event went over capacity. We have found these events are great in reaching younger visitors and getting people to visit for the first time.

However, we also realised that first-time visits can turn out to be one-time visits, while our vision is to make young people feel they can be part of Tate and that Tate can be part of their everyday life, not just when special events are on. Therefore, we wanted to go beyond singular events and find ways to attract younger visitors to the gallery on a day-to-day basis. We knew we had to provide something a bit different, yet part of the regular offer, which led to the idea of developing a collection display and a social space.

Overall both *Source* and *Space* had a positive impact on the image of Tate Britain among respondents as an accessible, evolving and forward-thinking organisation that supported British art (young artists, young curators) and reached out to young and diverse audiences. It was also felt that it gave young people a voice in the museum and reflected their experiences:

Good thing that they have Tate Collective, especially for young people, it makes me feel appreciated, makes me feel there is something for me here. The fact that they are thinking of our age group.

The quantitative data showed that *Source* and *Space* attracted a younger audience, which was a more ethnically diverse audience than usual at Tate Britain. Satisfaction was strong across all age groups, showing that what young people like – with some exceptions – is of broader appeal and not [with] limitations, something that has the potential to give a positive message about young people to other visitors.

Visitors were very positive about the visual impact of *Source*, as it provided a different experience of Tate Britain by presenting

a thought-provoking display that was historically grounded while relating to contemporary life. The ambience (low lighting, sofas) drew visitors in and the relevance of the content made them engage more deeply; the interactive elements (creating your own soundscape) and accessible yet thought-provoking content together with the wall text and leaflet information facilitated audiences' engagement with art. Visitors also commented that it helped them relate to young people. Young visitors appreciated that work by young people (through the open call) was shown to a wider public. Despite it being a bit hidden, the fact that *Source* mixed in with other displays was more credible as it avoided the feeling of putting young people in a special zone; audience feedback included:

It looks like it is relevant to us. It is like a mirror talking back to us... normal, urban view, the everyday life, the interactive parts.

It created a positive image about young people: it is impressive. It makes me proud to think of young people. People dismiss young people when it comes to art because we don't have experience behind us but it does not mean we don't have opinions.

There clearly is potential for a space for young people at Tate to meet their social needs and create more of a destination:

[It] seems out of place for a gallery. It is a good thing. I like to spend time to sit in galleries. There is never a place where you can sit and if you do so for a long time you feel self-conscious. There are not many indoor spaces in London that do not require anything from you.

Visitors were positive about Space as a place to relax while in the gallery. However, Space came most to life during events and otherwise suffered from low awareness and was hard to find. Like *Source*, it was supposed to be woven into the regular Tate offer, but as such it turned out to be a bit hidden.

Space was designed as a very open invitation, offering the opportunity to hang out, talk, think, learn or just be. This was appreciated by audiences but also missed an opportunity: it did not link out to other offers for young people, which might have added to deepening their relationship and engagement with Tate. It also lacked a strong identity. In terms of age it was broadly appealing and often became a family space; in terms of function it was unclear what it was for. The challenge is to develop a more distinct look and feel that young people love, but which might appeal less to other audiences without labelling it 'for young people'.

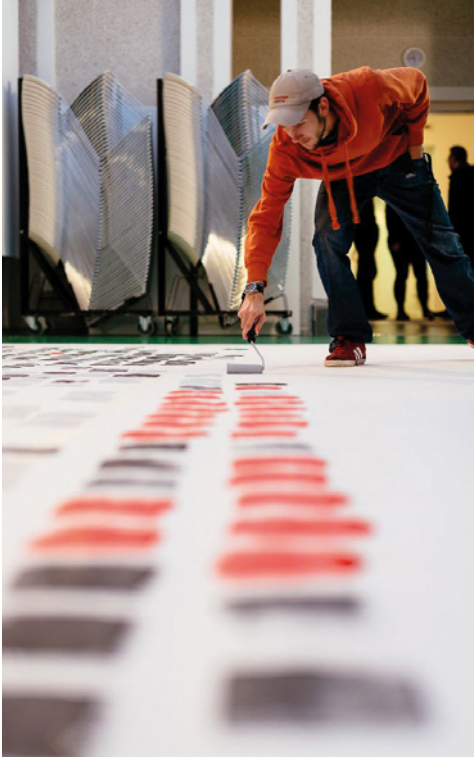
One-off events still have more impact in attracting young people to Tate, engaging them on an everyday basis; the research indicates the following:

- As events are often at the start of the relationship with Tate, there is an opportunity to communicate more effectively the gallery's permanent offer during events and being clearer about what else Tate offers young people
- A need to increase visibility and awareness of the young people's offer inside the building as well as in gallery communications
- To provide tangible opportunities to access the collection and to find connections relevant to young audiences. While events have a clear call for action

thanks to their specific date and programme, we should think about ways that create more of a sense of urgency for the permanent collection, as well as activities that make the collection accessible and help demystify art



10



# Multi-disciplinary Events and Festivals

Mark Miller

## Multi-disciplinary programming

*Embracing and presenting a range of artistic and cultural forms was central to the Circuit programme. Mark Miller, Circuit Programme National Lead, Tate Britain & Tate Modern, considers not only the different viewpoints and content that young people can bring, but the impact this can have on audiences and on institutions.*

The programmes delivered by *Circuit* shifted away from viewing galleries as transmitters of culture. As things developed, it was evident that a purist relationship to content related to art and cultural theory and to historic, modern or contemporary art was being resisted, challenged and changed. The programmes began to act as a catalyst to represent and define culture for young people in its widest terms; cultural activity such as oral, social, digital and ephemeral event-based experiences were being introduced on a regular basis.

Young people producing culture in galleries can align art with current trends in visual consumption, digital experiences, and popular and

subcultural forms. Utilising the social, cultural and political zeitgeist as programme content can reconnect the visual arts to wider issues, and strengthen its link to contemporary life.

This multilayered approach engages with social and decentralised modes of creation and exchange, which has the potential to create dynamic and diverse forms of cultural activity reflecting and responding to our daily experiences. Some young people's experiences of art exist in a much more networked and hyperlinked manner, rather than as a singular or insular relationship. This approach can shift the disconnected position of art spaces and art experiences to provide an interdisciplinary and social model. The *Circuit* programme has demonstrated this is not only a successful method to produce skills and learning, but also engages new and diverse audiences.

The current need for change in museums and galleries to be more present – and relevant to their wider public – may still be distant from their core function and working norms. Galleries might want to maintain a balance with their traditional canonical roles of 'keeper of knowledge' and their close relationship to economic markets and exclusivity. Indeed, there is still demand for this across the very wide range of roles the museum or gallery holds. When we discuss 'culture', its intangibility can create myths within itself: how do you hold culture, rationalise or visualise it? If galleries and museums shifted to a place where culture could more freely emerge from a broader constituency in its multifarious forms (in this instance, by young people), materialise and make a contribution to connections to the present, then its relevance would become more transparent, recognisable and potentially easier to achieve.

Throughout *Circuit*, utilising an expanded view of the arts and creativity, while responding to themes, processes and histories

specific to the visual arts, has been successful in engaging young diverse audiences. Across all gallery sites we have seen specific musical genres, digital platforms, popular culture and subcultural activities take place that are specific to demographic and location. These methods significantly increased the retention and relevance for the young people developing and delivering these programmes as well as for the audiences who experienced associated events.

There are also questions of 'quality' and what is 'good' in the traditions of galleries and museums. Perhaps 'good' in the twenty-first century should not be based on production within the cleansed white cube, but perhaps 'good' or 'quality' should be defined by experiential relevance and the resonance of any objects, or by artistic intervention with their audience. Other organisational perceptions of these programmes are sometimes concerned with the clarity of how this work connects to the 'art', and whether they are just a 'gig in a gallery' that could have taken place anywhere. These programmes may not speak to the usual visitors or to the current systems of an organisation. It raises critical commentary that demands that programming should have a clear connection or response to the art. Crucially, this view evades different approaches to production by young people that can be ambiguous, disruptive, deliberately challenging and digitally deft. This is the response to the artworks and context. Organisations may ask, 'How are you responding to art and to our collections?' To which the answer is, 'Not in the way that you would expect.'

Mark Miller

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Much youth culture takes place in bedrooms, online or in the street or other social spaces. How do we merge or positively disrupt the understood cultures or expectations of a gallery experience to enable an institution to become a space of happening?

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Mike Baines, Araba Mercer Banson,  
Adrian Shaw, Andrew Vaughan

## Just a gig in a gallery? Cultural democracy in the museum

*Multidisciplinary art forms have been celebrated through Circuit, as a driver for attracting new and diverse audiences to cultural institutions. However, programmers, artists and collective members at The Whitworth and Tate London have also come to reflect on what different people consider the relative value of different art forms and how this influences their representation in cultural organisations.*

AS Music is often used as a key driver to attract specific audiences. But it can result in 'accusations' from other colleagues: 'It's a gig in a gallery. What's it got to do with the collection? What's it got to do with art? Or Learning? Is it just a tokenistic gesture? Did these guys ever come back? Did they have any meaningful engagement with the art?'

AMB I think many people might view what Tate does as just a gig in a gallery, but that's only because they don't really have the

full idea of what art is. I guess that comes from different cultural values. Some people don't see the workshops or the different exhibitions that are also on, they just see the music as the main selling point. And for a while it was. But there was a movement away from the music and towards the art itself, so the workshop side of things has become more important. That allows us to plan events for a wider demographic of people. Whereas before we were taking music from different genres to accommodate for particular groups of people, we've now decided to move towards different political issues and issues that people will generally be interested in as a sort of bait to keep them coming back to the gallery. Although that might not necessarily work as not everyone is actually interested in art, [but] it allows people to understand that the gallery is a place for everyone and that everyone can be accepted in the gallery.

At Late at Tate now, everything is kind of joined together. We hope that when people come to the gallery and they understand the theme of the event, it will also cause them to look at the art because we make sure there's a strong connection between the two.

AV Throughout *Circuit* we have learned that the expressive arts can be a significant ally to help us reach out to new audiences. Young people have programmed showcase events using music, dance, poetry, performance and film as a way to market and promote. This model of experiencing 'art by stealth' was a driver for young people when starting to plan WARP Festival at The Whitworth.

A music festival in a park was absolutely something that Whitworth Young Contemporaries (WYC) wanted it to be.

It was a language that young people understood. It was a language that young people would definitely come to. But we didn't just want to make a music experience that young people were familiar with, we wanted it to be a gallery in a park, rather than just a festival in a park. Health and safety regulations to ensure the safety of people and collections were part of our thinking, but we were also very aware that we wanted to encourage WYC to develop a planning ethos of multi-arts interventions and experiences that connect to the art.

Some successful interventions included soundscapes, digital projections, pop-up poetry and dance performances, live music streaming, live art, theatre, silent disco, pre-recorded music on headphones, hi- and low-tech games, soapbox and a variety of participatory arts workshops - lots of ways that young people could come inside and have a transformative moment through the art, through the space, through the social space of an art gallery and hopefully make those connections.

MB Live music played a big part in the reception and the demographic that we got on the night at WARP Festival. The demographic that we were targeting felt represented by the music that was on offer. It was about finding a compromise with The Whitworth and WYC about how a live music event was going to work in a non-standard way that wouldn't lead to problems, like essentially having a massive rave.

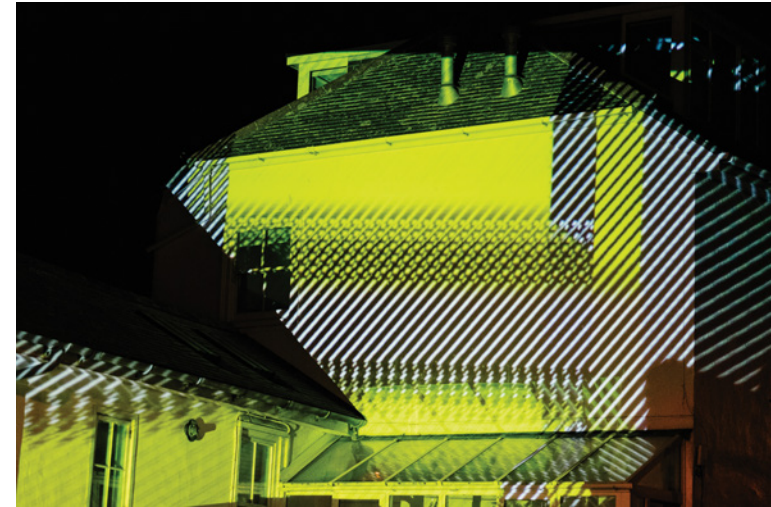
We got a well-known DJ from Manchester called Chimpo and recorded the audio and visuals of him doing a mix and then presented it to people in a 'not right in front of your face' environment (which could have created a rave). We had that



through silent disco headphones, so you could walk around the gallery taking in the pieces while you were listening to him mixing drum 'n' bass and jungle and grime. And on another channel on the headphones, we had a live room, which was in a room in the gallery which was full of instruments with people coming and going and playing and singing. You could walk around and switch between them; it was about creating a gig in a gallery in a way that doesn't create the problems that you'd have at a standard music venue.

People who came along might have just come and had a drink and enjoyed the rave while they were there, but they're going to come away from that thinking, 'This institution did that for us.' They [can] associate with that openness of the gallery and that willingness to engage with young people in a way that's not forced. I think that does a lot for galleries. To open the spaces up to young people just for the night and take the gallery away from what it's there for every day.

As a young creative, and for my peers, the arts have a responsibility to include each other and that's the way that things move forward... when we put events on that bring different art forms together, it attracts a wider demographic and it gives people more options while they're there.



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Alex Rinsler

## 'Build it and they will come': Reflecting on the *Circuit* festival programme

*Alex Rinsler joined Circuit as a producer for Blueprint Festival at Tate Liverpool, subsequently acting as Festival Consultant for the national programme. Bringing his experience of producing festivals in the UK and internationally, he worked with each gallery and Circuit group to plan their vision, aims and approach.*

Producing a festival was a key part of *Circuit*. Using each gallery as a base, core groups of *Circuit* participants from around the UK produced festivals for young people by young people, with significant budgets (c. £40K) and professional support. These were heralded as 'landmark national youth festivals'; Mark Miller, *Circuit* Programme National Lead commented:

Our young *Circuit* members have put an immense amount of effort into the programming of the upcoming festivals. Each contribution from each partner group has its own unique style; the young people involved have really captured the spirit

of the places they live in, and are using art to both express themselves and create access to cultural activity for others. It's been an inspirational journey so far; we hope you'll join us to see the fruit of their labour at these large-scale *Circuit* festivals nationwide.

For *Circuit*, the festival was defined as an ambitious, time-bound and large-scale event with an identity distinct from the institutions' regular programme. Working definitions, however, are elusive. The Latin *festus* implies joy, joviality and a sense of holiday. Festivals embody a sharp sense of place but are bound by time, with a start and an end. Institutions, historically, operate very differently. If bricks and mortar rise vertically, a festival site spreads horizontally – they are different ecosystems: 'When we asked young people: "What is a festival?", we [then] spent three months looking at that. There's something quite leading about the word "festival"', said Sally Noall at Tate St Ives.

The word 'festival' sparks fear and hope into the hearts of cultural institutions. Festivals force departments to work together quickly, often exposing an organisation's structural vulnerabilities by stress-testing policies, procedures and resources. When it comes to festival delivery, newly recruited volunteers might become the public face of an organisation and external contractors deliver one-off services that are out of the ordinary. The programme itself will likely confirm a lot later than the marketing or facilities teams might like, all of which can induce anxiety.

In terms of hope, cultural festivals attract varied audiences. They're often free to attend (or have a substantial free programme) and can appeal to people described as 'harder to reach', or who might not feel that a museum or gallery is 'for them'. Festivals create exciting and inspiring moments of togetherness, and demonstrate cultural institutions as centres for community. This imagery changes perceptions,

boosts morale and makes memories. Kay Hardiman, Head of Learning, Nottingham Contemporary, commented:

The Affinity Festival was a momentous occasion for Nottingham Contemporary. It was the culmination of over a year's careful planning by a collective of twenty young people who showed the most incredible dedication and enthusiasm for putting on an event to attract new, diverse young people in their thousands. The fact they achieved this - bringing over 4000 young people over two days to a takeover of films, music, dance and creative workshops - was so rewarding to see. However, for us as an organisation, the impact was far longer than that weekend. Over that year we worked together with young people in our Exhibitions, Public Programme, Marketing, Front of House and Learning teams - and this continues with young people in paid positions within our organisation today. As an organisation we learnt how to give freedom and support, how to collaborate across departments and change ways of working. Affinity was the catalyst for this.

### **Aims and outcomes**

The stated aim was to bring thousands of young people into cultural buildings, amplifying their voices and with them the impact of the whole programme. Tapping into this potential at scale and connecting with each other across the UK, these events would disrupt the social fabric. Ultimately, it was hoped that the festivals might become sustainable cultural brands driven by young people for young people.

Equally important was the experience for the core groups of volunteers. Large-scale events present significant learning and training opportunities with possible skills transfer in a wide range of activities, from copywriting to marketing, design to production,

event management to curation, promotion to performance. With a one- to two-year lead-time and significant resources and expectations, the festival would be the *Circuit* groups' key outward-facing activity. All the galleries' Learning and engagement teams recognised the prime importance of the quality of experience for the young people volunteering their time.

In line with other *Circuit* strands of work, a third aim was for the festivals to affect structural change within host organisations so that the legacy of the programme might be an altered landscape for young people. Specifics on this organisational change were unclear, but the gauntlet had been thrown down to cultural organisations to take the risk of handing over their buildings and brands.

### **Assumptions and logistical tensions**

#### **Are 15-25 year olds a homogenous group?**

From the outset the term 'young person' was problematic - participants hadn't chosen it - and the label complicated the process of forming identity, festival mission and brand. *Circuit* groups had to navigate what this label meant (if anything) before applying a similar process with place: what does it mean to be from North Wales, from the coast, from the town, from the gallery? These conversations took considerable time and energy.

The same is true for audiences: is the target audience 15-25 year olds or a broader local audience with a strong focus on young people? Some galleries brought other partnership-work to the festival and this crossover of activity and audience proved fruitful.

#### **Do young people want to run a festival?**

Most *Circuit* groups formed around pre-existing programmes for young people at the galleries, which were already offering a wide

range of creative and cultural activities, albeit at a reduced scale. Understandably, the planning and execution of the festival came to dominate, particularly in the months leading up to delivery. This came at a cost; in the words of one producer, 'The group just didn't want to work. They want to go back to making art.'

It's a point of difference that Learning and engagement programmes in the UK focus heavily on skills acquisition and knowledge transfer, alongside creativity and 'making art'. Personally I think this is a great thing, introducing young people to a wide range of roles in the cultural sector and providing them with the vocabulary to articulate these activities in ways that make sense professionally down the line. Commercial festivals employ a huge number of people under twenty-five; and the festival strand of *Circuit* provided participants with a useful vocabulary and experience to bridge into that sector. But this didn't appeal to everyone.

#### **Does young people doing cool stuff + an institutional brand = throngs of new and diverse audiences?**

There are two assumptions here: firstly that young people would be more able to attract their peers than an organisation's professional marketing team, and secondly that *Circuit* participants would be as motivated and able to work with 'hard to reach' young people as professionals working in cultural organisations are.

Beginning a new event and new audience from scratch takes time, as well as committed investment and resources. For the metropolitan galleries in towns with large student populations living locally – The Whitworth, Nottingham Contemporary – it was possible to achieve a critical mass with marketing and content so that attendance numbers were very high. For coastal galleries such as Tate St Ives and MOSTYN, an audience in the thousands was not possible with the available resources.

There was a creative tension between the urge to attract new audiences and the desire to build the groups' experience. Much of the pressure associated with the former came from the groups themselves, with them experiencing returning to anxieties around how a festival 'should' look and feel.

#### **Common themes**

##### **The role of the producer**

It might sound obvious, but a festival needs a single point of contact within a cultural organisation to channel conversations and manage internal stakeholders. The range of tasks can include: coordinating marketing, devising the event plan, contracting, managing expectations, undertaking risk management assessments, managing event-based staff, coordinating artists and practitioners, and liaising between all stakeholders and partners.

Generally speaking, the experience was seen as being positive and rewarding; however, when project management was absorbed into existing job roles, producers struggled to dedicate the time and energy required while at the same time maintaining the rest of their duties. This led to considerable fatigue across a number of sites, and at least one case of burnout.

##### **Who is the event manager?**

As a new event with multiple stakeholders, there was a risk of confusion around organisational hierarchy. Any institution considering a similar activity needs to identify the event manager at the outset – the person with whom the bucks stops and whose name appears on the bottom of any event plan. This will most often be an institution's director or a member of the senior management team. With high external visibility and programming that crosses spaces and departments, there are elevated reputational and practical

risks, which will usually extend beyond the responsibilities of the festival producer's job description.

*Circuit* galleries were well-versed in running large-scale events of their own. What was different here was the scale of the young people's involvement and the diversity of national stakeholders of the other *Circuit* galleries. Managing the long list of visitors and partners required time and energy, as well as navigating the organisational hierarchy. Having buy-in from senior management and gallery directors was very important, especially in galvanising organisation-wide support and clarifying expectations from gallery staff not directly involved with young people.

#### **Delivering a new event for a new audience - building a festival brand**

New events tend to take three iterations to embed within an organisation's calendar - legacy and sustainability were always going to be a challenge to the *Circuit* programme. All the galleries have recognised that repeating their festival on a similar scale will not be possible without alternative external support. This doesn't negate the positive impacts the festivals have brought, which have included:

- Over 40,000 people participating in *Circuit* festivals across the eight sites
- Young people being recruited into permanent positions within the cultural organisations
- New or deeper partnerships with local stakeholders, including new connections with existing urban arts festivals
- Setting the precedent for ambitious programming putting young people at the heart of cultural activity

#### **The importance of local context**

It's hard to understate the impact of local context on the shape and outcomes of the *Circuit* festivals, which was keenly felt in the planning

and development stages. Smaller, coastal towns would be heavily affected by the seasons, as young people travelled away to work or to study. Core *Circuit* groups reflected the geographic spread of young people, with some participants having to travel for many hours each week to reach the host gallery.

#### **Concluding thoughts**

According to one head of Learning, 'A festival forces you to make building blocks that aren't already there, whereas in the gallery you work with what you have and what you know.' *Circuit* festivals agitated the galleries to try new things and experiment with different ways of working.

Given the rising star of urban arts festivals, it's likely that we will see more attempts to steer young people's programming in this direction, particularly if funding avenues open up within urban contexts through tourism, well-being or other civic agendas.

This isn't without its problems, particularly as this drive isn't necessarily coming from young people themselves or from practitioners engaged in young people's programmes. And festivals are expensive to run - the budget for the weekend festival could have been used to maintain much of a Learning programme for a year.

The celebration at the heart of festival practice appeals at a time when young people live under increasing pressures. And as a methodology, *Circuit*-type festivals are a fantastic way to showcase an organisation's partnership work in a number of areas, and convene people who might not otherwise meet, while giving primacy to the contributions and voices of young people as part of a larger community. Perhaps this is where the potential is greatest, to demonstrate to young people that they are a valuable and critical part of our society's complex web, the complexity of which is reflected in a comment by Tahira Fitzwilliam-Hall, *Circuit* Programme Manager at Wysing Arts Centre & Kettle's Yard:

It was so interesting to produce such a public-facing event, interacting with people who'd never come into Kettle's Yard or Wysing - [and who were] making art part of their everyday life - something they just came across. I'm interested in doing more of this kind of work, wanting to capture that playfulness in communities' own spaces. On reflection, although it was a demanding experience and at times I felt stretched, I am proud of what we achieved as a team and feel that producing the festival is my personal highlight of working on the *Circuit* programme.



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Georgia Colman

## The benefits of INexperience (picking up worms)

*Georgia Colman, GLITCH  
Programme Assistant at MOSTYN,  
worked with GLITCH Collective  
to deliver their Circuit festival.  
Setting out to support risk-taking,  
she viewed the group's relative  
lack of experience as a positive  
for bringing richer programming  
and a new image to the gallery.  
Post-festival, she supported the  
group to 'reset' and move on,  
after having focused so much  
energy into a large-scale event.*

GLITCH Festival went off in your favourite seaside town, Llandudno, to the sounds of brass bands, punk badgers and world-weary robots. GLITCH Collective took over and put together an experimental line-up that included virtual reality, a skateable exhibit, pop-up workshops, live music, street food and Welsh bands – programming that was a complete departure from the gallery's arguably buttoned-up image. How did it happen, how do we celebrate, and where do we go from here?

Starting any creative pursuit is fraught with difficulties, the classic 'can of worms' artistic process. You love your idea... and then you start to look into the practicalities and realise this is going to involve a lot less fun and a lot more paperwork than you thought. You were prepared to put the work in, but damn, are meetings where ideas go to die?

What *Circuit* offers to the art world is a cohort of people who are unrestricted in their initial vision by years of experience – and in the case of GLITCH Festival, what it gave MOSTYN was something that would never have happened without the rose-tinted vision of its organisers. Yes, there were bumps along the way. Yes, a can of worms was opened – but that was no excuse not to try. And so problem by problem, worm by worm, the festival came around without a major hitch. This was because of the voluntary hard work of a core of people within the group – and the general drive of the group as a whole.

The festival was a huge success; as a visitor I got to see it from an 'outsider' perspective: the space was humming with activity, amazement and good old-fashioned, down-to-earth vibes. It was a festival I would have gone to as a member of the public, with 'legitimately' kick-ass gigs and daring art. I so wanted the group to see it through my eyes; but often it's hard to see something for what it is when you're so 'in' it.

As staff, we are the ones repeatedly having to rein back ambitious ideas into ones that are workable and practical. But it could be argued that what the art world needs to reconnect with its audience are ideas that are playful, ambitious and uninhibited, and for those ideas even to be voiced; there needs to be a level of energy, a disregard for the institution, and importantly, INexperience.



Inexperience	Experience
Audience participation!	Mess and damage Health and safety Staffing cost
Live music!	Mess and damage Licences Noise pollution
Offside projects!	Safeguarding Logistics Split audience Cost!
'We CAN do!'	'We can't do because...'

A major part of the *Circuit* programme is the creation of young professionals, but should we ask ourselves, is there such a thing as over-professionalising?

I'm sure it is as true in other groups as much as it is true at MOSTYN that negativity, once it takes hold, is hard to get rid of; it's just a natural response when the idea you loved so much changes in order to make it happen. How can we help our creatives step back and really appreciate how awesome their work is, how unprecedented and affecting it is for other young people in the area?

I recently went to a roller derby talk called 'Train your brain: Mental toughness in roller derby'. One of the subjects covered was the idea of 'resetting'. Roller derby is played in bouts and the idea of resetting is that no matter what happens in your last bout, no matter how frustrated or tired out you are by the other team or your own performance, you set yourself rituals to reset your mind, so that you can face the next round with a positive focus. For me, I can easily see how the idea of 'resetting' could apply to creative projects. After each exhibition or event you reset your goals, talk to yourself positively, do a power pose and visualise where you want to go next. Maybe *Circuit* should develop some rituals around resetting and celebrating the culmination of long-term projects.

Linking up with other organisations, bringing in mentors and remembering to make sessions fun cannot be underestimated as tactics to reinvigorate tired collectives. We need to constantly reset - as individuals and as groups - in order to keep up morale when working towards our goals. One idea that GLITCH Collective has put into place is bringing in visiting mentors. These mentors come from outside of the organisation and therefore are less held back by the way things are normally done; this can help bring the group together and distil their individual ideas into a group vision or project.

The line between practicality and vision is a hard one to walk. This already difficult task in any curatorial process is amplified by the peer-led set up of *Circuit*; the fresh-faced leading the experienced. We strive to keep on opening those cans of worms and to keep on creating - refreshed, challenged and amazed by the uninhibited vision of our *Circuit* members.

*Circulate members*

## Top tips for peer-led festivals

*Circulate, Circuit's group of young evaluators, gathered evidence at festivals, came together to analyse it and identified key learning points.*

### **Designing a festival**

- Ensure the work is peer-led but that young people have enough support and guidance
- Work across all departments with the young people, for example, marketing, press etc.
- Use young people's knowledge, understanding and insight into the issues that local people feel passionate about, as a way to engage local people
- Plan strategically to engage 'hard to reach' audiences by involving the community and potential audiences in organising the festival
- Specifically target publicity at 'hard to reach' audiences
- Festivals will inevitably be attended by people over, as well as under, twenty-five - this has the potential for adults' perceptions of young people to change
- Make sure festivals take over all spaces and change the dynamic of the gallery, as a way of opening up access and changing perceptions

- Use space in new and interesting ways that make the most of their unique characteristics; make sure people feel comfortable and relaxed
- Use outdoor space to engage people who might be daunted at the idea of entering a gallery; use it as a way to raise awareness of the festival and regular gallery programme
- Ensure you have plan Bs, for example, planning for the weather with inside or spare spaces just in case
- Create festivals with a wide range of activities and events and a continuous flow of entertainment to engage the widest range of people; this way people become more familiar with different cultural experiences and expressions, thereby breaking down stereotypes
- Include drop-in workshops and performances and advertise these across the various festival locations; use these to offer new insights into different practices and art forms
- Use universally recognised processes and activities, such as games, to initially engage people in an inclusive way
- Provide free food and refreshments to engage those who might not be able to afford to buy food at gallery prices; this can be an incentive to engage
- Make high demand for activities visible, but ensure there are enough spaces for all to take part
- Include opportunities for people to contribute their opinions in an interactive way so that they feel involved and develop a sense of ownership or investment in the festival and ultimately in the gallery
- Provide things (such as portraits, drawings or other mementos) that people can take away with them, as reminders of their experience so that they are more likely to return

#### **Important questions for future festival curators to consider**

- How can we make the audience more aware that being an

audience member is, in itself, a creative and active thing?

- How can we make links and themes that may be apparent to us more obvious for those who are visiting – for example gallery workshops, events and other activities taking place outside of the festival?

#### **Promotion**

- Advertise details of the festival, such as drop-in workshops, more clearly than only in the programme; market these events early
- Produce specific websites and/or Facebook pages for festivals to generate further visitors
- Collaborate with other venues in the city to ensure early advertising and promotion
- Ensure the programme layout is clear, as well as attractive and thematic
- Use different types of media to promote events – social media, radio, TV, newspapers
- Ensure hashtags are simple, memorable and used on all marketing and publicity

#### **Collecting evidence at a festival**

- See the exhibition or experience elements of the festival before interviewing people, so that you know and understand what it is that they are talking about
- Keep notes of the things you hear people saying, not during interviews, but things you overhear, or things people say after you 'turn off the mic'. Consider being an 'undercover evaluator' for some of the festival or event
- Set your own random target when you are planning who to interview, so rather than approaching the next person who looks as if they are enjoying themselves, decide that you will ask the third person who passes by, before you see them

- Tell people their feedback will be useful in improving what we do, so you are able to elicit a more critical perspective; if people know that we really want to hear their opinion, they are more likely to be honest
- Use audio interviews, as these can be better than filmed interviews at nurturing a more natural conversation

#### **Learning for gallery educators and artists about running a peer-led festival**

- Try to get more practical, commercial or design-based workshops into galleries to demonstrate the part art can play in various career paths; engage young people by highlighting the vocational relevance of working with galleries
- Allow the young people as much autonomy as possible
- Create opportunities for young people to gain work experience, so they have roles through which they can gain valuable transferable skills
- Pay the young people because of the work they do; don't assume it will always be voluntary
- Support young people to 'take over' galleries, to challenge expectations and stereotypes

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Empower young people to take  
charge and change our spaces

Outreach happens but does  
it make any change within  
the organisation? If the work  
keeps happening 'out there' does  
it have any impact in the gallery?

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Thoughts from delegates at the *Circuit* conference,  
Test, Risk, Change, March 2017

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We can see how much we've had an impact on other people and how far we've come over the years. I see the change that's happened, but I think we also see how much more we can do. But I think what our issues are, what we really want to speak about, why we want our voices to be heard, we haven't really nailed that yet and I think that's why we keep coming back.

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Abigail Christenson

## *A Democratic Dialogue* and positive disruptions of hierarchies

*Tate Liverpool changed to becoming more diverse with the range of art presented with and for the public. The team there, including Abigail Christenson, Curator: Young People, witnessed a growing openness within the gallery to encourage young people's participation in the delivery of the programme. Led by Tate Collective Liverpool, this culminated in events including Art Gym and A Democratic Dialogue.*

*A Democratic Dialogue* began as a project on identity, as an artist-commission for the Tate Exchange programme and evolved into a peer-led, creative direct action, with the collective members - in the role of artists and curators - addressing issues they felt were worth fighting for.

The collective created a list of provocations to spur discussion with the public for a series of workshops and debates, and to give shape to their

provocations they produced large protest banners that were taken onto the streets of Liverpool, as well as occupying gallery spaces. Carrying their banners, the collective marched and stood for long periods of time, voicing their provocations to members of the public and to gallery visitors and staff. The banners featured the following provocations:

*Will we learn from history?*

*When do world issues become fiction?*

*Dreamers not sleepers*

*Protect the young*

*Is this real?*

*Wake up in 3, 2, 1...*

Banner prototypes and earlier versions of provocations, as well as film documentation of the direct actions, were installed within public exhibition spaces at Tate Liverpool. The installation also featured two sound pieces – one by London-based singer, musician and artist Klein, which was her sonic response to the collective's provocations, and the other produced by Tate Collective as a response to Klein's sound piece, both layered together on a loop as a sonic dialogue. The public were invited into the space to respond to the provocations using social media hashtags #democraticdialogue and #tateexchange on Instagram, Twitter and Facebook.

These positive disruptions served to create platforms for the voices of Tate Collective Liverpool to be heard. *A Democratic Dialogue* also charted progress towards positively disrupting hierarchies within the gallery, as a way of spurring institutional change. The persistent

interdepartmental hierarchies found within art galleries, and in particular between curatorial-exhibitions and learning/education approaches to cultural productions, is somewhat entrenched within art organisations with collections to curate. The notion that there is an 'official culture' and a learning or educational culture, which is supplementary, persists. *A Democratic Dialogue*, as well as Art Gym - a programme of drop-in activities inspired by a traditional gym to learn new creative skills - and the Blueprint Festival, have been key moments of disruption of those hierarchies, as the organisation as a whole moves towards viewing and presenting cultural production by young people facilitated by Learning departments as just as significant as those overseen by their curatorial-exhibitions counterparts.

# Progression Routes for Young People

*Emilia Eyre*

## Becoming an 'advocate'

*Nottingham Contemporary set up an Advocacy Programme as an alternative route into the gallery. Participants are asked to complete tasks in their own time, which builds their connection with the gallery and its programme, and helps develop tangible skills. Upon completion, participants, such as Emilia Eyre, are given a reference and invited to join the Collabor-8 Collective.*

When I initially enquired as to how I might be able to get involved at Nottingham Contemporary, my expectations were low. As any young person looking for experience in the arts will know, opportunities are rare and competition is high. However, as I found out over a coffee with Alice Thickett, Youth Programmer, the gallery's answer to work experience is totally unique; there are no pre-requisites for getting involved. The Advocacy Programme allowed me to start straight away. I became immediately integrated into a community of like-minded, artistic young people and gained some invaluable experience.



In order to become an advocate, I had eight tasks to complete, all of which encouraged me to spend more time in the gallery, engaging with the art.

Here's a taste of how I completed some of the tasks:

- I helped a resident artist run a community workshop building giant cardboard cities with the Nottingham & Notts Refugee Forum
- I wrote a review of the gallery's Rights of Nature exhibition and posted a video of my favourite piece on Instagram – a collection of amazing mechanical butterflies by Fernando Palma Rodríguez
- I took part in a series of guest artist workshops, creating costumes for a local parkour group who then performed at that month's Collabor-8 social – an event based around our work and designed and hosted by workshop participants
- I posted a video on the Collabor-8 Facebook page of Tracey Emin discussing and 'making' *My Bed*, at Tate
- I bought a friend along to another Collabor-8 event to chill out with a drink and do some craft

Once I had completed a task I was able to attend the *Circuit* steering meetings. And possibly the best part of these meetings was becoming part of such a creative community and, corny as it sounds, making friends. The atmosphere was relaxed and inclusive, and everyone wants to hear each other's ideas. Although no two meetings are the same, we worked towards producing the Affinity arts festival for young people. It has been really rewarding to be involved in such an ambitious and exciting project, and as a member of the programme, I had a real sense of playing an important and valued role within the gallery. It might have something to do with our 10% discount at the café bar and shop, our free rein of 'The Space' when we put on events,

but most significantly, it was the amount of power we are given as a group to shape and influence the course of Nottingham Contemporary for young people.

Now, as a fully-fledged advocate, my role is to fly the flag for 15–25 year olds. In return I receive a working reference from the gallery, which is guaranteed to stand out on my CV or on any arts-related application form. I now have tons of experience and transferrable skills; the opportunity to impact upon the running of *Circuit* within the gallery; and a sense of being a part of Nottingham's exciting arts scene. There's everything to gain from this opportunity and I would encourage anyone creative to get involved.



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How much should gallery youth programming take on in relation to career formation and employment? What policy interventions might make a difference to the diverse cohort of young people who do want a life and livelihood in the arts? What can galleries do to support this agenda?

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I know a few people who have loved being a part of *Circuit* but couldn't sustain a connection with it as they had to focus on earning money. There are young people engaged in the arts who have a passion for it and they can't afford to be involved.

So, when you consider this, you realise how huge the amount of people we are not reaching, utilising or representing could be.

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## Experiences of *Circuit* internships

*To support individual development, Wysing Arts Centre & Kettle's Yard offered paid internships to young people involved in Circuit Cambridge. The role was open to members of the Circuit group and to participants in youth sector partnership projects.*

LJ I first heard about the internship from the youth organisation The Foyer and thought it would be a great opportunity to be a part of *Circuit* and to see what it was all about. Before the internship I was already participating in *Circuit* workshops held at The Foyer every week, in which we learned about different types and styles of art; from this I managed to complete my Bronze Arts Award. Now, with the help from Kettle's Yard, Wysing Arts Centre and the *Circuit* programme, I am doing my Silver Arts Award based on traditional animation.

The internship, although in the early stage, has been very rewarding. Everyone is friendly and welcoming. Personally I feel

more confident and responsible. Already I feel like I'm doing things that I would have been too scared to do a few weeks ago, such as booking taxis for people or greeting people at events. I knew at times I would feel outside of my comfort zone but when I did, the members and staff were very understanding and supportive, so that I felt more relaxed and confident.

MT When I started the internship I didn't have much of an idea of what part of the creative industry I wanted to work in, but this has opened my eyes to the many job roles and opportunities available, which I never had considered before, and has pointed me towards the direction I think might be right for me. It has also given me confidence when comes to doing general admin tasks like making phone calls to group members, taxis and ordering, emailing, researching for *Circuit* trips, updating social media, setting up for workshops and *Circuit* sessions and much more... which at first I found intimidating or difficult without lots of direction.

HK My time after graduation was hard. It was a period where I had to make a lot of adjustments. It was my first time outside the education system. There was no longer the guidance of tutors and support of my peers. My creative network had dispersed and my access to the library and workshops had ceased. I found myself back home, after having lived an independent life for four years. I had to adjust my expectations - by which I mean lower quite significantly - my employment prospects. I naively applied for 'graduate' jobs that really required applicants with one-to-three years relevant experience. How do you get that when you don't have any to begin with? Suffice to say I had low self-esteem and felt of little value to society. And the only sad but reassuring thing was that many of my friends were going through the exact same thing.

For me, being part of Circuit Cambridge did several things. It gave me an opportunity to engage with an arts programme as much or as little as I liked. It fuelled my interest in pursuing a career in the arts and the internship made it a possibility. It enabled me to meet new people and make new friends. I was very fortunate to be living at home and not having the financial pressures of some of my friends. But I do think without *Circuit* I probably would have pursued a different career path because of the challenges of securing work in the cultural industries. I have tried to make the most of every opportunity, including supporting colleagues with their events and admin work. But everyone needs somewhere to start and for me that was *Circuit*.



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We all know that arts organisations have cycles of privileges. How do we break those cycles? We need to look at our employment practices, change the way that we're working and change how we offer work to young people. So, I think we need to look at apprenticeship schemes, training, different progression routes and different ways for young people to say how they want to work with us and for us to be able to offer it better.

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Mike Baines, Pat Farrell, Helen Newman,  
Andrew Vaughan

## Supporting emerging talent

*The Whitworth developed an Artist in Residence programme to support emerging talent. Each year, two or three artists representing a range of art forms would undertake a placement at the gallery. The focus was on working with the Whitworth Young Contemporaries group to develop their skills as social practitioners, rather than on producing their own artwork.*

AV We put a call out for lots of different of artists, and not just visual artists, but also dance, music, theatre and spoken word, for example. We really wanted to get the best of young people into the core Whitworth Young Contemporaries (WYC) group so that they could act as a catalyst for change, and also use their own artistic skills and practice to inform the kind of work that we were able to imagine.

It made us think about what emergence is. We did get a lot of graduates. Normally we'd get about 150-200 applications

for usually two or three residencies right across the board. So we got the typical 23, 24, 25 year old coming straight out of college, thinking about their next steps. But we also got people at the start of their journey, who maybe hadn't gone through an education route. This group may be local to the gallery, and actually brought a different type of knowledge about where the gallery is situated; they also extended the range of communities that they were able to speak to.

We were also really keen to think about what their role was going to become. It wasn't offering them a residency to make new work or create and develop something for their own portfolio, but to really change the perception of what an artist can be through a social practitioner model. We wanted them to engage with others through a practice-based skill level, as a way to critique, to debate, to really get under the skin of what was actually possible to be achieved and also be that imagination. The imagination of what we could do. Often the skill set was important. If they were performers, they could do performances at our showcase events, but also they would have done outreach work with some of our partners and were able to work with lots of other types of young people and then invite them back. And that seemed to be a really good model of good practice.

HN My first paid job as an artist came from an amazing opportunity to be an Artist in Residence at The Whitworth. Throughout my role, I worked on outreach projects for local youth groups and alongside the gallery team as a representative of WYC. As a representative of the group, I was passionate about making sure our voices were heard and that our presence was visible at the gallery.

During my residency, WYC produced our own festival in Whitworth Park alongside the commission of Anya Gallaccio's *Untitled 2016* [ghost tree]. This was an important time to get our voices heard and a huge opportunity to have a festival produced by young people for young people. Taking what I had learned from my time working on the commission, I worked with the group to form WARP Festival. Being able to engage with Anya meant I could lead workshops with the group, and feed back information about Anya's work and find ways our festival could link with 'ghost tree'. The whole production process was a huge education for the group. We were able to learn skills in how to produce a festival and engage with other youth groups to find out what young people in Manchester want from a festival and from a gallery.

It has been a valuable learning experience for me as an emerging artist, giving me confidence in my ideas and the confidence to carry on creating and leading workshops. Most importantly I have enjoyed working with people from a variety of backgrounds with different skill levels and engaging in conversations and building relationships with them. Workshops in galleries provide a great base for people from all backgrounds to connect through art. Leading the workshops and watching relationships grow, Nathan Coley's sculpture sitting near the studio expressing the words *Gathering of Strangers* felt so relevant.

Hopefully I've been able to bring young people into the gallery who haven't been here before to show them a different side of what the gallery can be and what art can be and change their perspectives on how they can make art, or look at or think about it.

MB I think it's given me a lot of insight into how to work within the creative industries in more senior roles, like delegating different jobs to different people, as well as taking a lot of stuff on yourself. It's taught me about working towards deadlines and being organised; I think it's definitely opened my eyes to how the world of freelancing within the creative industries works.

PF This has been a great platform. Creatively, network-wise and financially, it has put me in a position where I was able to spend a whole year developing and I feel a growth in confidence, a growth in competence.

I'd never done things like planning workshops before I did this job. I'd never done many of the things that we did here, and I've [now] learned to do a lot. I've also just had practice at doing things and been exposed to different ways of working. I feel like I'm coming away having gained a lot, and given a lot.

*Jess White*

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Before Tate Collective, I thought that if you went to art school you could either be an artist or an art teacher, so being involved in *Circuit* gave me an understanding of the whole industry in the arts and how many jobs there are.

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## Image Captions

- 1 Touch Workshop with Gary Zhexi Zhang, Wysing Arts Centre & Kettle's Yard, 2017  
Photo ©Charlie Bryan
- 2 When considering the rebranding of their group 'Cylch' at MOSTYN, young people were asked: what is Cylch? and how would they explain it to a friend, with no 'official speak' or buzz words?  
Image ©MOSTYN, Wales UK
- 3 Alice Thickett, excerpts from *What Makes a Successful Youth Programme* zine, 2014  
Image ©Alice Thickett
- 4 Awkward Arcade, WARP Festival, The Whitworth, 2016  
Photo ©Anna Budrys
- 5 Whitworth Young Contemporaries worked with collective Volkov Commanders to design and decorate their own ghetto blaster bikes, WARP Festival, 2016  
Photo ©Anna Budrys
- 6 Ideas development and planning by Circuit Cambridge, Wysing Arts Centre & Kettle's Yard  
Photo ©Circuit, Wysing Arts Centre & Kettle's Yard
- 7 Alice Thickett, *...But what do I actually do?* 2014. Diagram documenting the processes and responsibilities involved in being a youth programmer  
Image ©Alice Thickett
- 8 Jack Cornell and Alex Forbes, Wysing Art Centre & Kettle's Yard  
Photo ©Claire Haigh
- 9 *The Plaza* exhibition part of GLITCH Festival, MOSTYN, 2016  
Photo ©Luke Kirkbride
- 10 *Source* exhibition, Tate Britain, 2014  
Image ©Tate
- 11 Young@Tate session, Tate St Ives, 2014  
Photo ©Tate (Ian Kingsnorth)
- 12 SWITCH Festival, Tate St Ives, 2016  
Photo ©Tate (Ian Kingsnorth)
- 13 Digital-Factory residency part of the Andy Warhol exhibition, Firstsite, 2016  
Photo ©Charlie Bryan
- 14 Blueprint Festival opening party at the Kazimier, Tate Liverpool, 2014  
Photo ©Tate

- 15 Projection at Late at Tate Britain:  
*My Bed*, 2016  
Photo ©Tate (Dan Weill)
- 16 Fernando Palma Rodriguez, *Tocihua-papalutzin (Our revered lady butterfly)* 2009. Installation view, *Rights of Nature: Art and Ecology in the Americas*, Nottingham Contemporary, 2015  
Photo ©Andy Keate  
Artwork ©Fernando Palma Rodriguez
- 17 SWITCH Festival, Tate St Ives, 2016  
Photo ©Tate (Ian Kingsnorth)

## Footnotes

- (1) Christopher Naylor, 'Foreword', *Envision: A Handbook, Supporting Young People's Participation in Galleries and the Arts*, London, 2008.
- (2) See Donald Schön, *The Reflective Practitioner: How Professionals Think in Action*, London, 1983 and Hilary Bradbury 'Learning With the Natural Step: Action Research to Promote Conversations for Sustainable Development' in Peter Reason and Hilary Bradbury, *Handbook of Action Research: Participative Inquiry and Practice*, London, 2001.
- (3) Further details can be found at [issuu.com/circuitphf/docs/g1\\_brochure](http://issuu.com/circuitphf/docs/g1_brochure).

# Evaluation and Research

How can evaluation and reflection  
become a useful part of everyday work?

As an action research programme, fundamental to the early development of *Circuit* was putting the structures in place to support rigorous evaluation and to embed reflection throughout programming and delivery.

Evaluation and reporting were not meant to be used as tools for advocacy; they were to be methods for implementing changes to working with young people in galleries. As well as helping to understand more clearly what had gone well and why, evaluation was meant to reveal issues, and show analyses of how individuals and organisations were learning from these changes. The aim was for galleries to bring together different sources of evidence on which to base firm judgements, leading to an ongoing development of their programme rooted in those findings.

For some, this was a shift in approach to the usual ways of reporting to management and funders. It was important to avoid a tendency to want to share only positive outcomes and gloss over what might be considered a failure. Instead, a culture of reflection was encouraged among gallery staff, young people, artists and partners, at every stage of the programme.

The scale of *Circuit* allowed the galleries and the programme's National Team to test and use many different forms of evaluation and research. Some techniques for data collection were used by all the galleries to

gather both quantitative and qualitative evidence; in other cases, galleries developed methods relevant to their own programmes and contexts. Critical friends and consultants helped to support them. Young people were encouraged to reflect on their experiences as part of the process of taking part, as well as to play an active role in evaluation with audience members.

This was not without its challenges: sometimes it proved difficult to collect and analyse enough quality data; developing skills for staff and participants to carry out evaluation needed mentoring and support; and with large-scale programmes to deliver, finding the time and energy for reflection and evaluation could be demanding.

Research added depth to the evaluation carried out by galleries, and was an opportunity to explore particular themes emerging from *Circuit*. A selection of these research papers are available online. (1) Reflections in this publication consider some of the methods the authors of these papers adopted when undertaking their research.



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## Evaluating *Circuit*

*Emily Pringle developed evaluation and research for Circuit from the outset. Through her role as Head of Learning Practice and Research at Tate, she supports the strategic development and implementation of a values-led research-based approach to Learning programming across Tate Britain & Tate Modern.*

If we have learned one thing through *Circuit* it is that the authentic and rigorous evaluation of participatory arts practices with young people is complex, time-consuming and at times contradictory. However, in part through acknowledging and working through these challenges, we have also learned that embedding evaluation processes from the start of a programme and directly engaging participants in analysing and representing their experience can have profound and positive impacts on evaluation and learning practice and participants, while providing key insights that can be shared more widely.

From the initial planning stage, the aspirations for the *Circuit* evaluation and research were as ambitious as for the programme

itself. We were keen to move beyond methods and approaches that we perceived were unsatisfactory, either in providing evidence of the changes brought about by engagement in the arts, or in making a positive impact on arts engagement practices themselves. In terms of galleries working with young people in partnership with youth organisations, we were already aware that best practice involves close collaboration and shared decision-making to enable young people to take the lead in planning and directing activity. However, we were also conscious that conventional evaluation methods could operate in opposition to this. For instance, evaluation practices that focus exclusively on accountability and value 'objectivity' can attend less to the experience and processes of learning for all those taking part. At the same time, traditional evaluations of arts education programmes tend to locate young people as objects to be evaluated rather than providing them with the opportunity to determine and articulate their own assessments of value. To avoid this, the *Circuit* evaluation sought to build on existing models of good practice, but also to introduce new ways of working. In doing so, *Circuit* aimed to have a positive impact on, indeed to change, evaluation practices within the sector.

Mirroring *Circuit's* values and aims, (2) the evaluation sought to address issues of social justice, democratic participation and organisational change and learning. We drew on models of 'empowerment evaluation' (3) as we recognised that *Circuit* was a change programme, seeking to bring about improvements in young people's access to arts and culture and in galleries' ability to facilitate this. We identified that the evaluation could and should play a vital role in facilitating these changes. Consequently, the evaluation located gallery professionals, young people, artists and partners as active reflective practitioners. They were tasked with working closely with critical friends, evaluators and researchers to gather and analyse evidence, reflect on what it told them, share their findings more widely and, crucially, change their practice in light of these findings. In this way

the evaluation aspired to empower participants by giving them skills and agency, while enhancing their responsibility towards and ownership of the programme's success.

So what was our rationale for adopting this approach? From the start, we wanted to find out about the nature of young people's engagement, learning and development and their sense of ownership and agency in the gallery. We wanted to know who was taking part, what was being learned through participating in the programme strands, how the young people involved engaged, developed and learned in different contexts and the quality of that engagement. We also wanted to understand better the short- and longer-term changes brought about in young people; what they gained from participating and how the experience shaped their lives more broadly. As much as possible we wanted young people to tell us directly; to have their voices present and visible throughout.

Furthermore, the evaluation sought not only to establish what had taken place and whether the *Circuit* aims had been met, but also to identify those elements that generated the most effective experiences and outcomes for young people. To do this we also needed to examine the conditions for (and processes of) institutional change and the nature of partnerships. We envisaged that this evaluative approach would support improvements to the programme as it progressed and would culminate in the establishment of sustainable models of high-quality work with young people in partnership with youth organisations.

To achieve these ambitions, we needed to work with gallery staff and young people to take ownership of and implement a multi-stranded evaluation involving varied methodologies, while also bringing in specialists to focus on particular aspects of the programme. We recruited the *Circuit* Evaluator (Angela Diakopoulou) who has supported *Circuit* gallery partners throughout to develop and

implement ongoing quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis related to young people's participation in programmes and events, as well as institutional perspectives on *Circuit*. We also brought in the *Circuit* Critical Friend (Roz Hall) to work with partners to recruit and nurture a core group of young people who would lead on evaluation from each gallery (the 'Circulate' team). Through regular Circulate meetings she has supported the young evaluators to develop their skills, reflect on their learning and input proactively to the evaluation and programme. By the second year of *Circuit* it became apparent that the wealth of evidence being generated through the evaluation was too much for the *Circuit* Programme National Team to analyse and feed back to partners and external stakeholders. We therefore introduced a *Circuit* Data Analyst (Hannah Wilmot) role who twice a year drew together and analysed all the varied evidence from across the programme and identified key learning points to inform *Circuit* going forward.

To further support the research ambitions for *Circuit*, in January 2013 we applied for and were successful in obtaining an Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) funded collaborative doctorate. This PhD, undertaken by Nicola Sim and co-supervised by Professor Pat Thomson at the School of Education, University of Nottingham, has examined the possibility for productive, creative and sustainable partnerships between visual arts organisations and the youth sector, using *Circuit* as a case study. The research strand also includes a longitudinal study, which is also being undertaken by Rebecca Coles and Pat Thomson at the University of Nottingham, focusing on the changes brought about in young people's lives as a result of their participation in *Circuit*.

The *Circuit* evaluation programme has been shaped by the National Evaluation Team that was made up of the *Circuit* Programme National Lead, *Circuit* Programme National Manager, Head of Learning Practice

and Research, the *Circuit* Evaluator, the *Circuit* Critical Friend and the PhD candidate. (4) From April to June 2013 this team (with input from young people and partners) developed a multi-stranded evaluation framework. The aspiration was that this framework would achieve three things: describe what evidence needed to be collected, act as a planning and monitoring tool for all *Circuit* partners, and nurture a shared understanding of what was expected of, and happening within, the programme. However, one of the first things we learned was that although some partners found the framework useful, it was overly complicated and in year two we introduced a simplified version.

The challenge of working with the evaluation framework was one of the early indicators that the evaluation approach we were implementing was not straightforward. Throughout the programme, gallery partners have struggled with balancing the demands of programming with assigning the time required to reflect on their progress. We also identified early on that there was a need for professional development to support partners to gather and analyse evidence, as there was a lack of confidence and skills in this area. For the evaluation approach to be effective, it also required a perceptual shift in terms of understanding and valuing the importance of evaluation, specifically regarding gathering evidence, analysing it and learning from it. The building in of a cycle of reflective practice entailed a move from the dominant perception of evaluation as necessary only to account to external partners and/or funders. Encouraging partners to be rigorous and honest in making explicit the challenges and difficulties, as well as the benefits and opportunities of working with young people, has been a key element of this programme; i.e. to make clear the difference between evaluation and advocacy. Without question, it has been a steep learning curve for all of us.

However, the fact that we have learned so much about how a programme of this size and ambition can be evaluated will perhaps be

one of *Circuit's* important legacies. The texts throughout this publication illuminate how the evaluation progressed and demonstrate in detail our learning. In reviewing them it is evident that adopting an embedded approach to evaluation has enabled partners to work reflexively. This in turn has supported the development of high-quality experiences and programmes for young people and better informed partnership work with the youth sector. The evaluation has also enhanced the processes of institutional change by providing a space where gallery partners could reflect on a project's progress and implement change based on evidence as well as their experience. It has also encouraged young people to have a voice and articulate their experiences (and the value of these experiences to them) rather than have this delegated entirely to a 'professional' researcher. And at the culmination of the programme the evaluation is now providing evidence to those beyond *Circuit* about ongoing developments and the changes this has brought about in young people and arts organisations.

There is much that we and the sector can learn from the *Circuit* evaluation, not least in terms of the need to embed a learning culture within organisations to foster an appetite for change, alongside the importance of providing sufficient resources to support effective evaluation and reflective practice. As the writer Saville Kushner once observed: 'Evaluation - as a representation of human experience - is as intractable a problem as the art it observes and all evaluators can ever do is their best.' (5) The need for participants and evaluators to 'do their best' to understand and evidence the experience and value of arts participation in rigorous and authentic ways is increasingly important. Policy makers, funding bodies, project coordinators and participants recognise the need for effective evaluation, not only to assess the 'success' of arts projects, but also to enhance the progress of a project, and provide a means of disseminating good practice and build on previous positive experiences.







Doubt.

Draw it.  
examine it  
think it  
imagine it.

Act it  
dress it  
test it  
∴ progress it.

Ignore it  
remote it  
forget it  
demote it.

# Principles of Reflection

Roz Hall

## *Circuit's* evaluation framework

*Developed collectively by staff, partners and young people, Circuit's evaluation framework outlined the evidence that needed to be gathered relating to the programme's aims and objectives. Roz Hall, Circuit Critical Friend, was instrumental in helping to develop it.*

The process of developing an evaluation framework is, in itself, useful, as it demands that everyone involved reflects on the aims they have for the work and how they are going to achieve those aims, as well as how they will gather relevant evidence in order to work out how (far) the aims have been met.

As well as outlining the evidence required, it also outlines the dialogue that needs to take place, for meaningful reflection, among all involved, to nurture a shared and explicit understanding of what is happening in the programme. On a practical level, it also shows the different roles involved in evidence gathering, monitoring and analysis.

The framework is then an ongoing tool and resource as it enables a process of checking back to remind ourselves of the aims that relate to our objectives, or to put it another way, why we are doing what we are doing. Very often, in long-term projects or processes, it is easy to lose sight of our original aims and just keep on doing the things we planned to do, even if those things are not achieving the aims we originally had. The framework enables us to remind ourselves why we are doing the things we are doing and revisit and revise our objectives as we go along. It is only when we understand why we are doing something (the aim of the work) that we are able to make informed decisions about how best to do what we do (the objective).

The evaluation framework for *Circuit* can be viewed online at [tate.org.uk/research/research-centres/tate-research-centre-learning/circuit-evaluation](http://tate.org.uk/research/research-centres/tate-research-centre-learning/circuit-evaluation)



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Museums do a lot  
of so-called evaluation  
but not much reflection

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*Circuit staff member at partner gallery*

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Hannah Wilmot

## *Circuit* evaluation: Principles and factors for success

*Extracted from the report  
'Circuit 2013–2017. A Review  
of the Evaluation Structures  
and Practices'. Hannah Wilmot,  
Circuit Data Analyst, outlines  
some key principles. (6)*

- Persistence, routine, repetition; reflection, conversation, collaboration
- Clear articulation of project objectives that have been discussed and agreed with young people and partners in advance. This is the basis for rigorous evaluation
- Reinforcing, reminding and repeating consistent messages about evaluation methods, processes and available support
- Employing a critical friend and independent evaluator where possible and utilising peer exchange and support for mutual benefit
- Employing data collectors to administer audience surveys
- Establishing baselines whenever possible
- Employing artists (including filmmakers) who are familiar with evaluation and familiar with the target audience of young people

- Committing to long-term projects with the same young people, allowing for depth in evaluation and tracking change over time
- Engaging young people as participants and peer evaluators
- Dedicated people (including young people) and time for reflection and evaluation
- Making evaluation visible to encourage shared and iterative reflection
- Signalling the value of evaluation and encouraging engagement by giving participants something in return for their feedback (a pencil, for example, or origami flower)
- Utilising methods facilitated by people that result in a larger and more thoughtful response
- Ensuring someone takes responsibility for the meta-analysis of evaluation data gathered and reported in a large-scale partnership project

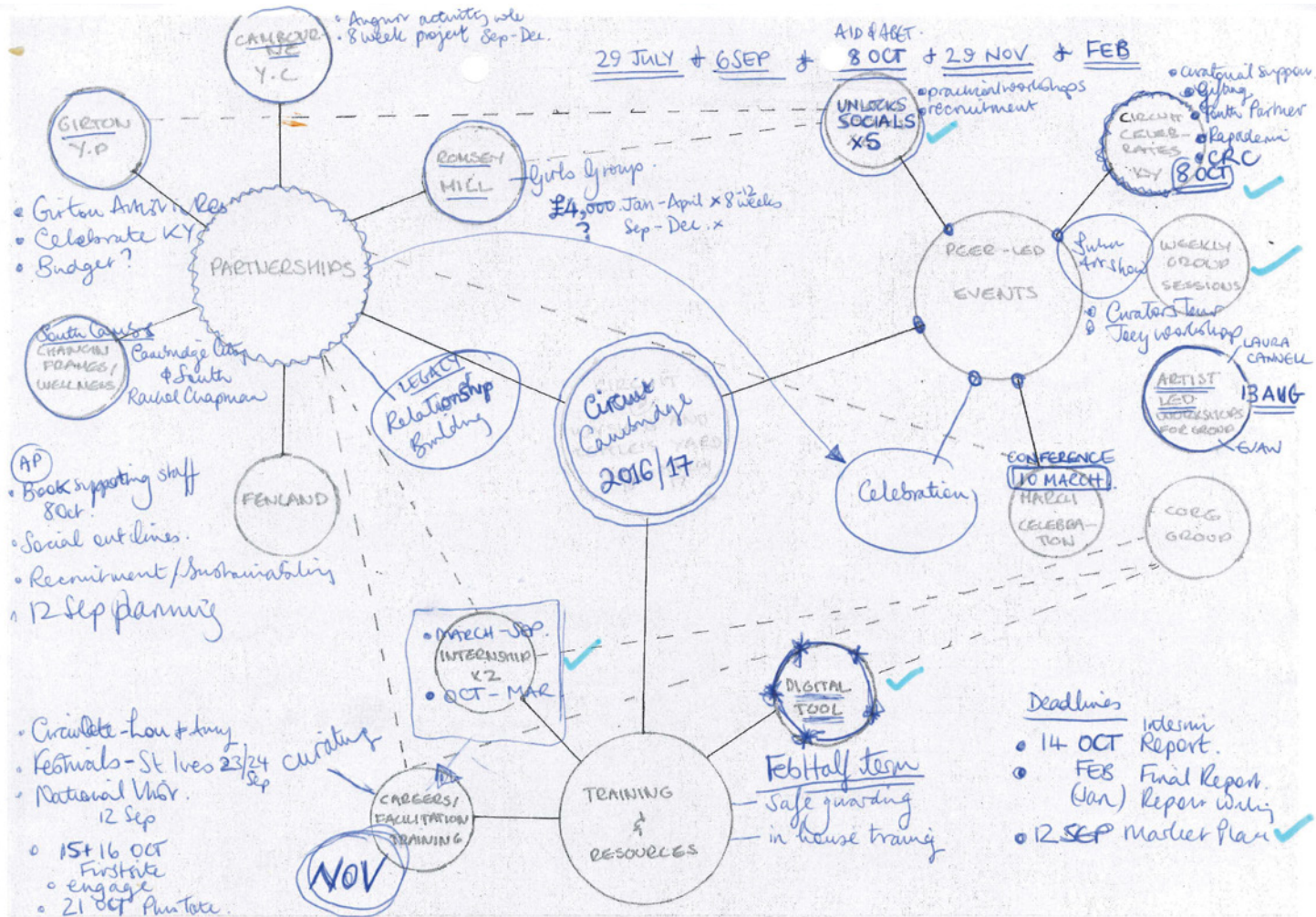
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**Meaningful, conscious reflection is essential. This is where I saw a significant contrast between the youth sector cultures and the arts. Youth workers are encouraged to become reflective practitioners.**

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One of the shifts that we're working on and will continue to work on is a conceptual shift in how you think about programming. The idea of trying to embed an effective reflective practice of you do, you review, you learn, you change then informs what you do going forward. Importantly, if you evidence what you've done and make it public, the sector more widely can learn from your experience.

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What strategies and approaches have been successful in realising your aims?

What things haven't worked?

Have there been barriers to achieving the aims which seem beyond your control?

What are the key learning points that will inform what you do next?

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Questions provided as prompts for writing  
*Circuit* reports to help focus on reflection

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# Young Evaluators

Roz Hall

## Circulate: *Circuit's* young evaluators

*Young people played a central role in the evaluation of Circuit. This was developed further with the establishment of Circulate – a group of young people from each gallery who would share techniques and analyse findings. As part of her role as Circuit Critical Friend, Roz Hall brought together and supported this group.*

Circulate were a group of young people engaged in *Circuit* who worked together to document, reflect on and evaluate the programme and the difference it made. They articulated their own experiences and those of other young people so that their opinions could inform the programme. They also devised many bespoke, innovative and creative mechanisms and tools for evaluation.

Circulate kept their own records in journals and blogs as well as documenting, interviewing and gathering feedback to: ascertain the programme's success, identify learning from it, inform the programme's development at their own and others' galleries, and share their learning

and findings beyond the *Circuit* partnership. Such a role is key in an action research process, as the learning from 'doing' feeds into future plans in an ongoing, cyclical way.

Circulate provided an opportunity to explore the potential benefits of young people having roles as evaluators and to identify the types of challenges there might be in such an approach.

### **The impact**

Through being part of Circulate, young people have developed reflective practice and autonomy as learners, which has benefitted both themselves and the programme. They were able to inform the direction of their own gallery programmes, as well as gathering evidence at and reviewing each other's festivals. Circulate's findings fed into galleries' wider evaluation and reporting for *Circuit*.

Their input ensured that learning was informed by the perspectives of young people and so brought insights that would not be apparent without a group of young evaluators being supported to reflect on, analyse and articulate their own critiques of the programme. Participation also meant that members' sense of their own potential to inform decisions and steer direction, as they became aware of how they can legitimately do so, was based on the articulation of their own analysis of evidence gathered. As Lou Greenwall from Wysing Arts Centre & Kettle's Yard commented, '[Circulate has] meant having time to reflect and to look back on events, think about them and work out how successful it's been based on everyone's experience and lots of audience feedback... it has meant being in a position to report it to the gallery and the rest of us as a team can then discuss how things went and feed that back into future plans.'

The young people in the Circulate creative community developed a critical edge, which enabled them to identify and articulate what is important to them. This helped them in reaching conclusions about

their futures. In many instances they continue to realise the aims of *Circuit*, as illustrated in this exchange:

Sufea Mohamad Noor, Tate Liverpool

What I've realised through *Circuit* is that you can use art as a tool for social change...

Charlotte Winters, Firstsite

We are becoming a lot more serious as people... we are literally becoming the life of the gallery and people are thinking of us on the same level and really valuing our ideas.

Angela Wereko-Anderson, Tate Britain & Tate Modern

... and so they should! We are the next generation, all of these guys who are chairmen or CEOs, we will be the ones who will be in their seats...

Jack Makin, The Whitworth

... that's one thing the programme has given all of us, is that we realise that... the fact that we are thinking about how we can change galleries is down to the programme.

It also nurtured the potential for young people to consider their experiences in a reflexive way. The roles young people had as evaluators have thereby extended the parameters of the programme into the future by supporting members to appreciate the power they have to influence change, as experienced by Bradley Stephens from Firstsite, '... [I want to] continue working with the community and bring them together to spark discussion and debate and a different perspective. Using art and the skills I've accumulated to maybe one day, spark a major change.'

### **Bespoke evaluation processes and tools developed**

Circulate members have determined how they have evaluated their

programmes and each other's festivals. At all galleries, Circulate members devised activities to get feedback from events and exhibitions that they programmed, some of which are described in the section entitled 'Creative evaluation methods'. At most galleries, Circulate members facilitated sense-making activities with their core group about the difference the programme was making. At some galleries evaluation activities were divided up, with one Circulate member evaluating the peer-led strand and another the partnership strand. At one gallery there was a paid role for the 'lead' Circulate member. The work has varied across galleries, in ways determined by each gallery and the context in which they are working.

### **Challenges in supporting young people to have roles in evaluation**

There were challenges in developing Circulate because of the logistics of working with a self-selecting group of young people from a broad age and geographical range. However, the involvement of having different ages and with different ambitions and experiences ensured that a wide range of tools, approaches and evidence were generated.

Circulate also faced challenges because of the nature of life for 15–25 year olds. Many people have left the group when they have moved for college or work or when their lives became differently focused. However, young people who have engaged for temporary periods have often influenced ideas within the group beyond their involvement. It has therefore been important that Circulate has been a fluid group, enabling both short- and long-term involvement.

Circulate did however also develop its own 'core group', which constituted a 'critical community'. This group grew slowly owing to the limited number of times that young people, with very busy lives, were able to come together. There is a need for patience and trust in an organic and responsive process when organising a group like Circulate.

Another challenge is to do with the perceived status of young people, within galleries and within peer groups. Young evaluators' ability to influence planning conducted by a gallery core group has sometimes been limited, as Lou Greenwell, Wysing Arts Centre & Kettle's Yard, pointed out, 'Not everyone understands how useful it is for the staff and for the group to see if they have achieved what they set out to, so it has been quite hard sometimes to get people to think about evaluation.' Part of my role, as Critical Friend, was to ensure that young evaluators were able to carry out their roles within galleries and so my exchange with gallery staff was crucial. However, this was not without issue, as there were significant differences between galleries in their understandings and expectations of Circulate. The scope of Circulate was initially often underestimated, again as commented on by Lou Greenwell:

Initially quite a lot of people didn't really know what its purpose was; evaluation is something that people expect to be about getting someone to fill in a form... Because [*Circuit* evaluation] has been more about different ways of getting feedback and then matching the feedback back to the aims, it's been more interesting. Also, realising the importance of that process and how important it is to being able to work out how far the work is successful in your gallery has meant that it has been different from my expectations.

Staff from the *Circuit* galleries acknowledged the personal and professional benefits that the young people involved got from Circulate, additional to those of being a member of a gallery's core group. However, it was sometimes difficult to meet everyone's needs as young people and galleries' levels of understanding and skills in relation to evaluation were varied. (7) Some galleries felt that Circulate operated as a separate entity, and that their findings were not effectively fed back or useful data for the galleries to develop their own programmes

internally. This does raise a question about what it was that may have prevented Circulate findings from informing some programmes, when they clearly informed others.

### **Recommendations for young evaluators**

Throughout this process there has been much learning, which we think will be useful for other organisations supporting young evaluators, within projects or programmes, as summarised below:

- Young evaluators should have a pivotal role, informing programme direction, and this needs to be recognised and embraced by all involved
- Do not offer too many off-the-shelf tools. Young people will devise far more creative, innovative and exciting tools, which are more likely to be relevant to the context
- Make sure there are structured and informal opportunities for socialising such as 'Skills bingo', 'Speed networking', long lunch and tea breaks, gallery tours and other opportunities to discuss things in a very relaxed way
- Make sure there are a wide range of reasons for people to engage, to ensure a broad group engages for different reasons
- Be flexible and responsive, so that young people can determine the kind of evaluation work they do that is relevant to their professional development. Ask at each session what their priorities are for future skills development, and identify opportunities to develop such skills in a 'process-generated' way, such as developing planning skills by including young people in devising these activities
- Ensure a framework that supports everyone to stay focused on the aims of a programme or project
- Do not underestimate the potential reflective space of a journey, after events have taken place, for discussion or journal writing

- Keep your nerve and trust that young people will be more likely to exceed expectations than not live up to them
- A 'critical friend' is essential in this context, partly to ensure that members of staff take notice and act upon the findings of young evaluators
- Encourage young people to find out what specific groups of young people are interested in, through their own evaluation processes. This ensures that peer-led programmes are not based on an assumption that young people know what will engage all other young people

### **Conclusions**

Circulate has shown how valuable it can be to support a group of participants to be central to an ongoing evaluation process. And for some participants has deepened and extended the difference made within and by the programme for young people, as Bradley Stephens of Firstsite points out: '... it (Circulate) has made me a far more confident person when it comes to engaging with other people and portraying the view of it all through my eyes. Without Circulate I wouldn't be doing even a fraction of what I do now independently... I'd be so different a person it actually makes me sigh with relief that I made that... decision.'

This in turn has had a positive impact on the programme and thereby made a positive difference for the galleries involved. I would even advocate for young people to always have roles in evaluating projects or programmes that are about their engagement, because it is young people who are the experts regarding that engagement and therefore best placed to take on roles as evaluators.



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**We are the ones who are planning,  
programming and delivering the  
work so it wouldn't make sense  
for us to not evaluate it.**

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## Responses to evaluative practice

*The Whitworth created a role to lead on young people's creative evaluation and representation in Circulate. At different times, Jo Roy, Jack Makin and Charlotte Davies all took on this job, developing evaluation techniques for reflection internally with colleagues and with the general public at events. This role helped to amplify young people's voices within the organisation and throughout the wider programme.*

JR One of my main roles within Whitworth Young Contemporaries has been acting as a 'young evaluator'. Now I must admit, when I dreamt of working in creative events I had mainly imagined building installations, booking artists and creating visuals – i.e. generally having a great old time doing all the arty/fun stuff. What hadn't entered my head was how exactly these events come to be, where the money comes from (if they are to be free and all-inclusive for young people) and what the requirements are to release that funding: ultimately

the nitty-gritty stuff that makes it possible to do it all in the first place.

So, while I have been able to participate in the creative side, what I am learning as a young evaluator is invaluable information about all the necessary behind-the-scenes stuff that forms the backbone of projects such *Circuit*. Therefore, despite 'young evaluator' not sounding like the most glamorous or electrifying role within the programme, it has given me an important insight into the reality of how such worthwhile projects actually run, which is what makes all the background stuff worth it.

The biggest challenge as young evaluators is to find interesting, yet thorough, ways to evaluate. It is vital for funding to gather information from those attending our events. However, the cold hard truth remains that nobody enjoys filling out pages-upon-pages of questionnaires. Being approached with a clipboard sends most people into a cold sweat and – being brutally honest – the word 'evaluation' is generally followed by rolled eyes and a sigh of disappointment. The difficulty is that we are working so hard to change young people's perceptions of galleries being boring, educational institutions and ideally we wouldn't want those enjoying themselves at our events to have to stop and fill out information on what qualifications they have or if their parents ever went to university. It kind of undermines our whole aim!

JM Within The Whitworth my role was simple: to implement a more creative approach to gathering feedback and evaluation material. A lot of the techniques we came up with were well received by management and gallery visitors. In my approach I wanted the techniques to be as artistic as possible and in





a format that is still gaining all the required data. I wanted a lot of influence from the core group at the gallery, who had some amazing creative ideas. And even though red tape and protocol sometimes got in the way of our creative ideas, we always managed to come to a compromise.

It is important to involve young people throughout the evaluation process as in doing so, they begin to understand the reasoning behind evaluation and evidencing impact. For example, how positive impact data can enable more events to happen or in finding out what crowds we attract we can best tailor events for specific audiences. Young people have just as much appreciation for the process of event-planning as staff do. Showing that it is a process to achieve specific goals is key. This learning can influence future thinking – and using the processes learned can be taken into consideration when developing new content. The skills acquired will also stay with the group and then be used individually in future career routes or personal passions. We have had higher success rates of gaining data when we have the members of our core group involved. It is much more welcoming to have peers collecting the stuff that matters through creative techniques than other more traditional ways of asking for feedback.

Creative evaluation within The Whitworth has shown staff and management alike that ‘young people’ can be and are just as effective when working as a team on a project. We have had events that have filled the gallery with ‘young people’ owing to our work as a group. Circulate has acquired the data to hopefully influence the wider gallery, and prove that the work we are doing is having huge benefits. We have created a more welcoming environment for people who might possibly have

not entered a gallery environment to feel comfortable enough to come back and start to create their own opinions of the art world, whatever those opinions may be.

For me personally, I want to apply these skills into my own photographic practice. I have learned a lot of organisational skills owing to the opportunity to work for such a great programme, and can only hope to further my experience within the sector. I have found a passion for youth work and greatly enjoy watching and helping people develop as I did. The future is positive if programmes like *Circuit* can continue to integrate youth voice and opinion into gallery practice.

CD Evaluation doesn’t have to be boring and tasking. Evaluation is important in creating forward thinking, and in allowing the voices of young people to be heard. The work has been engaging and creative and the aim of the project was met, by creating new ideas, forming collaborations and working together to make evaluation important, progressive and fun.



*Rachel Moilliet, Grey Wu, Jo Roy, Charlotte Davies,  
Jack Makin, Bradley Stephens*

## Creative evaluation methods



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*Creative evaluation was a central theme that young people brought to the evaluation of Circuit. Rachel Moilliet, Circuit Programme National Manager, introduces a selection here by young people from the gallery partners.*

Creative ideas and methods often brought new approaches to evaluation in the galleries.

Creative techniques were adopted for self-reflection. Individuals and groups kept journals to track their personal and collective journeys within *Circuit*. The way this information was expressed visually was often carefully considered by participants; illustrations and diagrams were used frequently to capture goals, challenges and next steps in one place. Games were used by group members to structure their meetings and establish the aims for the programme in their gallery. Films and online platforms were used to capture the views of people within the gallery and beyond to understand the attitudes to their programme more widely.

While planning events, thinking up creative evaluation techniques became an inherent part of the programming process for some groups. Galleries found that creative evaluation often worked best when it was embedded as part of an event. This helped evaluation become another activity for audiences to enjoy, within the event programme, rather than a seemingly dry feedback exercise. Galleries also found it was effective to use multiple methods at one event, opening up opportunities for young people to develop and lead on a range of activities, and for participants to articulate their feedback in a way that suited them. Collecting a breadth of quantitative and qualitative data helped create a better informed picture of what had resulted from a project or event.

Galleries wanted to ensure that while remaining creative, the evaluation methods always generated evidence that was useful, not just plentiful. Moreover, to use these techniques well it was important to analyse the data collected afterwards, a role which sometimes fell back to staff to complete. However, the data captured through these creative methods did add depth to the findings in each gallery, complementing the findings from more formal research such as surveys.

Here is a selection of the creative techniques used throughout *Circuit*. Some methods were the idea of one individual; many of them were developed collaboratively. Some techniques were devised in discussion within the context of the Circulate group of young evaluators, of which most of the people cited below were a part:

**Grey Wu, Wysing Arts Centre & Kettle's Yard: Jenga**

*Play Jenga; answer questions. A technique used for self-reflection in a core group session*

Having established that the way we word the questions is crucial in order to acquire 'quality' responses, we decided to begin the

session by inviting everyone to create questions that would help us reflect on our own experiences. To make it a fun process, we had put question words ('If', 'How', 'Why', 'Can', etc.) on a set of Jenga blocks, which were then used to create the next question. Example questions included:

- If you could collaborate with any artist, who would it be?
- Can parameters be helpful?
- Should we be evaluating every week?
- What is quality?
- Could your experience be improved?
- If you have anything you want to change, what would it be?
- Would you still come to Circuit Cambridge if there was no food?
- Would you say you've learned more about museums and galleries? If so, how?
- Are there any problems with being peer-led?
- Can you name examples of when you've enjoyed collaborating with other Circuit Cambridge members?
- How do you think we can attract more Circuit Cambridge members?
- Do staff at Wysing Art Centre and Kettle's Yard give [you/us] enough support?

**Jo Roy, The Whitworth: Films**

*Gathering baseline data on perceptions of the gallery, to inform early programme planning*

I worked alongside an independent film company, Belle Vue Productions, and interviewed three young people on their thoughts and ideas on art gallery spaces. (8) The entire process was a unique and interesting experience, building a relationship with three young people from around Manchester with completely different artistic backgrounds. The filming process was a journey for both myself

and the three young people as it developed the idea of collaboration between age, background and artistic practice, whether that be music or art. The film created definitely helped us to develop our events across The Whitworth from then on, as having something visually representative of young people encourages others to want to become a part of that:

My expectations of the gallery are that it's going to be a white, quiet sort of place. You have to go in a certain direction... I've always thought of them as quite strict places, like a library.

I'll go to more art galleries I think. I'll give them a chance. Just like I gave this a chance... and it worked out all right!

**Charlotte Davies and Jack Makin, The Whitworth: Photo elicitation**

*Using photography to elicit responses for internal evaluation with gallery staff*

We photographed a number of different scenarios across the gallery space that we felt were relevant to the way young people are perceived within traditional art gallery spaces. By representing certain stereotypes of youth today, we hoped the photos would act as stimuli to prompt a reaction. The stereotypes fitted into the following categories: 'The young curator', 'The quiet contemplator', and 'The disruptive teen'. We then created a website through which gallery staff could anonymously share their opinions in response to the images. This form of evaluation seemed to appear very successful as a number of individuals commented, leaving both positive and negative feedback for us to then later interpret. We feel that the photo elicitation attempted to break some of the barriers down between gallery staff and young people. It also showed how open people are when they have the freedom to comment in their own time, under no pressure and anonymously. (9)

**Jack Makin, The Whitworth: 'Warped' photography**

*Recreating surveys in an interactive, photographic format*

This technique, which gathered evaluation via photography for WARP Festival, set out to warp evaluation from a boring experience into something that creates your own personalised warped imagery of you and your friends at the festival. It worked very well as it was interactive, and also the people taking part got a piece of artwork to take home as memorabilia. It used a technique called photo-merging in Photoshop. I gathered data from participant responses to several different questions and statements, which were merged into a single image. These included: did you enjoy your experience at WARP Fest?; I would come to another event in this style; I would recommend an event like this to friends/family; I will remember this event for a long time.

**Charlotte Davies, The Whitworth: Thumbprint Map**

*A popular technique to track where your audience members have travelled from*

I created and developed an idea known as the Thumbprint Map – a large-scale map of Manchester, overlaid with tracing paper. People added their thumbprint to the place they were from, using different coloured inks to represent their age group. This process was well received, simple, and an evaluation technique that can be utilised at almost any event; it ended up being adopted by other *Circuit* galleries. We found that evaluation through a visual display is most successful, as it allows people to become involved, creating a final product and producing an artwork that can later be viewed and displayed.

**Bradley Stephens, Firstsite: Evaluation lounge**

*Performative evaluation in a homely environment*

I put together an intimate space with a sofa, standard lamp and tea and cake, where people would feel comfortable. I dressed in character,

claiming to have no knowledge of the event, and asked people to explain it to me. Some of the conversations were recorded. [I found that] people are more likely to talk openly and honestly in familiar surroundings, so we were able to have in-depth conversations that provided useful feedback.

### **Jack Makin, The Whitworth: 'Dear Whitworth'**

*Asking audience members to write a letter to the gallery about their experiences*

The theme of the event was based around storytelling. Creating some form of letter seemed to be a great idea and meant we could work with one of our artists-in-residence, Caveman, to help us word the letter. When discussing evaluation techniques in our group, we thought about how we could entice people into completing our surveys. The group mentioned that getting something in response to completing a task is always a good way to get people participating. As a giveaway and yet still linking into the theme, I developed the idea we could give away origami paper, with instructions on how to create your own small envelope. We got a lot of responses, which we think was down to the fact it only took a minute to fill in. The small origami-added bonus meant that people filled out our evaluation, and then began to socialise with other people who were also participating.

### **Circulate members, Blueprint Festival: Interviews**

*Interview footage used to reflect on audience experiences*

People were given the option of how they wanted to be interviewed – illustration, video, photography or voice recording. When they heard that they could be illustrated, they screamed – they thought it was exciting. We chose quotes from what they said and made them part of the drawings.



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In our busy lives, the crucial time and space for reflection is often while we move chairs and stick things up on walls, when our hands are too busy to be taking notes. This is one of the reasons why I think journal-keeping is a really important form of documentation for us all.

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# Research Approaches

Angela Diakopoulou

## Challenges of the *Circuit* evaluation process

*Circuit Evaluator Angela Diakopoulou worked as a consultant to construct and deliver standardised methods of evaluation across the gallery partners. The data gathered provided invaluable insight into audience profile and change within each organisation. Here she considers some of the challenges faced when evaluating the outcomes of Circuit.*

The research conducted was primarily of a quantitative nature and collected information on: the demographic profile of audiences and participants who engaged with three strands of the programme (partnership, peer-led and festivals); their source of awareness and motivation for engaging; and their propensity to recommend *Circuit* to their friends. (10)

### **Data collection**

Driven by the aim to embed reflective practice in the core of the programme, as well as due to budgetary considerations, the onus

of collecting the data was with the partner galleries. Data collection in a structured way for research purposes was not part of the usual practice of most partners. While galleries could 'understand' the purpose of the request, staff capacity as well as personal preferences sometimes prioritised programme delivery over data collection.

In the first year, core group members were tasked with the responsibility of collecting the data. With the large number and changing group of young people and staff involved, quality control was difficult to maintain. Again, due to capacity and priority placed by young people on programme delivery over fieldwork, data collection was inconsistent and the samples achieved were neither robust nor representative of the programme.

In subsequent years, a budget was allocated for data collection, enabling galleries to appoint staff with the exclusive remit of collecting data at events. This resulted in a significant improvement of the quantity and quality of the data collected.

Attitudinal issues were also a barrier to collecting data, with some galleries being hesitant to administer the surveys. Galleries expressed concern that collecting data of a personal nature at events was intrusive; they also commented that the lack of gamification, or of a creative approach to surveying participants, interfered with the experience and enjoyment derived from events.

Time was required firstly to identify the reasons for resistance to collect the data and for addressing the issue. Witnessing trained interviewers approaching participants in a manner suitable for the event(s) and achieving a high response rate helped to change attitudes. Staff turnover at partner galleries also meant that the above learnings were not being passed on to new members, hindering the data collection process.

### **Data analysis**

The emphasis that was placed at the beginning of the programme, on analysing data 'per event', was time-consuming and ineffective in view of the small size of samples achieved per event. Clustering a number of similar events and allocating more resources on data analysis and interpretation for individual galleries was more effective.

Allocating more time, as a programme, on analysis and interpretation and the actions that can be taken on the strength of the data would have been more beneficial.

### **Methodology**

The research produced invaluable quantitative data. The task of collecting information of qualitative nature about young people's experience of engaging with the programme was assigned to young people and Circulate members.

Undoubtedly, the experience of learning how to evaluate *Circuit* events was hugely beneficial to the personal and professional development of Circulate members and in informing the development of their galleries' programme.

It may be worth examining in the future the role of young evaluators alongside professional evaluators. A holistic assessment of the programme, based on both qualitative and quantitative data, could produce richer insights. The danger of confusing 'external evaluation' with critical thinking and the process of empowering young people to have 'a voice' and bring change within organisations should be taken into consideration. The extent to which young people have the necessary expertise to provide in-depth and conclusive insights into the experience of their peers, and therefore the impact of the programme, should also be reviewed.



## Researching participation / participants over time

*The longitudinal research undertaken by Rebecca Coles and Pat Thomson, University of Nottingham, focused on the experience of individuals at four of the Circuit galleries, drawing on their wider lives and considering the role of Circuit within this. Initially carried out from 2015–17, the research will be ongoing following the end of the programme to assess the long-term impact on the individuals who took part.*

Our research aimed to understand more about the lives of young people participating in *Circuit*. What aspects of *Circuit* and the gallery did they value? How did *Circuit* and the gallery fit with other parts of their lives: home, work, education and art practice? How did differences in young people's lives affect how they valued *Circuit* and the gallery? (11)

We were engaged in 'qualitative longitudinal research', a methodological approach developed in part to explore major social changes affecting

the transition from childhood to adulthood. (12) Moving from education into work and from dependence to independence is no longer sequential as it once was, but is recursive and multilayered. Young people must now take increasing responsibility for choosing their own pathways through a complex 'global-local' field of family, education, peers and work. (13) They must be the 'actors, builders, jugglers, stage managers of their own biographies'. (14) We set out to investigate the particular 'choice biographies' of young people involved in contemporary arts practice and institutions.

Qualitative longitudinal research probes the relationship between broad social change and the lives of the individuals who both navigate and make this change. Because it follows unfolding events, documenting what people do as well as what they say, it can explore the back and forth between people's identities and aspirations and the world they encounter. The method is concerned both with the 'historical' – how wider events frame and impact young people's lives, and the 'generational' – how the lives of young people living in different circumstances in the same period do and do not resonate. (15)

We conducted five waves of interviews with twenty-one young people over an eighteen-month period across four galleries – one in the capital, one in a midlands city, one in a northern city and one in a more rural town. These young people were nominated by gallery staff, but all consented willingly to longitudinal research participation. When possible, interviews took place in person but we also interviewed online and via the phone. Each time participants were asked about 'home', 'work', 'education', 'art practice' and 'the gallery'. 'How are things at/with...?' As interviewees became used to the questions, they would pick up the narrative and the analysis from the preceding interview, which sometimes made the prompts unnecessary. We sometimes reminded interviewees of what they had been doing, thinking or feeling the last time we met, and they

would say how this had changed or stayed the same. Interviewees were also asked about their past lives: their family history; their early experiences of art and the gallery; and how they came to be involved in *Circuit*.

After each of our five interview waves, the recorded interviews were transcribed and the enlarged pool of data analysed, so that commonalities and differences in interviewee experience could be explored. A researcher-written narrative was created and updated each time, exploring each participant's own particular circumstances and perceptions. We developed an emerging set of themes relevant to participants' diverse circumstances and perspectives.

The longitudinal nature of the research allowed interviewer and interviewee to build a shared knowledge of developing events and reflection on them. We were able to engage participants in analytical thinking about their experiences and they took on the role of research collaborators. However, because of the personal nature of the research content and because potential readers of any publications may include interviewees' friends and colleagues, great care had been and will continue to be taken to ensure participant anonymity.

Retention is a perennial problem in longitudinal research and it is worth considering the remarkable participant 'retention' rate in this project. One interviewee did suggest that participants might have continued so as not to 'let down' the researcher, a common ethical problem arising from researcher-participant 'rapport'. A related common research problem is whether to pay participants. In this case, our research project, which came to explore issues around paid and unpaid work, relied on the unpaid participation of its interviewees. Participants told us that they valued being asked to reflect on their lives and we must conclude that this, and the quality of relationship

developed between researcher and participants, accounts for their consistent participation.

Qualitative longitudinal research is often carried out over periods of several years and even decades. Our research is not concluded with the ending of the formal *Circuit* programme. We hope to have the resources to conduct further waves of interviews, to continue to explore participants' ongoing similar and different experiences of art and the gallery, education, work and home.

## Researching and evaluating partnerships



13

*Nicola Sim, doctoral researcher at Tate and The University of Nottingham, investigated the politics and performance of partnerships between visual arts organisations and the youth sector. Nicola was also commissioned to evaluate the experiences of staff and participants through a series of interviews. Findings from Nicola's research are shared in chapter 1. Galleries and the Youth Sector Building Partnerships.*

### **Rationale and research questions**

The overarching question that directed the course of the PhD study was as follows:

What does a multi-sited gallery youth programme reveal about the nature of partnerships between visual art institutions and youth organisations?

In addition, a series of sub-questions helped to narrow the focus of the fieldwork and provide structure to the thesis:

- What is the character of the relationship between the arts and youth sectors?
- What is *Circuit's* partnership offer?
- How is this offer taken up?
- What are the barriers to, and facilitators of, effective partnership working between galleries and youth organisations?
- What happens as a consequence of these partnerships?
- What could change to improve partnerships between youth and visual art organisations?

The rationale for conducting this research and devising these questions was to shed light on a specific area of partnership practice that has until recently received less attention in literature (when compared with gallery-school relationships or collaboration between galleries and wider communities). *Circuit* also offered a timely opportunity to develop empirical study around relationships between galleries and youth organisations at a moment of increasing pressure for youth services in the UK.

### **Research method**

The PhD fieldwork took place between September 2013 and December 2015 and was carried out as a 'multi-sited ethnography', in recognition of the dispersed nature of the research context. By adopting an ethnographic approach, I committed to spending time as a participant/observer in different areas of the programme, including at meetings, events and workshops within organisations. I also attended and took part in a range of youth sector and art sector events, to gather an understanding of the issues and concerns affecting these distinct fields of practice. As part of the multi-sited ethnography, I developed more intensive relationships with four of

*Circuit's* eight sites, and conducted in-depth site studies in three regions. Semi-structured interviews also took place with youth workers, gallery staff, young people, artists and others who had been involved in the research.

As a qualitative research method, ethnographies can bring about rich, multi-dimensional data about a setting and its communities. Ethnographies also typically demand that researchers acknowledge and check their own position, privileges and biases – particularly when carrying out work with communities facing social disadvantage. This process allowed for reflection on the power dynamics and inequalities that are often inherent in partnership work.

### **Evaluating partnerships**

Tracking and evaluating the quality of partnership working was also revealed to be a sometimes overlooked aspect of practice in gallery youth projects. In *Circuit* there was a tendency to focus on the experience and journey of young people in youth engagement projects, while the journey of partnership and the experience of partners were less likely to be formally assessed.

*Circuit's* commissioning of a piece of interview-based research was a response to this gap, and my PhD also formed part of the programme's wider investigative work into partnership. But I have also argued that programmes can build in methods to reflect on partnership working without the intervention of an external researcher, and in my thesis I cite examples of this type of activity.

Evaluation and monitoring in general has grown exponentially in importance across the youth sector, so to build a more integrated collaborative field requires visual arts organisations to involve themselves more actively in the youth sector's current impact and evidence debates. By contributing to this wider dialogue around

evaluation and evidence, the visual arts sector potentially builds its ability to define the legitimacy of the arts in fields connected with the youth sector (such as health, social care, crime etc.), which can support youth practitioners to justify their work with arts organisations. Arts practitioners can also play a role in helping to develop creative, open-ended and reflective models of evaluation – in response to concerns about the rise of outcomes-led practice in youth work.

The combined challenge for the youth and visual art sectors is to convince external fields of power that their body of evidence should be valued. There are intrinsic and ongoing tensions involved in finding methods that are appropriate for the fields of youth work and gallery education, and that also suit the demands of authorities and funders.



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Hannah Kemp-Welch

## A digital democracy: The role of the *Circuit* website

*Circuit Digital Producer Hannah Kemp-Welch oversaw the development of the Circuit website. The site aimed to be a democratic, non-hierarchical and honest space for ongoing reflection, by anyone involved. It served as a repository and tool for reflection within the programme, as well as extending the reach of Circuit findings to a wider online audience.*

In 2012, we set out to construct an online space to share learning from our action research programme. This was the time when Snapchat was a secret platform populated by teens sharing auto-destruct images. Twitter was a space for off-the-cuff provocations. Facebook was ad-free.

But *Circuit* ended in 2017. Tweets are scheduled two weeks in advance. Responses are constructed to online criticisms that have not yet been made. Style guidelines and 'tone of voice' manuals are as thick as dictionaries. As organisations infiltrate online trends and seek out new ways to connect with audiences, brand reputation is everything.

In action research, your mistakes are sometimes your greatest asset. So if you need your organisation's action research team to shout about their mistakes, and your organisation needs your mistakes to stay hidden to remain trusted by audiences and funders, how do you create an online space for an action research project that takes place in a prestigious institution?

We thought long and hard about building a *Circuit* website. As a fixed-term project, we didn't have a brand to promote or a product to sell. But we did have learning to share and a network to foster. We wanted to create a non-hierarchical, shared space for reflection and evaluation, embodying the values of *Circuit*.

In reviewing existing channels at each partner site, the participating gallery websites spoke with authority and carefully managed who was allowed to contribute. Young people's channels were more participatory – but few were actually managed by young people. Distancing ourselves a little from the brands of our galleries was necessary in order to create a space where everyone could speak, where all were equal, and criticism could be met with a listening ear.

*Circuit* is about sharing, building and supporting, and our website had to do just that. We decided against a marketing angle. Our partner galleries each had existing channels for this that would outlive our project; so building a second outlet from scratch was futile. Concern around being too inward-focused and losing the valuable reflections and debates within our project was the main driver.

Keeping to Tate Digital's motto at the time: 'digital as an element of everything', we considered: what if *Circuit* was entirely digital?

We imagined a peer-led strand taking place on Google Hangouts, a festival in VR, partnership projects on Facebook live, gallery visits as

Twitter tours. We wanted an online space that could somehow house all these possibilities – flexible, informal, ever-evolving. We decided to build a humble blog to let the creativity, diversity and open opinions of *Circuit* participants shine through. Basing ourselves on WordPress, with a thousand and one plugins to allow us to be agile, we set our aims for this online space:

- Anyone involved in *Circuit* can blog
- Content will not be edited by a central authority
- Sharing mistakes is encouraged

So – how did it work out?

### **Who speaks for the gallery?**

The unique feature of the *Circuit* website is its democratic nature. Anyone involved in *Circuit* at any level can ask for their own login or group login, and has permission to write for the website. As a result, the website is full of rich content: thirty-nine members of staff at *Circuit* galleries asked for a personal profile on the website, so they could post regularly. We also, on request, created group logins for young people's collectives, and *Circuit* young evaluators. By March 2017, 420 posts had been published.

This is in stark contrast to other websites in our sector – galleries tend to exclusively house an 'expert view' with strict control over who is allowed to speak for the brand. Youth arts websites often also take this approach, or choose to make websites especially for young people to speak to each other via blog posts. Our website encourages young people, artists and staff at all levels to share the space, and places equal value on each post, embodying the values of our programme.

Discussions arose about this model, highlighting some areas where this has brought discomfort to the table. When writing about young people, members of staff have felt uncomfortable with the terminology our

sector uses to describe 15-25 year olds, and using this language in their presence. This generated an interesting debate, as if we are uncomfortable calling young people 'hard to reach', 'vulnerable' or even 'young people' in a space where they may read this, is there an alternative phrasing or viewpoint that can be used which feels acceptable to both parties?

An interesting example of these discussions has been particularly around the term 'young people'. A group of 15-25 year olds in the programme wrote a blog post that questioned the term and considered alternatives. Similarly, members of staff who are within the *Circuit* age range wrote about the transition from young person to adult, and how this is defined in parallel to how it is felt. Another member of staff wrote about their memory of the experience of being a young person, and the challenges this life period presented. So three voices in different situations are heard on the same topic, in this instance from the same gallery. Finding the common threads in these posts presents an opportunity for valuable learning from this collective investigation through the website's shared reflective space.

The style of writing chosen by young people could be seen as indicative of the amount of authority they feel they have, show their motivations for involvement, reveal the level of autonomy they have within the programme, or reflect their confidence in sharing honest reflections.

The following are loosely identifiable trends in young people's writing on the blog:

Reviews      'The Modern Lens collection seeks a new way of perceiving and understanding the world around us. Young@Tate mirrored this ideal, creating an environment for young people to explore the gallery in an equally new and refreshing experience.'  
– Felix Gillies-Creasey, Tate Collective St Ives

Critique 'I don't think public attitudes towards young people have changed, be that because they never had an opinion to begin with, or because they didn't know what the event was.'

– Livius Jaeger, Circuit Cambridge

Personal experience 'At this point, I was nervous about saying the wrong things, but oh boy who knew after being sat around that table, I would find a new found love in contemporary art.'

– Robert Brookes, Collabor-8 Collective, Nottingham Contemporary

### What's happened as a result of this?

This model has been hugely useful internally. Partners have been able to keep track of activity at other sites, and forge new connections to share guidance and learn from each other's evaluation. It's allowed for cross-pollination of ideas, shown young people that their voice is valued and resulted in a repository of young people's cultural production throughout the programme. As such it is an archive of learning, a portfolio of activities across sites, and an active hub facilitating the network.

Since its launch in February 2014 until May 2018, the website has attracted over 27,000 readers. It has a high dwell time, showing that audiences engage with blog posts, with average session durations of three minutes – almost unheard of in our sector. A survey of website visitors in 2016 showed us that

- 54% of visitors were arts professionals
- 50% were young people (15–25 years old)
- 10% were from the youth sector
- 5% were funders

- 34% were involved in *Circuit*
- 46% had a professional interest
- 17% had a personal interest

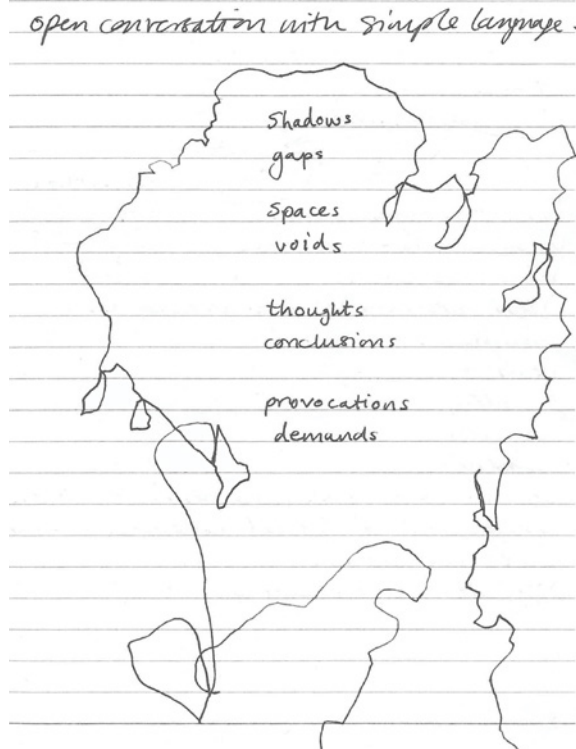
Our survey showed that significant numbers of young people were using the website as well as over 25s – despite the fact the website was not designed as a 'youth space'. Arts professionals around the UK are engaging with the content, and report that reading content makes them 'think differently' and gives them 'ideas [they] will use'. Visitors predominantly come from locations where *Circuit* is active, however four of the top ten cities are not *Circuit* partner locations, which tells us that the website's reach has expanded to be national.

Having our own space has, to some extent, resulted in a lack of visibility for our action research and celebrating young people's achievements across main gallery digital channels. We must now make the case for young people's voices to be embedded in these gallery channels, and use the evidence provided by the *Circuit* digital platform in our argument.

We put forward our learning from the programme to make the business case for diversity, and to show the benefit to our organisation of giving young people a voice through their channels. Young people have learned skills as writers and digital producers, and have a portfolio of thought-provoking articles in their name, and so we leave behind a cohort of competent authors and filmmakers who can continue to advocate on behalf of youth programmes in future.



## #WhyArt: Online research with social influencers



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*To take research beyond the programme, Circuit Digital Producer Hannah Kemp-Welch developed an online campaign with creative social media agency Social Life. Over a month-long period, influential figures on social media who had followings fitting the programme's target demographic posed questions based around the hashtag #WhyArt.*

As a national programme connecting young people and galleries, we spend a lot of time talking about the impact of contact with the arts in young people's lives. But what do young people think about the value of art and how do they articulate these experiences? Over one month, we asked young people to share their thoughts with us through an online campaign, with the aim of gathering data on a mass scale. (16)

Considering the fact that to a greater extent arts websites seek to influence and inform rather than listen and learn, we launched a large-scale, open, online consultation with young people, inviting them to

contribute to our research, seeking to discover what young people believe the value of art is in their lives.

Taking inspiration from business models, rather than existing strategies employed by the arts sector, we contracted a social media agency, Social Life, that works with brands to target young audiences, and we worked closely with them to develop a strategy to invite responses from young people to our question.

Social Life suggested working with key digital influencers with mass followings of young people to tap into these audience bases. These influences are not necessarily connected to arts organisations and frequenters of arts spaces, and they created content designed to generate responses from young people, pushing them out through their existing channels. Social Life then aggregated these responses both as quantitative data and examples of key statements submitted by young people.

Ensuring that the chosen influencers covered a range of interest topics and fandoms, with primary diverse audiences of 15–25 year olds, we contracted twelve influencers and briefed them on the project aims. Deciding not to prescribe the wording of the question, as this was likely to appear inauthentic to the influencers' audiences and potentially skew the results, we asked influencers to put our research question into their own words, and gave them freedom to create content as they saw fit.

Over the month that the campaign was live, we engaged 74,995 young people with our question, and analysed the 1,171 in-depth responses – looking for patterns that could help us understand what it is that pulls young people to, or away from, the arts.

Findings of particular interest were the disparity between genders, where a far higher percentage of women engaged with and responded

to the research question than men. In over a thousand responses, key themes were clear, and we pulled five major topics out that young people mentioned again and again in their responses.

As a research methodology, such an approach cannot claim to be scientific. Arguably, young people who have access to the internet, follow influencers online, and are confident enough to respond to such a question, already have a degree of privilege and insight, and potentially are critically or culturally engaged. However, as the results are on a mass scale, and through channels unconnected to institutions, we feel we have learned something new by listening to young people's voice in an organic space, without intruding through the promotion of our brand or breaching the confidence shared with us through data collection of individual responders.

Interestingly, not one of the 1,171 deeper responses to the question mention art galleries, organisations or spaces, indicating that young people generally see art as something outside of this context. Social Life commented that through all their work to date, they had not seen an audience open up to the extent to which they contributed meaningful and personal responses to this question. The decision to not impose our branding, not to use the institutional voice and to speak through a third party has given us new insight into the autonomous views of young people.

The research led us to ask ourselves several questions, such as, do we, as youth programmers, recognise any of the findings as overlapping or linking to those uncovered through work with young people and the arts? How could these findings be useful when considering and developing future programme? Could this methodology be re-purposed for other areas of audience research? If this is a starting point, what would we ask next? Would it be an effective way to ask young people specifically about their experience of galleries, or crowd-source ideas for programme?

A key word analysis of all responses showed the below words to be the most used:

The responses received from young people included:

## Emerging themes

- SELF EXPRESSION
- MENTAL HEALTH
- SOCIAL TOOL
- GLOBAL ISSUES
- LEARNING & PERSPECTIVE

4d  
Art has made my the person I am today. It has allowed me expression in a world full of suppression, without art and it's therapeutic remedies I would never be where I am today!!

4d  
#whyart I think art as impacted on my life in a way that can't be put into words. It's an escape from the world around and for me to be let loose with my own world of imagination. Art is many things for many people but for me it's home. It's peace on paper, leave me with paper pencil and my mind and let's see what happens 🥰💖

4d  
Art is all about beauty, creativity and perspective. Art taught me that there is no right or wrong- that is the beauty of it. Art has helped me figure out who I really am- there in lies the creativity of it all. Art gave me a voice when I couldn't find one- I found that perspective can be louder than words.

4d  
Art gives me a way to express my love for the things I enjoy. Creating fanart makes me feel like I've made something awesome and feel happy and accomplished. over the last 7 years art has impacted me most by helping me seriously increase my patience, diligence, and appreciation of beautiful things 💖

## Themes & feelings

Whereas influencer-led campaigns usually focus on brand-based or people-based themes, responses to #WhyArt were articulated through emotions.

Here, we've listed the campaign's most-used words.

**Emotions**

**Involved**

**important**

**Involved**

**important**

4d  
#WhyArt Throughout my depression, art has been one of the only hobbies that has continued to be fun and make me happy. Besides that, art is always a sort of constant in my life. Even when I feel completely worthless, art least I can make art which both makes me happy and gives me a feeling of value.

4d  
somethinglikelydia For me, definitely. I've struggled with confidence issues my whole life, but even when I've been at my lowest, I can still find my voice in the art I create. Equally, because I suffer from depression, sometimes words cannot express how I feel, but I'll see a painting or hear a song, that can express that feeling in ways that words never could.

4d  
Art gives me an escape when the world gets too heavy. It helps me relax and focus on what's really important instead of worrying about every little thing. Drawing and coloring have helped me a lot with my anxiety and are things that help me through panic attacks. #whyart

4d  
Art has impacted me in a lot of ways, but the main impact it had on me is that I had a creative platform to channel all of my anger, sadness, frustrations, and happiness. It let me release stress and be free from judgement by other people. It let me reflect on myself and be more calm and not easily angry. I love how art is an outlet and a reflection of everyone differently. (I hope thats good xD)

Rachel Moilliet

## Looking at organisational change: Artistic commissions

*Three members of staff  
delivering Circuit at three different  
galleries were commissioned  
by the programme's National  
Team to undertake a piece of  
research, considering the theme  
of organisational change.*

The approach to these commissions drew on the fact that while these *Circuit* staff members were youth programme managers and facilitators day-to-day, they were also artists. Their experience of working with young people, combined with their own artistic practices, put each of them in a unique position to unpick emerging themes from *Circuit*, and present ideas through different media.

Through this research approach, each artist set aside time to step outside of their day jobs and used it to reflect on their work within their gallery and on wider organisational change. Part of the time was spent researching and exploring different ideas; part of the time was spent producing artistic responses to the ideas that emerged.

Alice Thickett (Youth Programmer, Nottingham Contemporary) explored concepts of community and the conditions needed for change, producing diagrams, zines and sound pieces. Sally Noall (Programme Manager: Young People, Tate St Ives) produced sketchbooks and sound pieces, particularly focusing on the use of language within the organisation. Rachel Noel (Assistant Curator: Young People's Programmes, Tate Britain & Tate Modern) considered what galleries might look like in the future, creating an experimental library and social space at the *Circuit* conference and at Tate Modern, inviting visitors to explore radical possibilities about what the future of the museum might be.

Work from the commissions is included throughout this publication and is available online. (17)



*Mark Miller*

The impetus for change:  
Harnessing potential for the future

*Circuit* set out to learn through its aim of making equity real and tangible for young people. The goal was to evoke the potential of what a museum of the future could look like through three main initiatives: enabling access to cultural resources; representation for those individuals, collectives and communities who are not featured or acknowledged in the dominant narrative of national and international culture; and making young people stakeholders in the production of culture in galleries.

As we approach 2020 in the continued momentum of ongoing change, it is important to acknowledge that most individuals working in museums and galleries understand that change to engage a broader audience in the arts is required, which is an impetus that has been ongoing for decades. The idea of a 'museum and gallery of the future' is inevitable, but the fundamental question surrounding change is 'who are the stakeholders and leaders of this change?'

Creating a critical mass through programme production, reflection, research and evaluation were key to establishing the right conditions for change. The Circulate young evaluators were a good example of this, as they continued critical questioning by asking why, who and how these resources for young people could be adapted to create beneficial outcomes and opportunities for young people aged 15-25.

Throughout the four years *Circuit* has demonstrated that working directly with young people and youth sector organisations as partners

and collaborators, has enabled visual arts organisations to deliver a range of multi-art form programmes that attract and provide for a varied audience. *Circuit* evidenced that a workforce that broadly represents its immediate communities will produce a programme that is relevant to those communities, establishing an audience who want to take part, get involved and create vibrant opportunities and experiences for all.

We hope that the *Circuit* programme can be useful in galvanising past and present thinking that has arisen from its distinct national scale, within rural, urban and suburban contexts. It also needs to be said that *Circuit* does not hold all the answers, nor intends to halt exploration and re-thinking of any emergent learning related to this work. *Circuit* is an addition to the many projects and programmes that aim to accomplish lasting change for our organisations. As we speak, more programme approaches, models and devices for positive equitable change continue to be developed, be questioned and made real.

Finally, we also hope that *Circuit* serves to demonstrate that change to enable equity can emerge from, and be produced through many differing approaches and contexts. These include physical actions and a process of cultural production for and with audiences, which impacts the organisational message of relevance, as well as influencing the producers through learning, skills, and progression, and audiences by providing relevant experiences, knowledge and a meeting point between the arts and wider social and cultural lived experience. These strategies can cause a visceral, tangible, physical production of a critical mass that causes positive change for, by and with young people.

## Image Captions

- 1 Young@Tate was an open Saturday for creative people aged 15–25 with free entry to the gallery, workshops and activities, Tate St Ives, 2014  
Photo ©Tate (Ian Kingsnorth)
- 2 Image of artist Hannah Kemp-Welch commission, which was presented at the *Circuit* Conference, Nottingham Contemporary, 2017  
Photo ©Circuit
- 3 Sally Noall, extract from *spokenwrittendrawn* 2015/16  
Image ©Sally Noall
- 4 Summer workshop with Liverpool CAMHS (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services), Tate Liverpool, 2015  
Photo ©Tate
- 5 Diagram showing reflections on evaluation processes, Wysing Arts Centre & Kettle's Yard  
Image ©Circuit Cambridge
- 6 The Action Research Cycle: a reference for collecting and analysing evidence, and using it to inform next steps  
Image ©Roz Hall
- 7 *Circuit* Studio used by young people at Wysing Arts Centre, 2017  
Image ©Circuit Cambridge (Charlie Bryan)
- 8 Feedback gathered by Sufea Mohamad Noor, Tate Collective Liverpool, for WARP Festival at The Whitworth, 2016  
Image ©Sufea Mohamad Noor
- 9 VJ Workshops, led by digital artist Liam Roberts, Firstsite, 2015  
Image ©Firstsite
- 10 Circulate Young Evaluators created an alternative survey for visitors to the fill in in a letter format, entitled 'Dear Whitworth', The Whitworth, 2016  
Image ©Whitworth
- 11 Journals were a popular way to capture information, and to write up further reflection after an event or project: Reflections from a participant in a youth partner project at Tate Modern, Bosco zine page  
Image ©Tate
- 12 Workshop with Aberrant Architecture at Hyperlink Festival, Tate Modern, 2013  
Photo ©Tate

- 13 Young person taking part in a workshop in the Tanks at Hyperlink Festival, Tate Modern, 2013  
Photo ©Tate
- 14 Tate Collective Liverpool and art, architecture and design collective Assemble presented *Art Gym*, a three-week programme of free, drop-in activities held within a specially designed space, Tate Liverpool, 2016  
Photo ©Tate
- 15 Doodle by Beth Hull, Programme Organiser, Young People, Firstsite  
Image ©Beth Hull
- 16 Themes emerging from data collected through the hashtag #WhyArt on Twitter, which asked young people what they thought about the value of art in their lives  
Photo ©Tate  
Texts ©contributors
- 17 Alice Thickett, What can help us change? Part of the *Circuit* artist display, Tate Modern 2016. The diagram documents the processes and considerations youth programmers need to consider to spark change  
Image ©Alice Thickett

## Footnotes

- (1) [tate.org.uk/about-us/projects/circuit-programme](http://tate.org.uk/about-us/projects/circuit-programme).
- (2) See the section About *Circuit* for a list of *Circuit* values and aims.
- (3) Empowerment evaluation has been defined as 'an evaluation approach that aims to increase the likelihood that programmes will achieve results by increasing the capacity of programme stakeholders to plan, implement and evaluate their own programmes', David Fetterman and Abraham Wandersman, *Empowerment Evaluation Principles in Practice*, New York 2005, p.27.
- (4) The team was also joined at times by the *Circuit* Marketing Advisor (Rachel Escott), *Circuit* PR Advisor (Myvanwy Evans), *Circuit* Digital Producer (Hannah Kemp-Welch) and Paul Hamlyn Foundation's Director, Evidence and Learning (Jane Steele).
- (5) Saville Kushner, *A for Arts, Evaluation, Education and Arts Centres*, Darlington 1989.
- (6) The full report, '*Circuit* 2013–2017: A review of the evaluation structures and practices' by Hannah Wilmot is available online at: [tate.org.uk/research/research-centres/tate-research-centre-learning/circuit-evaluation](http://tate.org.uk/research/research-centres/tate-research-centre-learning/circuit-evaluation).

- (7) Wilmot 2017.
- (8) The films are available at [vimeo.com/127849759](https://vimeo.com/127849759) (last accessed 22 June 2018).
- (9) For reflections on some of the responses to the comments on this blog, see Andrew Vaughan's article, 'Representing "young" artists' in chapter 2.
- (10) The full report for 2016–17 is available at [tate.org.uk/research/research-centres/tate-research-centre-learning/circuit-evaluation](http://tate.org.uk/research/research-centres/tate-research-centre-learning/circuit-evaluation) (last accessed 22 June 2018).
- (11) A report of the findings up to 2017 is available at: [tate.org.uk/research/research-centres/tate-research-centre-learning/circuit-evaluation](http://tate.org.uk/research/research-centres/tate-research-centre-learning/circuit-evaluation) (last accessed 22 June 2018).
- (12) See Rachel Thomson and Julie Holland, *Youth Values and Transitions to Adulthood: An Empirical Investigation*, London 2004, and Julie McLeod and Rachel Thomson, *Researching Social Change*, London 2009.
- (13) Johanna Wyn, 'Becoming Adult in the 2000s: New Transitions and New Careers', *Family Matters*, no.68, 2004, pp.6–12.
- (14) Ulrich Beck and Elizabeth Beck-Gernsheim, *Individualisation: Institutionalised Individualism and its Social and Political Consequences*, London 2002, p.23.
- (15) Rachel Thomson, 'Intensity and Insight: Qualitative Longitudinal Methods as a Route to the Psycho-social', *Timescapes Working Paper Series*, no.3, 2012.
- (16) The full report, 'Why Art? Research into young people's perceptions of art, directed by influencers on social media', by Social Life and Hannah Kemp-Welch is available online at: [tate.org.uk/research/research-centres/tate-research-centre-learning/circuit-evaluation](http://tate.org.uk/research/research-centres/tate-research-centre-learning/circuit-evaluation)
- (17) [tate.org.uk/about-us/projects/circuit-programme](http://tate.org.uk/about-us/projects/circuit-programme).



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*Circuit* - Test, Risk, Change  
Young people, youth organisations and galleries  
working together

Produced by the *Circuit* Programme National Team  
With contributions by *Circuit* participants,  
researchers, artists and staff from galleries and  
youth organisations

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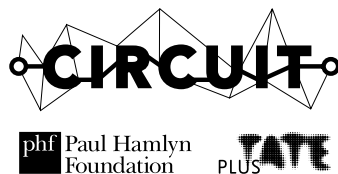
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This publication builds on recommendations  
from the *Circuit* report, 'Test, Risk, Change - Young  
People, Youth Organisations and Galleries: Working  
as Allies to Spark Change'

The report, full research papers and blog  
posts written by *Circuit* participants  
and staff are available at [circuit.tate.org.uk](http://circuit.tate.org.uk)  
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*What can you do to make your gallery become more representative of society?*

*What are your plans for enabling young people's long-term contribution to your organisation?*

*How are you working in a reciprocal way with youth sector organisations to benefit young people?*

*How can you establish equity of access for young people to produce cultural events for their peers?*

*Circuit* involved ten galleries across England and Wales working with youth organisations to create and sustain opportunities to bring about positive change for young people in arts institutions. It was led by Tate and funded by the Paul Hamlyn Foundation.

How can young people, youth organisations and galleries work together to spark change?

*Circuit: Test, Risk, Change* shares a variety of approaches and perspectives to work with young people that emerged through a national programme connecting 15–25 year olds to the arts.

With contributions from young people, researchers, artists and staff from galleries and youth organisations this publication:

*Explores the partnerships and collaborations that can be fostered between arts and youth organisations*

*Investigates the conditions that are needed to bring about changes in art galleries to make them more representative and diverse*

*Examines approaches to evaluation and research that support reflection, risk-taking and change*



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