

Tees Valley Arts can work with you to plan and set up a programme of creative activities, find a suitable artist, help to frame a budget and secure funding, and then manage the project, both artistically and administratively. If you have an idea you would like to discuss, please contact us:



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Autumn Newsletter 2007





A note from the Director

August crept up on me unawares. Suddenly I noticed the nights drawing in and after six weeks of rain I felt a pang of disappointment. Unfulfilled plans; a summer almost lost? Perhaps not... if all I hear about an imminent Indian summer is right - and being an eternal optimist, I've been out and bought some new summer clothes in preparation.

Perhaps being female means that it is compulsory to spend half an hour extra every morning trying to decide what to wear. To me, it has always been a complicated business. A cursory look in the diary to see who I'm going to see and where I'm going to see them, a look out the window at the weather, and most importantly; what's actually been ironed! But like it or not, what we wear is an important aspect of how we are perceived by others and I have learned that getting it wrong might put me on the back foot. I guess the same thing applies to our working environments, and the refurbishment of our new HQ is for that very reason; because it's a 'what you see is what you get' mentality.

But what does it all actually achieve other than surface gloss? I guess our smart clothes and our flash offices instil a certain professional confidence that is based on an ability to conform to a certain social norm. However, norms can be meaningless if they exist without substance.

I recently recounted a tale told to me by a friend who, whilst stood at the school gate was met by her five year old son and his friend. The five year old excitedly told my friend that his dad had become a Fireman. He then asked my friend what she did as a job. My friend is a strategy consultant. She tried to answer the small boy by explaining that she went to meetings and talked to lots of people about making plans. The five year old had evidently seemed unimpressed. I guess there are a lot of us who make our living by putting on the right sort of clothes and have meetings about making plans. It may all seem rather empty when compared to what a Fireman does. But as a colleague said to me when I had recounted this tale; "it's what comes out of the meetings that matters". That's the tricky bit.

So meeting protocols continue and the great and the good sit down and strategise.

On the face of it, the amount of hot air we 'strategic thinkers' produce could happily mobilise a balloon race. But in the Tees Valley it seems to be mobilising a lot more than that...

Day after day I sit in meetings talking about the most exciting initiatives. Initiatives that will support the training of artists, create new cultural amenities, launch vibrant events that will draw in the crowds and much, much more. And I know they are exciting because I know they will happen; because I know the drive and the passion of the people behind them. I have come to the conclusion that it's time to say; move over Newcastle, Gateshead... it's the Tees Valley that's the happening place. Cliché or not, I believe it and I also believe that all the talk has resulted in some real and lasting partnerships that have taken time and perseverance to build. Time because partners need to learn about each other and find common ground. Perseverance because it isn't always easy to please everyone all of the time (or very often even some of the time). But however slow the process has been, how could you build things better in order to make them last?

I am an eternal optimist - I've found it to be a good survival mechanism. But optimist or not the proof of the pudding is all around you; just take a look at the last couple of editions of the Journal Culture magazine and you will see everything from Tees Valley Music Alliance to MIMA to WinterFest (now re-branded as WorldFest) and there is much, much more (having enjoyed the delights of SIRF in August) coming in ever increasing and far reaching arenas.

Tees Valley is now firmly on the map. So next time you don't know what to wear for that all important meeting - go buy something new... it will be well worth it!

TVA will hold its 25th Birthday Party on November 6th 2007 - look out for your VIP invite in the post (smart but casual!).

Rosi Lister
Executive Director

We're bracing ourselves for The Big Move...

September will see TVA packing up and saying farewell to penthouse views and amazing sunsets. We have seen some changes on the Middlesbrough skyline from our lofty perch, as one of our previous newsletter editions described. However a new era for TVA commences with a move into purpose designed, shiny and modern accommodation on the ground floor of Melrose House (so we won't have to pay the removers any mileage!). Our expanded premises will be made up of open office space (the first time TVA has ever had matching desks!!!) with a number of 'open access' workstations, a casual area for informal gatherings (in other words more sofas...) two training/seminar rooms with wireless laptops, a fully networked lecture theatre and what we hope will become an 'Open Art Space'. We hope our new HQ will become home to many new and exciting cultural initiatives, and that you will all feel welcome popping in to see us. You will be able to use our training rooms via a pre-booking arrangement and details of this will be made available on our new website (to be launched October) along with a range of other information and advice including training opportunities for artists as they arise.

We will be having an official TVA HQ opening - or 'happening' on the 6th November - watch out for your invite in the post!

TVA Away Day

Back in June the TVA team got together with the TVA board of directors and went for a day of fun and games down by the riverside in Stockton. Kath Dowson of Inspirational Choices facilitated the day which began with Rowena Sommerville teaching us all how to construct a 'Haiku'... a seventeen syllable Japanese poem... that defined the essential character of TVA as an organisation. After some subsequent and very interesting debate ably chaired by Kath about company governance structures and the developing future for TVA we were treated to some light relief that took the form of a brief drumming workshop... led by our very own Tim Coyte - excellent stuff!

On a more serious note, the day was a very worthwhile exercise that brought our directors closer together with our staff team in a very conducive atmosphere. The venue; Castlegate Water Sports Centre in Stockton was a great choice - the sun shone (the rain poured) and the thunder clapped! But we were very comfortable and well looked after throughout. All in all a very positive experience...

Community Programme



I can't believe three months have passed since the last newsletter... And in another three months we will be on the move and issuing special invitations to the bonfire of the sanities... watch this space.

Anyway - Community Programme activities have included the Parachute project - creative activities with young asylum seekers and refugees and their families funded by the Paul Hamlyn Foundation; a range of arts taster workshops for the Boro Drugs Forum funded through Middlesbrough Learning Shop; overseeing the selection of an artist to design some fabricated steel-works for the railings in a new housing development; swimming through the sea of initials and initiatives - E2E, E2V, LSC, pre E2E, perm any three, core skills, life skills, wider skills, key skills, Catskills (my mistake) - that represents the attempt to engage disengaged young people and get them back to learning and/or work; and also the sea of (not altogether) tranquillity that is the region's arts organisations, centres of learning and strategic cultural bodies all trying to work out the best ways of addressing the skills deficit in the creative sector - whether it's artists who need tailored support and guidance about developing business awareness, artists and project co-ordinators who need professional development to be able to work well, safely and sensitively in a variety of challenging educational and community sectors, and/ or for all of us engaged in the continuing struggle as freelancers and voluntary sector agencies to be able to secure sustainable funding.....aaargh!



We've also been working with Hartlepool Council to redesign their neighbourhood maps, and preparing for work on the new-build Langbaugh hospital in Redcar.

Regarding young people - there will be another Gallery TS1, last two weeks of August - note those dates and visit to stock up early for Christmas (sorry to mention it, but business is business).

On a more personal note - I have successfully completed my MA in Creative Writing, and got a Distinction, which was especially gratifying as I was the only one of my cohort who didn't consider/ work for/ anticipate a Distinction, and was the only one who got one: and I'm also busy preparing for a world tour. Henwen, my band, will be touring with Ian McMillan, Bard of Barnsley, in late October, and while we aren't actually travelling the world, we do go as far south as Norwich, so that's pretty global. Catch us at the Arc on Friday October 19th!

I also had the pleasure of attending the wedding celebration for the marriage of one of the refugee musicians that we have regularly worked with, and his bride, a local young woman. They made such a handsome couple, they really demonstrate that love can overcome all boundaries, and yes, it does make me cry. We wish them every happiness and a long, peaceful life together.

Rowena Sommerville
Community Programme Manager

Art sans Frontieres

Family groups from Newport, Abingdon and Breckon Hill Primary Schools, Middlesbrough have recently taken part in the "Arts sans Frontieres" Project. Families worked with artist Adrian Moule and linguist Amandine Delestre exploring French language and culture through art workshops.

This innovative and exciting project involved children working with parents to create art, inspired by a range of French artists. Whilst creating surreal and impressionistic art, family groups learnt French vocabulary to describe the colours, textures, shapes and objects depicted in their paintings.

Families thoroughly enjoyed this project and have expressed an interest in further activities. Families have not only learnt about French culture; they have enjoyed quality time together in the process.



Pupils from Grangetown Primary School have created stunning batik banners with artist Naina Malde. The banners explore a range of themes:

One banner celebrates difference by depicting themes of tolerance and unity with a series of different faces and faiths. This banner is a development of the "Heartstone" initiative which encourages children to explore issues of diversity and promotes understanding.

A second banner paints a rich and vibrant rainforest scene and the third banner explores the theme of "Grangetown" incorporating the school motto into strong motifs that represent The River Tees and local industry.

Sacred Heart Sculpture Project

A dragon has taken up residence at a Middlesbrough School. The huge sculpture was the idea of youngsters at Sacred Heart Primary School. Twelve pupils aged from seven to to 11 worked with their art teacher, Sue Tatterton, and artist in residence, Ste Iredale, to design and produce a piece of artwork for their playground. The dragon was named Eragon, from the story of a boy named Eragon who befriended a dragon called Saphira.

The children were asked to come up with ideas for a unique and stimulating structure for their playground. After much discussion about environmental

themes they decided on the climbing and play structure in the form of a dragon that would represent a guardian of nature.

Inspiration for the sculpture also came from artwork produced at the school by talented ex-pupil, Diakola Mvemba, who was living in Middlesbrough as part of a family of refugees. He has since returned to the Congo.

The children created sketch books, drawings, designs, plans, clay models and wood engravings and Ste used the children's ideas in creating the sculpture. In Albert Park the youngsters watched Ste use chainsaws to carve the dragon sculpture.

Sue Tatterton said "This was a challenging project for our children but they loved every minute of it and are immensely proud of the end result! They worked closely with Ste to develop their ideas and learned a range of new practical skills, but also learned how to approach and solve problems. The children now see something they have ownership of and is valued by other people - a major boost for their self-esteem and confidence."

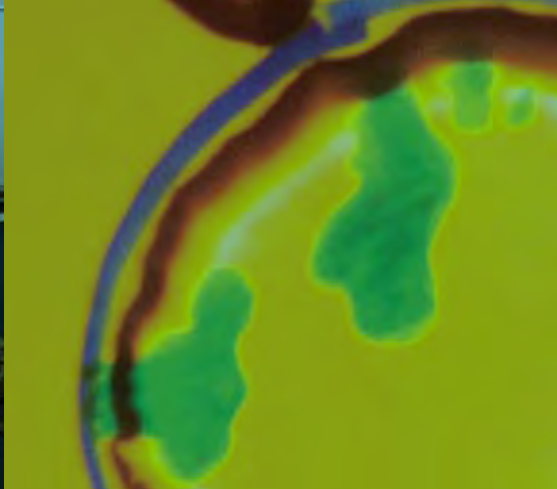
The project was developed by Tees Valley Arts and supported by Middlesbrough Council Extended Schools.



Beverley School

A drama project at Beverley school, Middlesbrough has proved to be particularly beneficial for a young pupil who is an 'elective mute', and who had previously only occasionally spoken in a whisper. The drama work has helped him gain in confidence so much that he now speaks regularly during the project; in fact he is so vocal that he has to be told to let other people have a say! The school are delighted with this development and are hoping that this will encourage him to speak more openly in school.





Energise is part of Tees Valley Arts' EASI (Education through the arts in science and industry) programme - exiting and innovative projects which push the boundaries of science and arts collaboration.

Tees Valley Arts' Education Officer, Tim Coyte commented "These projects address a national need - that there are not enough people going into the science industry. The EASI programme tackles this by engaging students in science through stimulating, enjoyable and meaningful arts projects."



Energise

The Energise Project

Gifted and Talented students from Our Lady & St. Bede School, Stockton, and Northfield and St. Michaels Secondary Schools, Billingham have taken part in the exiting and innovative Energise Project.

The project has been developed by NEPIC (North East Process Industry Cluster) and Tees Valley Arts (TVA) with support from Stockton Borough Council's Secondary Enrichment Consultant, Stella Cutland.



Energise has enabled Gifted and Talented pupils and delegate teachers to work with artists Andy Comley and Bob Beagrie and industry partners to explore the Fuels of the Future agenda through the arts. This process has encouraged pupils and teachers to discover their own inspiration and creativity to gain a deeper understanding of the environmental issues inherent in the Tees Valley and the wider world. The project has featured site visits with industry partners looking at biofuels and the hydrogen fuel cell giving students an insight into renewable energy solutions that are being developed by the science industry.

The project culminated in an exhibition of the pupil's sculptures and a workbook created by pupils as a peer-teaching resource as well as readings of poetry and creative writing created during the project at Preston Hall Museum. The workbook will be distributed to secondary schools across the North East region.

Over the past few months, artists and writers have been busy as bees with the Green Hearts project, a partnership initiative between Tees Valley Arts, Tees Valley Wildlife Trust and Tees Forest. Five primary schools have worked with artists to explore sites that paint a varied picture of the Tees Valley landscape offering a wealth of industrial and natural inspiration for artists and children to draw from.

The sites include Greenabella Marsh in Hartlepool, Bowesfield Nature Reserve in Stockton on Tees, Margrove Heritage Centre in Redcar and Cleveland and nearby countryside, Skerningham Woods in Darlington and Three Becks in Middlesbrough.

Green Hearts

The artists involved have had a lot of experience working in wild places, including Antarctica and Finland.

"This is a fantastic project", said composer Craig Vear who has been working on the project. "It provides great opportunities to work with young people, teachers and environmental organisations creating a lasting legacy."

"We have enhanced the relationship students have with their local environment" says visual artist Andy Broderick. "Through positive experiences the project will hopefully generate long term interest in learning about and preserving the environment."

Tees Valley Arts Heritage and Environmental Officer, Rachel Clarke said "It has been a busy few months with temporary art work, sound recordings, poetry and stories produced by the artists and students installed at the sites. The work produced will also create leaflets for future visitors to the sites and a manual for schools to creatively learn about their local environments".

Green Hearts has been supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund.