

Serpentine Galleries Youth Forum World Without Walls Programme Interim Report

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Introduction

This is the second report in the series reporting on research and evaluation of Serpentine Galleries' 'World Without Walls' (WWW) programme. In this report we will be focusing on 'Youth Forum' (YF), a project with 15 young people, Year 10 (14-15 years-old) students, attending Westminster Academy. Although the focus of this report is on the Youth Forum project, it will be set within a frame of the wider World Without Walls programme in the last section of this report.

As in the previous report, the standpoint and perspective will be one that reflects on positive and constructive outcomes. We are looking at ways that the Serpentine Galleries' World Without Walls programme of community-based arts projects enhances and augments experience – in broad terms, it is to look for evidence of learning and development. The programme is designed to work with children and young people, so an evaluation of participants' experiences clearly is paramount. At the same time, our research is revealing benefits both for the Galleries and for the artists involved, that learning is shared and particular to each group of participants

Youth Forum



Youth Forum Overview

The Youth Forum has been running over years in partnership with Westminster Academy. During the course of Year 10, the Academy designates two slots as 'work experience' fortnights – broadly in the middle of the Autumn term and the other toward the end of the Spring term – and Youth Forum is scheduled to take place in these two slots. For some students, enrolment on the programme is their choice – an elective – while others are nominated by the school. Selection for the project is connected with ways in which the young people are integrated into the life of the school and the wider community. School staff, students and education curators come to an agreement that some of the young people may benefit from Youth Forum rather than being given a more 'traditional' work placement, e.g. in a shop, office or workshop.

The table below gives a synoptic overview of activities involving the young people in the Youth Forum project. It covers only the period from September 2016 to February 2017 when the research team have been focusing on Youth Forum, set within the wider context of the World Without Walls programme. Its content is taken from talking with the education team, meeting the artist and observing the project.

The aim is to give a sense of the scheme of the project as a holistic process, not simply a time line, but to give some insight, albeit it brief, into the thinking and planning that has gone into the project. At the same time, it is neither comprehensive nor exhaustive – it is clear that much work goes on (before, during and after the project) that is represented here.

When	What and where	Who	How and why
Yearlong	Contacts with the school, Westminster Academy	Education curators School – work experience coordinator Leadership team	Coordinating practical arrangements for project Consulting on and developing project aims and content through dialogue Sustaining relationships with staff and students Building trust
Yearlong More intensively in Spring / Summer	Refining strategy/policy document to share with artists – producing policy document, including ‘Philosophy’, ‘Practices’ and a short bibliography. Commissioning artists Consulting with colleagues Researching the field Identifying artists Contacting artists Meeting artists Talking to research and evaluation team	Education curators Artists	Artist’s fit with ethos, aims and aspirations for the content Sharing project aims, negotiating forms and content Fine tuning project scheme
Early autumn	Confirming final arrangements Meeting with commissioned artists Interviewing and selecting students at Westminster Academy	Education curators School liaison Artists 15 Young people	Final adjustments
31 October – 11 November 2016	Youth Forum project Cockpit Theatre Group and individual work Discussion Mediation and negotiation Keeping journals/diaries Compiling ‘Lexicon of Labour’ an A-Z Collaging Drama vignettes – planning, rehearsing performing Day visit to Tate Modern (for research) Filming drama vignettes Lighting Planning the book – form, content, layout Photographing people in local area Producing GIFs from images of labour taken by young people (using GIF-maker) Celebratory lunch (in local Lebanese Restaurant) Reflecting, reviewing, evaluating	Young people Artists Education Curators Researcher Cockpit staff Film maker Book maker Academy Principal	Arts practices - guiding and instructing Providing materials and resources Crafting Developing group identity Supporting individuals Sharing ethos of project Discussing expectations Coordinating between young people, artists and site staff etc. (Education Curators) Mediating – aims of project, individuals and group

Youth Forum – emerging results

In this section, findings are arranged under headings that reflect analytical and interpretative categories emerging from the research and evaluation process thus far, holding in mind that there is more to come. The categories have emerged from an iterative review of the evidence collected – mostly in the form of field notes and some images. Field notes are taken from talking with Education Curators, artists and the young people and from three days' observation when the process of Youth Forum was sampled – days that were selected in liaison with the Education Curators.

There are two caveats that occur to the process of categorisation – first, that these categories overlap and interrelate. Second, that what is represented here is an early and interim attempt at categorisation and the Youth Forum continues later this year, so it is quite possible that, as research continues, categories will be subject to amendment and change.

Young people and art-making

arts-based activities; working with and as artists; media and modalities; craft skills; process and/or product; artistic citizenship; complementary to art in and for schools

Most obvious is that the young people were engaged in arts-based activities, working with artists, within artistic frameworks and toward artistic objectives and outcomes. The project provoked critical ways of thinking about and responding to the world of work, its relationships and structures, employing different modes and media of the arts that enable the young people to select, shape and form ideas, with the sense of communicating perceptions, ideas and attitudes to others in creative ways. Talking to some of the young people who had elected to come on the project rather than do more traditional work placements, it was apparent that they like doing arts-based work and that, especially under the constraints of curriculum approaching GCSEs, they had reduced access to arts on the curriculum.

In this project, arts work included making collages, taking words and images from magazines and from the internet. Meeting in a circle in the morning, Barby, who described herself as a 'print artist', told the group that they had 'decided to keep within the tight discipline of collage'. These images would feed ultimately feed into the compilation and construction of a 'Lexicon of Labour', an A-Z of labour, to be published in a book form within the year.

Working towards a 'real' product, one made and designed through negotiation among participants and aimed at audiences within and beyond the school, is clearly important both to the young people, the artists and the Galleries. On the last day of the first fortnight, choosing a title and doing some initial planning for layout and production, anticipating production and distribution of their lexicon, the youngsters were clearly excited and boosted.

Towards the end of the first week and into the second, they worked together on short scenes depicting aspects of workplace situations. The film-maker, Anna, was skilled at working with the young people, introducing the disciplines and techniques of filming, for example, in terms of angles and shots, allowing those interested to do some filming. On the first Friday, they made a visit to Tate Modern, looking at various artworks, observing the kinds of work involved in the gallery and talking with Tate's curators and workers. Later that week, on the last day of this fortnight, they ventured out into the market street nearby, taking digital images of people at work which they brought back to make animated GIF-files with three of the images – it was rapid, improvised, pleasurable and impressive work that clearly engaged the young people.

Overall, based on their work and their dialogue with artists, curators and with Anton, that over the fortnight they developed a sense that they have to some extent entered a community of artistic practice. It is, what Lave and Wenger, originators of the concept of communities of practice, refer to as 'legitimate peripheral participation' (Lave and Wenger, 1991). From another angle, participation in an arts community developing what Eliot Eisner (Eisner, 2005) refers to as 'connoisseurship' in the arts – that is, developing senses of appreciation and discernment.

Participants in learning

learning processes; funds of knowledge; developing relationships; voicing oneself – representation; development of personhood and individuality in a social setting; expanding horizons of possibility; bordering on adulthood

The perception of participation in learning as compared to being receivers of knowledge(s) imparted by teachers in school was apparent as the project unfolded. It is of course a generalisation, not to caricature teaching and learning in school as being predicated on transmission models, but the changes and constraints in curriculum policy have exacerbated a tendency towards teacher-centred instructional models in recent times. As in any collective project involving a range of different participants, however, there developed some wrinkles and ambiguities in roles and relationships, which we shall return to below.

In this project, young people were encouraged to draw on their own experiences, resources of knowledge and skill to develop ideas, to plan, to make and to show and share artefacts they had made. If the 'discipline of form' provided a framework and required the patient development of craft skills, it also allowed the young people to draw substantially on, and to contribute to, their 'funds of knowledge' (Moll, 1990).

Observation, discussion with the young people, Education Curators and the commissioned artists gave clear evidence that art-making activity was greatly valued by the young people. Levels of concentration (or distraction from some) were indicators of levels of engagement and involvement in the project. Overall, a palpable sense of purpose and progress was evident in the various

studio spaces at the Cockpit when the young people were making things. They garnered opinions from others, negotiated and reflected.

The young people generally felt that they permitted to give voice to their ideas, opinions and concerns. However, towards the end of the first stage of this project, some of the young people were eloquent and forthright in a lengthy discussion of some issues that emerged about the way that the group was working. The young were able to maintain a level and balanced approach, presenting opinions and perceptions, and engaging in respectful and mature but nonetheless forthright discourse with adults.

Discussion centred on complex issues around the respective roles of the young people, the artists and education curators and the relationships between them. In short, discussion was on the openness of discussion on the planning and progress of the project's work, issues of mutual respect, namely whether everyone felt there were sufficient opportunities to voice their ideas and opinions and contribute to the direction of work, and whether the role and responsibilities of artists should be like that of teachers.

The aspiration to open spaces for more democratic forms of participation, of providing opportunities for young people to lead the process and thus to develop a sense identity and autonomy at points of transition – in this case, between adolescence and adult, and schooling and work – is an ethos of approach deeply held by Education Curators, Alex Thorp and Ben Messih. In a document outlining the 'Youth Forum Approach', shared with the artists and Anton, they clearly set out a philosophy and approach to practice with young people that range over sharing expectations, entering dialogue, accepting disagreement and so forth. The artists espoused a similar commitment to might assist and enable young people to develop a confident sense of identity.

The content and tenor of discussion reflecting back on the expectations and the process and qualities of collective making, raised critical questions for reflection, particularly for the artists, on developing relationships within projects. In discussion with the Education Curators, there are also apparent lessons to be learned that bear on commissioning processes.

Nonetheless, it was clear in this project, as with others in the World Without Walls programme, that participation in learning processes was not confined to the young people. Ongoing discussion between Education Curators, commissioned artists and the young people gave real evidence of learning for all participants, with clear potential for learning to contribute to future development, including (but not exhaustively): the ways of relating to and working (and not-working) with young people; the variety, nature and amount of materials and activities; approaches to instruction, providing models and options; degrees of openness and constraint and so forth. Some of these issues will be discussed in more detail later on. For example, there is some possibility of documenting the curatorial offer to, and ongoing interactions with, the commissioned artists; this would be of interest to other learning curators in the UK and beyond.

Arts, communities and places

the value of community-based arts projects; places, spaces and possibilities; extending spaces beyond galleries; community engagement and galleries' civic responsibilities; spaces for participation and engagement in arts



The venue for the project – The Cockpit Theatre – clearly affected the ways in which the project worked. Places and spaces always have their effects on social relations and socially organised activity. The strong connotations attached to institutional spaces such as school, their restraints and constraints, were less easily discernible for the young people. Most of the young people came from high density housing around the Edgware and Harrow roads and some rarely travelled outside the area, as the excitement and consternation caused when suggesting they make their own way to Tate Modern on the first Friday revealed.

The choice of venue – neither a school, nor a gallery, but clearly a space for workshopping the arts and doing art-making (with a tradition stretching back 50 years) – signalled a range of things about the project to the young people. Two spaces were used – a dance studio upstairs and the black-box studio theatre on the ground floor, both evocative spaces that helped to concentrate a certain sort of attention in the young people. At the same time, it afforded different ways for the young people and adults to relate to one to another.



The evidence of place-based aspects of Youth Forum and other projects under the World Without Walls programme are interestingly suggestive of ways in which galleries and their relationship to various communities of interest (or uninterest) might be thought about. Gallery-sponsored community-based arts projects extends the space of the gallery beyond its walls, takes it

out of specific locations and allows permeability to member of communities that might otherwise associate themselves with galleries or consider visiting them. To engage young people in projects beyond the walls of the gallery is both to extend civic engagement and, perhaps, signals a gallery's greater accessibility. This is something that we will explore further as the programme proceeds.

Processes and products

trajectories; continuities; sustainability; development; outcomes

Issues of continuity, sustainability and development of project, are a matter of concern of SG's education team and an issue that has arisen in discussion with them and through observation of the project. There will be another iteration of the project in late March and early April, in which it is hoped that artists and Education Curators will maintain continuity with many of the young people who participated in the first part of the project in the autumn term. Negotiating projects with schools, as noted above, will inevitably be subject to constraints imposed by school calendars and timetables. Maintaining trajectories, through community-based arts practices and projects, that contribute sustainably to the development of children and young people is challenging and requires creative solutions. It is an issue that will be returned to in subsequent reports.

Meanwhile, the project will continue its development in March and April 2017. The young people are leading on arranging a day of performances and workshops for their peers on 20 April 2017, together with the artists and Education Curators and planning for this will begin in the second phase of the project. This promises to be an event that celebrates the achievements of the project, presents some performance work, exhibits some of the art work done, and launches their bespoke publication, the *Lexicon of Labour*. The question of the respective value in the processes, outcomes and products continues between the young participants, Education Curators, artists and researchers.

Youth Forum in context: the World Without Walls programme

Our research into World Without Walls has followed a trajectory of development from looking at Changing Play with young children under the age of five, moving then to inquiring into Moving Up with children aged 11 and, finally, to Youth Forum with young people. In each project, children and young people are at, or are approaching points of transitions, or rites of passage. It is a marker of any rite of passage that it involves the individual and social bodies and minds of participants. Another facet is that rites of passage, set at moments of transition, are likely to have a celebratory function, that, in facing the uncertainties of or anxieties attached to change, they may to some extent be wrapped in pleasurable, or even joyful activity that might ease moves from one place, or one phase to another. Such moments of celebration have been seen in Changing Play and Moving Up and, in what follows, we hope to highlight some moments of pleasure in the Youth Forum project, affective moments that contribute to the positive and constructive aspects of the project.



It has become clearer over the course of observing and researching into three projects (YF being the third in the sequence of research) under the WWW umbrella that there is coherence in the strategies, aims and ethos underlying all three projects.

Serpentine Galleries' Education Curators have identified four themes that run through each project – in many respects, they go beyond themes and set out aspirations that run through and drive each of the projects to a greater or lesser extent:

- Migrations and movements
- Rights to the city
- Children's right to play
- Rethinking schooling

Aims, of course, are statements of intent which, by their nature, are abstract – how they are realised, how aims are materialised in practice, how they inform processes and outcomes might be more difficult to track. Over the course of the year researching into the WWW programme, it has become possible for us to trace the ways in which the aims have become evident in various aspects of the programme. It is worth sketching out, at this introductory stage in framing the specificities of the Youth Forum programme, some of the ways in which the aims are threaded into the programmes and serve as key motive forces as projects unfold.

movements and migrations

Many of the children and young people are themselves migrants or are the children of migrants. Economically, they are clearly not wealthy: culturally, they are rich. The education curators' movement out of the gallery, commissioning artists to work with partners in community-based arts projects is significant, recognising the creative potential of children and young people living together, learning, working and developing in these mixed communities. The movements and migrations can therefore be framed not just in terms of geographical movements, but also in the various ways that the arts mediate the movement and exchange of ideas, feelings and aspirations.

rights to the city

The location of each of the projects in the programme and the recruitment of participants is significant. The projects are designed for children and young people living in and around the culturally and linguistically diverse, densely populated areas to the north of the wide and verdant spaces of Hyde Park and Kensington Gardens that surround Serpentine Galleries. Despite the fact that participants have family roots across the globe, once domiciled in north Westminster, most of the children and young people tend not to travel far out of their localities – in Youth Forum for example, a day trip to Tate Modern as part of the project caused some excitement and a certain amount of anxiety among the youngsters. Working in their communities through WWW's arts-based projects signals to children and young people that they are creative and productive, that they can augment the urban life and, ultimately, through a sense of their productivity they can develop a sense of personhood and citizenship.

children's right to play

The first of our Interim Reports in September 2016 outlined the dimensions of the Changing Play project at the Portman Children's Centre explicitly addresses the aim of extending and augmenting children's right to play, as expressed in the Article 31 of the UN's Convention on the Rights of the Child (UN, 1989, p. 31, www.unesco.org/education/pdf/CHILD_E.PDF, last accessed 23 February 2017). The right to play has implications for those that work with children and needs to be supported and extended through the work of children's institutions, such as the Portman Centre, involving staff working with young children, parents and the community.

We observed in our earlier report how the commissioned artist Albert Potrony's project, providing children with various materials to play with, augmented the range and scope of children's imaginative and creative play. The project also clearly contributed to the professional development of the artist, the centre's staff and education curators and engaged with parents through ongoing reflective dialogue. Such discourse led to a more expansive awareness of children's creative capacities and pointed up the complex articulation between physical play, language, literacy conceptual and affective development (Vygotsky, 1987, Vygotsky, 1994).

The right to play does not only pertain to young children, however. Changes over the past two decades in educational policy in terms of curriculum, pedagogy and assessment and in the structures of schooling can be seen to have squeezed opportunities for creative playfulness for children and young people across the age range. In the Serpentine Galleries' Moving Up project, the link teacher at Gateway spoke about how much the children enjoyed drama, how it was good for the social health of the group and contributed to language and literacy development, particularly for children whose home language was not English. Curriculum policy and testing had meant that the school was able to allow less time for arts activities and she welcomed the opportunity afforded by Moving Up project to enjoy playing and learning under less constrained circumstances.

Youth Forum is designed as a project that fits within the tight slot of a 'work experience' in the increasing constrained environment of secondary schooling. It, too, is seen by different interested parties to provide teenagers with the opportunity to engage in creative and playful activities.

rethinking schooling

The theme of 'rethinking schooling' is a strand that evidently runs through points made in thinking briefly about the aims in the above sections. For each of WWW programme's projects, points of contact with the children and young people are made through educational institutions – the Portman Children's Centre for under-5s in Changing Play, Gateway Academy for children involved in Moving Up and Westminster Academy for the young people working on Youth Forum. Centres and schools involved in the programme are interested in enrolling the children and young people in their care to augment their learning experiences and, ultimately, to enhance the life of the schools. Despite the tightness of mandatory requirements, people in these institutions are keen to find gaps and possibilities. Whatever their level of involvement, staff appear to learn things about the young people in their care and develop insights into the possibilities of working in arts and cultural activity.

The role of education curators in making contacts and engaging in dialogue with staff as well as the children and young people is key in developing and sustaining the relationships pivotal in the success of the projects.

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