

The Winston Churchill Memorial Trust of Australia

Report by Matthew Perry

2008 Churchill Fellow

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INTRODUCTION

My fellowship enabled me to travel to the U.S.A., Ireland, Scotland and England to study innovative visual arts projects for people with disability. This report provides an overview of diverse options to providing art making opportunities that promote individual creativity and maximize inclusion for people with disability.

I thank the Churchill Trust for giving me a precious opportunity to visit remarkable visual arts projects in diverse cultural settings and for the opportunity to meet and share information with arts coordinators, artists, arts facilitators and luminaries. My Fellowship travels have enriched my life experience and my capability for enlightened arts practice by exposing me to many exceptionally talented and generous people who dedicate their lives to sharing knowledge and participating in the process of art making.

I thank my employers Tulgeen Disability Services for their encouragement and support to take time out from the work place to complete my Churchill Fellowship travel study.

I am deeply indebted to my wonderful wife, Rebecca for her tireless and sensitive help in the planning and organization of my Churchill Fellowship and for her insightful positive counseling and inspiration during my travels.

I also thank the many people who generously took the time inside and outside the workplace to welcome me by giving me access to their projects, lives and diverse cultures.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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My fellowship was undertaken between the 8th of May and the 12th of July 2009. The aim of my fellowship was to visit the most innovative visual arts projects in the U.S.A., Ireland, Scotland and England that provide visual art making options for people with disability. I visited many remarkable projects, both urban and rural based, that provide art making environments that encourage the individual creativity of artists. I was able to knowledge share with artists, coordinators and facilitators who provided a rich source of best practice and sensitive and inclusive approaches to arts education and professional development.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Visiting California's dynamic multifunction art making environments at Creativity Explored in Francisco and Creative Growth Center in Oakland.
- Meeting with and seeing the art collection of Cheryl Rivers, a New York based art historian, writer/editor and luminary on "Outsider Art"
- Meeting Alice Fox the Senior Lecturer of Access to Art project at Brighton University who has initiated mentored tertiary education for artists with disability and a post M.A. degree course in inclusive arts practice for educators.
- Visiting Intoart project a dynamic and radically inclusive arts group based in London, England

RECOMMENDATIONS

To expand and refine art making opportunities and promote and support individual artists with disability in Australia it is necessary to:

- Develop degree level courses providing formal training in inclusive arts to train arts educators and coordinators in sensitive inclusive education and best practice.
- Lobby for more flexible guidelines from government funding agencies so that a non segregated approach to education can be developed for a full spectrum of people with and without disability to share art making environments.
- Foster small artist run projects that can develop a totally inclusive approach to art making and professional development and be fully integrated into their communities and be a platform to develop sophisticated and sensitive education and arts practice
- Develop art studio/galleries in all of the capitol cities of every state in Australia. These specialized arts spaces can provide inclusive arts education, professional development and gallery space to urban and rural based artists with disability.

IMPLEMENTATION AND DISSEMINATION

The principles learned will be embraced into the ongoing development and practice of Art in the Garage which is part of Tulgeen Disability Services based in Bega, N.S.W. Findings will be disseminated through knowledge sharing and mentorship with other projects and through public presentations and appropriate publications and journals.

FELLOWSHIP PROGRAMME

U.S.A.

San Francisco

Creativity Explored

8th of May – 11th

Oakland

Creative Growth Art Centre

14th of May – 18th

Minneapolis

Interact Center for the Visual & Performing Arts

19th of May - 24th

New York

Creedmoor Psychiatric Center “Living Museum project”

Land Project

Meet with Cheryl Rivers Art Historian and “Outsider Art” luminary.

American Folk Art Museum

Maresca Gallery

Meet with artists at exhibition of Pure Vision Arts at Marlborough Galleries

June 1st - 7th

IRELAND

Callan

June

K.C.A.T. Art & Study Centre (Kilkenny Collective for Arts Talent)

June 8th – Saturday 13th

Cork

Mayfield Community Arts Centre, Cork

Meet with arts facilitator at Code Organisation

Visit Code Organisation art exhibitions at Cork Library and Cork School of Music.

June 14th – 20th June

SCOTLAND

Glasgow

Project Ability

Art Access, Dumfries

June 20th – June 25th

ENGLAND

Brighton

Access to Art Project at Brighton University

Wellington House Day Centre, Brighton

Avondale Day Centre, Brighton

June 25th - June 30th

London

Intoart project, Clapham, South London

Tate Modern gallery education studios

July 1st - July 10th

KEY MOTIVATIONS FOR MY FELLOWSHIP

I initiated and currently coordinate Art in the Garage which is an art studio for people with disability and is part of Tulgeen Disability Services. The project has been running for 9 years and is located in Bega, a small rural community in N.S.W.

I have witnessed the vital importance of art making in the lives of many people with disability. The process of making art is not only therapeutic and a means of empowerment for people often marginalized by their disability. It is also a vital bridge to inclusion into their community and a way to relate to other artists. Exhibitions of art works created by artists with disability create meaningful ways for artists to connect with their immediate and wider communities and help to shift negative stereotyping.

The Art in the Garage project has grown organically and has been shaped and evolved by many factors such as available architecture, funding resources, disability guidelines, the knowledge and skills of the project staff and participating artists, the local community and the Australian cultural climate.

There are still many areas of Australia that have very few or no options for people with disability to pursue individually expressive art making. As someone who has initiated, evolved and sustained a visual arts project for people with disability in a rural area I am consistently questioned as to how to start a project. I chose to visit a wide range of art making environments in diverse cultural settings and locations both rural and urban to gain an overview of approaches and best practice that could be embraced into the project I coordinate. This knowledge can also be shared with other Australian based projects to help evolve more innovative and inclusive options for artists with a disability and to encourage new projects to be initiated.

COMPARATIVE STUDY OF INNOVATIVE VISUAL ARTS PROJECTS FO PEOPLE WITH DISABILITY

I selected projects to visit on my Fellowship that had a strong ethos and philosophy of developing the individuality of every artist and that the art works created in these projects reflected a celebration of uniqueness.

Every project I visited had innovative qualities but I have chosen to mention only the projects that most strongly emphasise the diversity and innovation in approaches to offering accessible and inclusive arts options. Because location and cultural settings strongly determine the evolution of projects I have listed projects in national categories. I have also categorized the projects visited into four main categories; large urban based projects: small urban projects: large rural projects and small rural projects. All these categories provide important diverse art making environments that approach inclusion and their connection with their immediate communities and professional development in different ways.

I have also included a brief history of the projects and of how they were initiated and continued to evolve. This information confirms how projects invariably begin as the vision of an individual artist. It also strongly illustrates how it is possible to initiate dynamic art making environments and creative options for people with disability in all types of cultural settings and locations.

LARGE URBAN BASED PROJECTS

Large urban projects provide art making options for large numbers of people with disabilities. They utilize large civic architectural structures in central urban locations. Many people with disability are able to access them through urban public transport systems from considerable distances outside the project location. The often less safe and not so community focused nature of these urban locations shapes these projects into becoming large self contained communities that provide safe places for art making and socialising. Connections to their surrounding communities are formal and consist mostly of some contact with an art buying public visiting project galleries, visiting artists and mentors and through selected groups traveling to chosen external sites.

U.S.A

Creativity Explored in San Francisco and Creative Growth Center in Oakland, California were both started by Florence and Elias Katz an artist and psychologist respectively. The Katz's vision for the projects was not only to offer sensitively supported art making options but also to create a community. This philosophy has shaped the evolution of both of these two projects. They both began as small groups of artists with disability working with an arts educator/facilitator in small working studios. They have both thrived and expanded and are currently housed in large buildings and offer shared open plan studio space for large numbers of artists. The limited funding sources in California have required that these two projects become strongly entrepreneurial to survive with both projects being reliant on art sales and fund raisers to be sustainable. This

entrepreneurial approach has helped to raise the profile of artists with disabilities in America, where their art is often being labeled “Outsider Art”. There are many private galleries who feature “Outsider Art” and individual artists who are supported in their professional development to exhibit nationally and internationally.

CREATIVITY EXPLORED - San Francisco, California

The project is housed in a beautiful old ball room building that is located on the edge of the Mission district. The front of the building houses a permanent gallery space with art works and merchandising on sale. The large working open plan studio offers art making space to as many as 60 artists who work in different art mediums in a vibrant interactive context. Areas of the studio are designated for different art mediums including painting, drawing, 3d works, ceramics and printmaking. In the studio context people are encouraged to be self motivated and to work to develop a focused dedicated approach to their art making. The project employs 20 part time artist/facilitators who work in designated areas of the studio offering technical support and encouragement. The studio strongly encourages drawing as the most immediate medium and as a way to establish personal mark making and authority to then move to other mediums. Several artists working at the project have had individual exhibitions in external art galleries and the projects artists regularly exhibit in group exhibitions nationally and internationally.

In 1995 the project opened a second facility in a neighboring suburb that caters for people who have more severe disabilities and special needs or who do not like the intensity and more interactive nature of the larger facility. The studio is located in an industrial area and is housed in a high ceilinged warehouse with skylights. The working area is spacious and allows easy wheel chair use. This project studio supports 20 artists with disability and there is a higher ratio of staff to clients.

The project is committed to supporting people with developmental disabilities to become working artists. By promoting their work as emerging artists this increases the importance of their contribution to the professional art world. Uncensored self-expression is both encouraged and celebrated which fosters art that is fresh, exciting, and innovative.

Pilar Olabarria, who is of Basque origins has worked at the Creativity Explored studio since it began 25 years ago. She has a life long commitment to social justice and equality. She also works as an artist /mentor in the San Francisco State Psychiatric Hospital and facilitates work shops in state penitentiaries with violent offenders.

“Mostly I do not intervene in personal conflicts or tensions in the studio. They mostly get resolved in a positive ways.... Many people when they arrive at the studio here... they have all this nonsense going on in their heads.... “I don’t fit in.... I don’t have a disability like them..... and racial stuff too.... but after a couple of days the art takes over their creativity begins to blossom... Yes, making art is the great leveller... the answer.”

CREATIVE GROWTH CENTER – Oakland, California

The project is located in Oakland, California in a building that was originally a Porche automobile show room. Dilapidation and inappropriateness as an arts facility prompted a major renovation funded by a \$700,000 grant in 2008. Renovations included creating separate administrative space, specialist training rooms and removing the mezzanine and adding skylights. The lobby to the facility includes a spacious gallery area with ongoing displays of artworks created in the project. The central studio space is light and spacious and accommodates many options for different art activities and mediums. The administrative and smaller special education rooms are contained on two levels at the rear of the building.

The large open art making space has few divisional barriers except to delineate areas for ceramics, printmaking, woodworking 3D construction. The studio atmosphere is quiet and focused with large working tables with groups of 10 - 20 people working round them supported by an artist/educator and a volunteer arts worker.

In the last 3 years digital animation has become a medium available in the studio. Claymation, moving cutouts, cell animation have been used to produce two finished animated videos. Due to the labour intensive nature of the process and the need for continuity one artist is selected to design characters and backgrounds and a team of other artists help implement those aesthetics. In camera editing has enable participants to have creative control with good technical support from a facilitator.

There is a special communication education area that is a valuable element to the studio function. Small groups and individuals who are having difficulty communicating with their fellow artists and facilitators can have specialised assistance. Educators help individuals with both verbal disabilities and language barriers to find clearer ways of communication.

Weekly meetings of arts educator staff with curatorial staff bring the focus on to the bodies of art works of individual artist emerging within the project. Artists with notable bodies of work then become elevated to the position of “primary artist”. Their body of work is then comes under revue more regularly and often leads to art works being submitted for external exhibitions. The project has an agreement with all artists attending that all their work stays at the studio. The evolution of that body of work can then lead to selection for a professional development focus. The project has an initial focus on drawing as it promotes more independent personal art making which can often lead to the exploration of other mediums.

The Creative Growth Centre has an Executive Director who is supported by an office manager and secretary. The gallery is run by a Curatorial Projects Manager who has two gallery assistants. The studio function is overseen by a studio manager and a full time nurse. Currently the project employs 40 practicing artists who work part time to support 130 artists with disabilities. Several of the artists have been with the project since it began and very few people leave once they have experience working in the studio.

Creative Growth Centre has gained a national and international reputation with many solo exhibitions and selected works being shown in major galleries and collections around the world. The project's director, Tom De Maria, has been a major ambassador for art works created by artists with disability. The project is strongly committed to the professional development of the artists it supports. A full time curatorial staff of three people enables the organization of individual bodies of art works and exhibitions with external galleries. The project has just opened a gallery in Paris called Gallery Impaire that is featuring art works of artists in the project.

INTERACT CENTER – Minneapolis, Minnesota

Interact Center is located in the C.B.D. of Minneapolis in an area known as the Warehouse District. The warehouse where the center is located is a large historic structure built in the late 19th century. The Interact Center has large areas of the basement and the first floor for their administration, performance rehearsal areas, visual arts studios and gallery spaces.

The project was founded in 1992 as a professional theater company that included actors with disabilities. Interact expanded its vision in 1996 to become a recognized center for both the performing and visual arts. Today, Interact Center is the only center in America that offers professional-level training, performances, and exhibitions in multiple artistic disciplines, for artists with a wide range of disabilities, from physical to developmental to mental to behavioral. At Interact, adult artists with disabilities explore and expand their creativity as actors, writers, painters, sculptors and musicians.

The Interact Center is a direct result of the rare improvised performance skills and passionate vision of Creative director, Jeanne Calvit. Jeanne studied in Paris with legendary performance improvisation teacher Jaques Lecoq and traveled extensively in Europe for several years performing with an improvisation focused theatre group. She was attracted to Minneapolis as a place of residence for its strong theatre tradition and generous arts patronage. She began working with people with disability through holding summer camp workshops and saw a unique creativity she was keen to nurture.

Minneapolis has a strong history of philanthropy that is unique in America and also has an enlightened approach to social justice and community welfare. It was in this context that the Interact Center was initiated with funding for their current large building and the employment of industry trained educators and practicing artists.

“Radical Inclusion” is a core value of the Interact Center. Shared educational contexts for a large age range and all types of disabilities is strongly promoted by the project and supported by the more flexible funding guidelines of the Minneapolis State Government. This allows access to people with a broad spectrum of mental health issues, intellectual disabilities and acquired injuries to share educational space for the performance and visual arts.

The performance arts program of Interact uses a space for rehearsal and workshops that is located in the centre of the first floor space. This area is set up with full blackout, lights and audio

and raked seating. It uses adjoining rooms for costume changes and one on one sessions. About 40 people a day are using the performance space.

The visual arts program has two studio areas. One area is used by artists who are using more traditional painting and drawing mediums. They are self motivated and disciplined and receive critique and technical advice from the Interact arts educators. The second studio area is located in the basement area. It is a multi media area with facilities for working in ceramics and a variety of sculpture materials as well as traditional paint and drawing materials. There is also a textile designated area. People find areas that are more private or intimate depending on their needs or location to mediums or proximity to friends. Employed arts facilitators and volunteers move through the space and assist people who require feedback on their artworks or technical advice. About 40 people a day are using these two studio spaces.

The performing arts practice are at the core of the Interact Centre's values. The inclusive and egalitarian philosophies employed in that context have shaped the evolution of arts practice and education throughout the organisation. There is a lot of cross over between the performance arts and the visual arts and many people supported by Interact now access both. The dynamic theatre and performance workshop process employed by the Interact Center teaches a broad spectrum of communication skills that are a compliment to the often more solitary pursuit of visual arts. The employment of group critiques facilitated by external artists is based on the importance of a shared open dialogue. The very broad spectrum of types of disabilities with a range of communication skills is utilised by the project to promote a group dialogue that is often avoided or overlooked in many large organisations.

SCOTLAND

PROJECT ABILITY - Glasgow

Unfortunately due to extensive delays in the construction of the new Project Ability studios in Trongate I was unable to see the project's studios functioning. The following notes are from dialogue at a meeting with project director Elizabeth Gibson.

Project Ability was initiated in 1981 and began as a small art studio based project with a coordinator and a resident artist. When funding was available the project worked with a group of 10 people with special needs based in a single studio located in central Glasgow. The project became respected in the Glasgow arts community and consistently held exhibitions of artworks created in the project.

Elizabeth Gibson took over the role of director/coordinator in 1990. In 1991 Glasgow was designated as a European City of Culture and funds for cultural development flowed in to the city. Project ability received a 500,000 pound grant to expand and provide creative options for people with learning difficulties. It was with this funding they were able to procure their current very large central city location. The project is based in a third floor turn of the century building with large areas that are used as gallery space, studios for painting, digital film and animation, photography, ceramics, sculpture and print making.

Currently the project provides art education options for 350 people with learning disabilities who range from 8 years old to 65 years old. Separate age groups work together in a workshop setting 8 -12, 12 – 16, 18 - 25, 25 and over. Workshops are run at a ratio of a maximum of 15 people supported by 2 artist/ facilitators. For high needs groups a maximum of 5 clients are supported by 2 artist/facilitators plus support workers and in many cases these can be “one on one” sessions. The project is also separately funded to work with people with mental health issues.

Art by people with disability has a low profile in Scotland. Arts educational organizations, gallery curators and private gallery owners have been very slow to acknowledge importance of the art created by individuals or by groups of artists with disability. Project Ability plays a vital role in this context where it hard to find respectful exhibition space. Project Ability has given generous mentorship to other projects through collaborative art making and by providing gallery space for artists and groups from other often remote regions.

SMALL URBAN BASED PROJECTS

Small urban based projects can offer a very different approach to inclusion than is possible in the larger projects. Smaller groups of artists working together offer a more personal approach to art making and professional development. These projects can also have a very meaningful connection to their immediate community that is far less structured and formal. Access to other artists and arts groups in the community can be spontaneous and be based on mutual appreciation, mentorships and friendships. Decisions and choices made by the artists individually and by group consensus can determine the direction of their individual art making and the project. Mobility to visit other sites and locations of interest is easier with a smaller group and allows more spontaneity.

U.S.A.

LAND PROJECT – Brooklyn, New York

The L.A.N.D. project is located in Brooklyn in a building that has a small gallery area displaying art works through a window at the front of the building. The small single room intimate studio is visible through the gallery window and feels connected to the busy street life. Brooklyn has a strong multi racial community and a rich arts culture with many artists working in studios and exhibiting their artworks in the immediate vicinity.

Project director Matt Murphy has a visual arts background with art therapy training. In 2003 he was hired by the League Treatment Center to establish an art studio for people with developmental disabilities. Founded in 1953 the League Treatment Center was New York's first organization to diagnose, educate and treat children and adults with autism and severe developmental disabilities. It took 2 years to establish working philosophies, project goals, a budget and find a suitable studio/gallery premises. The studio opened in 2005 with Matt as

the sole employee working with 6 artists with disabilities. The number of artists now attending has grown to 17.

The artists with disability who elect to join L.A.N.D. studios have already displayed a major passion for making art. The artists are at the studio 5 days a week for 4.5 hours. This provides a strong context to try new art mediums and approaches. The size of the group is small enough to be intimate and have a family feel. The group works towards personal growth by processing challenging life issues in the context of the group creating art works.

The studio runs with a staff of 2 full time employees. The project director is assisted by a studio assistant. The studio assistant has a communication and welfare emphasis to promote healthy group dynamics and communication. A volunteer arts worker is also part of the staff. Artists from the community regularly facilitate workshops and encourages artists to work on their own art works in the project studio.

L.A.N.D. sees itself as a progressive arts day program that is strongly connected to its local community. It is focused on art as a modality of learning and empowerment. Artists who attend L.A.N.D. are supported in learning portfolio development, exhibition development, community involvement, artist communication and collaboration and gallery and studio practice. L.A.N.D. places a strong emphasis on “external studio experience” going to galleries, museums libraries and visiting artists individual studios. Also making art in different locations is frequent.

The L.A.N.D. project holds regular art exhibitions and vacate the working area of the studio to create exhibition space. Art sales amount to approximately 10% of their budget. They have a policy which places the prices of the art works on a parallel with contemporary professional artists, which they admit can slow sales down. They are a booth holder at the New York Outsider Art Show, with average sales in the \$20,000 region from that single event.

Michael draws trains and listens to heavy metal music on his eyepod. Michael has created a thriving market in the greeting card business and people from the local community in Brooklyn buy his hand drawn original cards .

“I tried drawing trains there for a while...didn’t sell none” Michael rolls his eyes indicating he is patiently waiting for the world to catch up and share his passion.... *“So now I try to find stuff in the news... people like that...I did real good when the Pope cam....I did a whole lot of Popes,....What metal bands you got in Australia?....What about your trains?....What you mean you don’t know much about trains.... What do you do over there?”*

U.K.

INTOART PROJECT - Clapham, London

The project is located within Studio Voltaire which is a complex of affordable art studios and a gallery space for emerging visual artists. The building was converted into studios from an old church hall and adjoining out houses. The Intoart project works in a small studio space that is partitioned off from adjoining artist studios. The space was chosen by the artists for its close connection to other working professional artists.

Ella Ritchie initiated the project in 2001. Ella completed a visual arts degree in printmaking and on leaving art school began to give arts focused work shops in the “voluntary sector”. She gave art making workshops initially to younger autistic spectrum children at different schools around London. She initiated Intoart originally as an 8 week art making project that was funded by the British Arts Council. Her inspired approach to arts education based on total inclusion and the depth of her own arts practice was a key element in the group producing a very strong body of work.

Rathbone, a South London based service provider for people with learning disabilities, approached Intoart and said there were 6 of their service users who wanted to dedicate their time to making art. Intoart began working with the group of six artists initially for short blocks of time creating art work in different environments that culminated in exhibitions. The group requested that they have a permanent home and they moved to the current Studio Voltaire location in 2007. The group of six works daily from 11am to 4.30pm. They are currently preparing bodies of work and films for an exhibition in the prestigious Whitechapel Gallery in October 2009.

Ella is the project coordinator and has an overview of the arts practice and ethical approach to inclusion of all facets of the project. Ella also sources funding through grant writing and is responsible for the project’s administration. She employs two other part time artists and hires specialist artists to work with the project. Rathbone also provides volunteers who work as support in the studio. The environment and artists of Studio Voltaire provide a lot of immediate exchange and interaction with the local arts community.

Intoart promotes equality of opportunity to people with learning disabilities by creating a space in which new audiences can celebrate the excellence of their artwork. They establish inclusive and empowering projects that recognize creative potential and support personal development. They identify the need, importance and benefit of access to skilled art provision for people with learning disabilities..

The approach to the group’s art making happens organically as a result of a dialogue between facilitators and artists. The artists decide on all facets of the project. Ella Ritchie says, “*What do you want to do ?.....I continually return too that question as the core of our project’s values....The answers from the artists determine everything we do...*”

Spoken and written words are a key element of the group dynamic. There is no structural division between speaking, writing and art making. Writing is strongly encouraged as a vital element of art making. Total inclusion works in every facet of the project. The books produced by the project about their art making process are written, edited and designed in collaboration with the artists. Also the films made by an external film maker was scripted and edited in a meaningful collaboration.

Everybody in the project has a very focused approach to their art making and they all feel proud to be artists to have an opinion to make decisions. They are also very aware of the collective creative consciousness of the group and how they are stimulated by others work and thoughts.

ACCESS TO ART PROJECT – Brighton University, Sussex, England

Alice Fox is the senior lecturer for the Access to Art project at Brighton University. She initiated and coordinates the Rocket Artist project and The Inclusive Arts Practice Degree course. Unfortunately my fellowship visit could not coincide with the university curriculum so I was not able to see any studio practice with the Rocket Artist or the context of the Inclusive Arts degree course. The information for the following notes was accessed through dialogue with Alice Fox and the project's excellent films and publications.

The Rocket Artist project was created to give artists with learning disabilities access to the highest quality tertiary level arts education. 8 artists who had been involved in art making and displayed an interest in furthering their skills through education were selected from different service providers and day centres in the Brighton area. The artists spend one day a week at the University studios. The students at the university become mentors and partners to the artists with disabilities under the supervision of specialist visual arts educators. The results have been very powerful providing a mutual inspiration for students and artists alike whilst creating a rich platform for studying education techniques. It has created a unique mutually educational environment where everyone benefits. The artists in the project have exhibited in many prestigious art galleries and their art works have become highly regarded in many contemporary art circles.

The Inclusive Arts project is a 2 year MA course that was started in 2007. It is the only course in Britain that offers this level of intimate hands on training. The first batch of graduates are out there working in existing projects and initiating new ones.

The course is aimed at artists or individuals with an arts background who are working in the arts, health, education or community sector. The part-time structure of the course is designed to support and enhance work practices and assist the development of new opportunities. The course aims to equip students with the necessary skills to initiate and manage truly inclusive arts projects with diverse and marginalised groups

The course also aims to explore key issues in the inclusive arts debate by collaborating artistically with marginalised community groups such as those with learning disabilities, or those experiencing exclusion due to economic or health reasons. The course also challenges the debate over which artists are socially and economically valued and why.

Alice Fox is the inspiration and driving force that initiated and created these exciting and dynamic projects. Alice completed a degree in visual art and, for a while, worked by herself as a painter. She started to feel isolated and needed to have more communication and collaboration in her life. She began working in the voluntary sector and found she was drawn to working mostly with people with learning disabilities. She started doing arts practice, mostly painting and drawing with a small group of people. It was very quickly evident their work was dynamic and original. She tried to get funding for arts related special projects with the group and to gain more autonomy from the service providers who she worked with. Alice found that she was unable to get money from arts funding but there was money from the educational sector if she could find an appropriate educational establishment. It was at this point that she thought *“I went to University.... Why can't these people?”*.

This coincided with The Disability Discrimination Act being passed in Britain and she started delving into the structure of visual arts degree courses at Brighton University and probing the faculty and using The Disability Discrimination Act as leverage. It took two years to write an acceptable proposal that could work using students as mentors as part of their 1 day a week extension course, which is a day allocated to non prescribed elected areas of study.

In 2005 the university agreed to the course proposal and the Rocket Artists came into being. To enable the course to function the university asked Alice to coordinate the Access to Arts project as nobody had ever performed a similar role. The project has worked because of the enthusiasm of the university students helping to convince an often reticent faculty of the value of the project..

Alice acknowledges the challenges of meaningful higher level art education to people with disability. For the education process to really work the educators had to try and provoke and shift a very prescribed and non independent attitude amongst the artists with learning difficulties. The world of supported living being for people with disability is so rigidly structured that often decision making and decisive communication is non existent. Long term goals were set and a clearer attitude to learning gradually emerged.

LARGE RURAL BASED PROJECTS

Larger scale arts projects for people with disability are seemingly very scarce but they can function very well in rural locations. Rural communities foster a much safer and supportive environment where artists with disabilities can play an important role. The often lower cost in real estate and land value can allow for expansion into more generous studio and exterior work spaces.

IRELAND

K.C.A.T. (Kilkenny Collective for Arts Talent) - Callan, Co. Kilkenny

K.C.A.T. art study centre is situated in a beautiful location next to the Kings River in Callan and overlooking the ruins of an 15th century friary. The building is a large 3 storey purpose built structure with a court yard and out house/ studios. There is a large multi purpose studio on the ground floor that is used for part time students which is also cleared to house project exhibitions. The upper floors house administrative offices, 3 full time student studio/work areas, a computer graphics area and conference area. K.C.A.T. was initiated by the Camphill Communities of Ireland organization in 1996. Camphill is a disability service that provides accommodation and employment in healthy rural environments. They have pioneered inclusion and the search for ways to fulfill the needs and dreams of people with special needs and learning disabilities.

K.C.A.T. as a new creative arts element of Camphill was provoked by the tenacious art making skills of a 24 year old George McCutcheon. Camphill supported George's special needs and employed him as a cooks assistant in the mornings and a gardener in the afternoons. Amazingly George still managed to find time to make art that was both dynamic and prolific. His body of work became so undeniable the organization realised they had to provide a studio environment and allocated time for art making . The project began through a local artist facilitating the development of seven people with a range of disabilities. For the first four years the project was housed in primitive conditions in an old sausage factory. Then following a large grant from ACCESS the site of the old sausage factory was acquired and the construction of the current K.C.A.T. began. During the two years of construction the project moved into the basement of the nearby St. Augustinian Friary.

The centre was completed and opened in 2005. The project has now broadened its scope to include people of all ages and abilities who could share a creative environment and learn from each other. The project has had constant links and shared cultural events with other innovative arts projects in Europe; Cooperations(Wiltz,Luxembourg),Creaahm(Liege, Belgium)Creaahm (Provence France) and later Gallerie Atelier Herenplaats (Rotterdam, Netherlands), Inuti(Stockholm, Sweden) La Hesse (Vielsalm, Belgium)

K.C.A.T. uses 3 coordinators who overlap and exchange roles and information. Project Coordinator, Finance Coordinator and Education Coordinator. There is also a full time archivist/curator whose focus is to record important art works and create high quality catalogues with external graphic designers. The studio is overseen by a studio manager who links artist educators to administration. Exhibitions both internal and in external galleries are coordinated from concept to exhibit by the studio manager and one other artist with as much as possible being accomplished by contributing artists. The project employs 8 full and part time artists as facilitators. They are supported by volunteers and visiting artists and mentors.

The project has a simple yet powerful goal which is to provide an environment where artists and students from different backgrounds can work together and create as equals in a lifelong learning situation. K.C.A.T. runs a full and part time course for people with and without special needs aged between 15 and 65. Every student works at his or her own level with the emphasis being on the personal development of each student. The part time course of 2 years duration is located in the large multifunction space of the building. Here students can experience many different art mediums with a variety of full time and visiting arts educators. As well as more traditional painting and drawing art mediums students can create individually or in groups using techniques for sculpture murals and digital animation. Currently the part time course has 55 students from a 60 mile radius of Callan who travel using personal, parental assisted and community transport. They offer accreditation that can give people eligibility to apply to tertiary level art education.

The full time course offers shared studio space in the top floors of the K.C.A.T. building. These artists have shown a strong element of self motivation and commitment to pursuing full time and long term art making. Currently there are 14 artists using the studios and they are supported by fulltime arts educators, individual mentors and visiting artists who assist the artists in providing conditions for professional development.

Peter worked in a factory for the last 40 years until he was made redundant last year and was offered 2 days educational funding as part of an unemployment support. He began attending K.C.A.T.'s part time arts course and has blossomed in that environment. His son Jack has autism and has attended the project for 4 years and is a full time artist.

"I worked in a glass factory for 40 years and never did any art....I was always interested yer know but I never knew what to do and I was raisin' the kids an all. I come here to the studio now for 1 year and I'm lovin' it.... tryin out all the different art materials and talking to artists. They're great and they just want to get the best out of yer. I only get the government money to come 2 days a week but I loves it so much I come three days on me own steam and pay for the petrol me self. I help out as a volunteer and get to learn at the same time...My son, Jack he has the Autism....It's funny how Jack came here and started painting and doing the art I never thought I would end up here as well yer know....I don't know what I'll do when me second part time year is over...The unemployment now is so bad it'll be hard to get work...I might see if I can go to art school"

SMALL RURAL BASED PROJECTS

In general rural based visual arts projects are attached to disability service providers and offer art making options for larger numbers of people. Small arts or education funded groups have a strong impact on their communities and offer unlimited opportunities for art making and professional development.

IRELAND

MAYFIELD ARTS CENTRE, Mayfield, County Cork

Mayfield Art Centre is located in Mayfield in Cork City, Ireland. The project is housed at the rear of the Newport Daycare Centre in a single building that comprised of one large multifunction space that is used for visual and performance arts workshops. Renovations were completed in 2008 to make the space more suitable for the projects art making needs. A small print studio and administration area complete the ground floor area. Upstairs is a small studio area for the 5 artists with special needs who are the full time component of their integrated programme.

The beautiful surrounds and gardens are the result of a project in 2002 that invited adult artists in the community to be involved in the design and construction of an ornamental and productive vegetable garden.

The project began in 2002 by providing art making opportunities that had no limits for experience or for those with special needs. The project began with specialised arts workshops that focused on different community elements and arts focus. The project has evolved to now providing accredited arts education for 30 part time students. They work on different arts elements in a syllabus that will provide credits for applying for tertiary education. These students come 3 days a week and are funded independently or by various government funding disability agencies. Funding for the Integrated Programme was made available in 2007 it allows 5 special needs artists to be working as professional artists who work on their own arts focus as well as being linked to many visiting artists and community arts projects. The project also holds diverse educational workshops by visiting artists and staff facilitators in visual and performance arts that focus on specific topics such as youth initiatives, Global education that promotes the celebration of ethnic diversity and women's equality arts projects.

The centre is overseen by the coordinator who is also a practicing professional artist. The centre employs 5 full time arts facilitators who work both with the Integrated Programme and the part time arts group. There is also a secretary/receptionist. The project could not function without the team of 8 volunteers many of whom are practicing artists. A full time intern, who has completed a visual arts degree, assists the coordinator.

The project has a philosophy that supports everyone's potential to develop personally. It also believes that self worth, a sense of purpose and community are essential for all people and that everyone has the right to develop their creativity through the language of art.

CONCLUSIONS

In every country I visited on my fellowship it was evident that visual arts are a vital and potent language for people with disability. Whether it be a 2 hour weekly session or a commitment of many hours per week to making art, it is a highly valuable process. Already some of the most dynamic contemporary artworks are being produced by people who have a disability. These artists need to be supported through a broad spectrum of approaches to education and professional development.

The different approaches to creating innovative and meaningful art making environments for people with disability all have positive elements but also have limitations to the potency of the art options provided to a broad range of individuals. Some artists with disability need only an art making environment and minimal support and technical advice to be able and to produce exceptional artworks. For others the opportunity to interact with highly skilled and insightful artist educators can be extremely valuable. The opportunities for this level of education are currently very rare and in many places non-existent. Establishing and evolving projects that can provide this level of education will be a very positive development that help to establish artists with disability in all communities as a rich vital cultural element.

Art making options that are part of a disability service in general struggle to escape the rigid structure of the organisation and the pervading culture of “disability”. They can successfully provide a degree of supported art making but often fail to understand the very special and unique quality of the art works created. They also often lack the expertise or infrastructure to nurture especially talented and focused individuals who could clearly make art making a vocation.

Large visual arts projects for people with disability enable greater numbers to have access to arts options. They provide an environment that allows the gradual emergence of creative talent of individuals. Due to the large numbers attending these projects and the small ratio of facilitators to participants it is hard to provide the artists with disability a consistent insightful and empowered arts development.

Small artist run projects that are arts or education funded with a higher ratio of highly trained arts facilitator allow a very special focus on individual development that can navigate the project in a totally inclusive way. This type of project fosters dynamic individual development and an opportunity to evolve specialised education techniques that can be very valuable when shared with arts educators and coordinators. It can also provide a platform through sophisticated mentoring systems that allows people with disability inclusion in education at a tertiary level.

In America artworks by people with disability, which have been labeled “Outsider Art” already have a high level of recognition. Acquisitions of these art works by curators of major galleries and high profile exhibitions of individuals and groups of artists in private galleries have helped to raise the value of the artworks and promote a context that encourages professional development. The higher profile of artworks of by people with disability in America has mostly been the result of the level of enterprise and

entrepreneurial spirit needed in the context where money raised from sales of art works is vital to project sustainability.

RECCOMENDATIONS

To expand and refine art making opportunities and promote and support individual artists with disability in Australia it is necessary to:

- Lobby for more flexible guidelines from funding agencies so that a non segregated approach to education can be developed for a full spectrum of people with and without disability to share art making environments.
- Source funding to bring knowledge to Australia from overseas based practitioners of sophisticated inclusive arts education to be shared with coordinators and facilitators at conferences and workshops.
- Develop degree level courses providing formal training in inclusive arts to train arts educators, facilitators and coordinators in sensitive inclusive education and best practice.
- Develop specialized courses and sophisticated mentorships that give artists with disability access to the highest tertiary level education.
- Develop small arts and education funded projects that are facilitated by experience arts educators who can develop a totally inclusive approach to art making and professional development and be fully integrated into their communities.
- Develop art studio/galleries in all of the capital cities of every state in Australia. These specialized arts spaces can provide inclusive arts education, professional development and gallery space to urban and rural based artists with disability.
- To promote the importance of artworks by people with disability in contemporary art by holding a major comprehensive exhibition at a high profile state gallery in Australia.