

Research Proposal OSOP (Open Spaces Open Places) and g39 –WARP

OSOP proposed a collaboration with g39 to explore new and existing models for delivering and funding artist professional development (APD) and to share this information with the apd-network member organisations and stakeholders. The main intention of this research was to inform OSOP with a strong knowledge of existing APD models in order to help them shape a proposed programme of APD in Northampton.

Both OSOP and g39 undertook their own research into the APD services of different member organisations, the history of ADP network and shared their findings.

The information gathered during the research period by each of the organisations is presented below in report form.

Open Spaces Open Places **Research into Artist Professional Development in England and Wales**

In September 2009 Open Spaces Open Places (OSOP) and g39/WARP received a bursary from the APD-Network. The money was given to fund research into new and existing models for delivering Artists' Professional Development (APD), defined as

'formal training such as short courses and qualifications, and informal elements such as mentoring and peer support.' (Creative & Cultural Skills, *'The Visual Arts Blueprint'* 2009; p.34)

We were asked to share this information with relevant organisations and stakeholders, particularly those belonging to the APD-Network.

OSOP is an organisation based in Northampton that has commissioned temporary new art projects in the town since 1999. In August 2009 OSOP introduced the REACH programme of APD in Northamptonshire. The programme was introduced in response to a perceived need to raise the level of ambition and confidence of regional artists.

With REACH, participants met with artists and curators from across the UK to discuss opportunities to develop their own practice with a particular focus on the public realm. Three artists received a small bursary and one-to-one support from a curator to support their further development. Encouraged by the extremely positive feedback received for REACH, OSOP plans to develop a further programme for regional artists.

Through the APD-Network bursary scheme OSOP chose to work with g39 in Cardiff. g39 runs WARP (Welsh Artist Resource Programme), an established and successful programme of APD. OSOP plans to use g39/WARP as a model of good practice for the delivery of APD.

The collaboration with OSOP has allowed g39/WARP to research the role it has played in the continued professional development of Artists in Wales and how it might continue to deliver this post Esmée Fairbairn funding whilst allowing OSOP the opportunity to fully develop their APD programme through collaboration with WARP. Both organisations plan to use the collaborative opportunity to explore various existing and potential models for delivering and funding APD. Drawing on already established links and forging new ones with other APD agencies the groups

will work together to contribute to a body of research on methods of APD programmes and share their findings online.

The project began in November with an exchange of information via email and conversation between representatives from OSOP and g39. Both organisations went on to research other models of delivery and funding. This initial research was followed in early 2010 by visits to Cardiff and to other organisations to observe and contribute to APD in practice.

On April 14th 2010 representatives from OSOP and WARP met to share their findings and proposals for future developments. This report was produced following this final meeting.

In addition to the benefits to the two organisations this research is designed to add to critical debate at a time when this field of activity has the potential to become even more significant and beneficial for artists. Arts Council England have stated in their current consultation documents that:

'We want to support the continuing professionalisation of the visual arts sector, building the workforce's transferable skills to increase opportunities for movement between the visual arts and other sectors. We want to see greater collaboration between visual arts organisations on training, peer-exchange and mentoring networks' (ACE, Consultation Paper Appendix: '*Visual Arts: achievements, challenges and opportunities*' 2009, p.3)

www.osop.org

Models of Artistic Professional Development

The Wales Artist Resource Programme (WARP) is

"an artist led professional development resource that enables Welsh and Wales-based artists to receive mentoring, training and advice from arts professionals"

(www.g39.org/cgi-bin/website.cgi?place=resource , accessed March 2010)

It is part funded by the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation and the Arts Council in Wales.

The programme delivers a number of different schemes including

- Peer-to-peer sessions
- a Group Mentoring Service
- a resource area
- talks and events

The peer-to-peer sessions are offered to all visual art practitioners regardless of their previous training or academic level. Participants must first submit an application detailing their practice and what support they are looking for. WARP mentors research appropriate resources and applicants are then advised on how to develop their practice in a 30 minute session with follow-up advice delivered shortly afterwards. These meetings are held regularly at the g39 gallery and at other venues across Wales by appointment.



Members of WARP and Spike Associates visit Eastside Projects (photo Sean Edwards, g39)

The group mentoring service supports selected artist-led groups to devise and initiate a new project. g39 mentors provide a general induction to the administration and planning connected with setting up a cultural project, and also offer specific guidance throughout. Three projects are mentored each year and are selected by merit through an application process.

The g39 gallery hosts a WARP resource area where artists can drop in to access journals, books, the internet and useful software on a dedicated computer.

The WARP programme has proved a much needed resource for artists in Wales and has served to raise ambition and confidence. It provides a robust model for OSOP's ambitions for the REACH programme.

Artquest

Artquest was launched in 2001 as a project of the visual arts department of the London Office of Arts Council England (then London Arts) and University of the Arts London (then The London Institute). Research commissioned by London Arts found that artists in the capital wanted a central service where they could go at any time, and at any stage of their career, to find up to date advice and information. London Arts entered a partnership with The London Institute to create Artquest to fill this gap and continue to co-fund and support them to this day.

Artquest currently employs one full-time and three part-time workers who all work between two to three days a week. All of these workers are artists themselves. Due to the exceptionally high number of artists working in London the organization uses its comprehensive website as a first port of call for enquiries. Many artists navigate the site independently but some send queries using the site interface and these are first directed to relevant pages on the site using an automatic search application. When these resources fail to meet their needs and they get back in touch the project workers will respond with a more focused email. In exceptional cases project workers will arrange face-to-face meetings with individuals. These queries help Artquest to identify emerging issues which are not covered on the website and which can then be the focus of new resources on the site. Often these resources are produced by artists themselves, drawing on their own experience. One distinct part of the website is the Artlaw service which offers generic legal advice on issues such as contracts, liability and so on.

In addition to this virtual service Artquest offers programmes of public events which deal with particular issues or which allow artists to network or benefit from new information. These events are often organized in collaboration with other organizations. One such collaboration with EMERGE (an initiative supporting emerging artists based in, and funded by, six of the London Boroughs) resulted in a series of professional development seminars for emerging artists. These seminars were held at venues across the city and provided practical exercises which gave participants the opportunity to apply the content to real contexts. Other APD projects include Self Assembly: a talks programme providing practical advice and case studies on different aspects of artists' or makers' careers.

In addition, Artquest manages the Artroute and Artelier projects which support international residencies and artist exchanges for London artists.

As Artquest's virtual resources are easily accessible they serve as an invaluable service to individuals and organizations nationwide (and beyond). Many of their public programmes are also archived and documented online and serve as invaluable case studies for others to use and adapt for local contexts.

www.artquest.org

Eastside Projects

Eastside Projects is an artist-run public gallery space based in Birmingham. The organization works in partnership with Birmingham City University and is revenue funded by Arts Council England. According to their website it is

“a new model for a gallery, one where space and programme are intertwined: a complex evolving programme of works and events starting from radical historical positions. We aim to commission and present experimental contemporary art practices and exhibitions. The artist is invited to set the existing conditions for the gallery. Work may remain. Work may be responded to. The gallery is a collection. The gallery is an artwork. The artist-run space is a public good. We aim to support the cultural growth of the City.” (www.eastsideprojects.org accessed March 2010)

As part of their mission to 'support the cultural growth of the City' the organisation runs the Extra Special People programme of APD. This membership programme is offered to

“anyone who would benefit from engaging with a dynamic, ambitious artist-led environment.” (www.eastsideprojects.org , accessed March 2010)

This has currently three strands, including a regular Thursday Salon meeting, Awayday visits and talks by Artists and Curators of International stature linked to the gallery's exhibitions.

The content of Salon meetings varies and members are encouraged to suggest ideas. Previous events have included group critique sessions of members' work, film screenings, discussions and evenings focused on professional development. When I visited in March ESP members met to discuss and produce Comics with members of the Hi8us Midlands group. This latter group is part of a media and arts charity that has worked on media projects with young people in their communities since 1994.

I was impressed by how this meeting managed to combine concise information stirring critical reflection with an energetic and informal opportunity for members to network and to rethink their practice in new contexts.

The Salon format provides another useful model for APD that could easily be emulated by other organizations. Members pay a monthly subscription which allows them access to these events as well as artist and curator talks. Away days are another productive model to be adapted by other groups. The status of the group allows members to see a range of artist-led projects first hand and to make contacts which can support and develop future collaborations.



WARPees Rubric with Extra Special People's 'An Endless Supply' (photo Sean Edwards g39)

www.eastsideprojects.org/extra-special-people

Other providers

In addition to these apd-network member organisations (which to a greater or lesser extent are artist-led) there are a number of other organisations and individuals offering APD.

The HE sector has become increasingly aware of the need to prepare students for the world beyond the Academy with most art degree courses offering modules in Professional Studies. Some institutions have begun to offer Postgraduate courses that focus on these skills. One such course is Connect, a Postgraduate Certificate in Artistic Practice provided by the University of Derby. Part funded by the Arts Council East Midlands the course has been delivered across the region and is currently being taught at the University of Northampton. The course offers modules in Presentation Skills, Exhibiting, work Beyond the Gallery and Reflection and Evaluation.

The aims of the programme are to:

- provide a dynamic and supportive environment in which students can develop professional arts practice knowledge and skills
- enable students to develop a deeper understanding of opportunities, procedures, and professional organisations within the arena of arts practice
- enable students to recognize, reflect on and critically analyse their strengths, weaknesses and experiences in relation to the development of their professional practice

As well as a weekly seminar programme students are matched with an individual mentor and a group exhibition of students work in a regional gallery forms part of the assessment.

The academic structure of delivery and assessment is one that artist-led groups are unlikely to emulate, although the current Connect course is working in partnership with Northampton's Fishmarket Gallery and suggests a possible model for other groups to collaborate with Academic institutions.

There are also a significant number of freelance trainers offering Professional Development activities. The content of these varies and includes Business Skills, individual mentoring and training in practical skills. The quality and relevance of training is variable but most trainers deliver material that targets the particular needs of those working in the Visual Arts sector.

The APD-Network

The administration of the National APD network will be taken over by a-n from July 2010. There is a great need and appetite for APD and the energy and expertise applied to this field of practice across the country benefits from such a network as a way of sharing good practice and supporting those who deliver it.

The APD-Network was initiated by a-n (Artists Information Company) in 2001, as a UK-wide forum for organisations that were developing information, advice, training and professional development services for visual and applied artists. It developed as a direct result of consultation with individuals and organisations involved in APD programmes across England, to examine best practice and explore the potential for collaborative projects. By 2005 the APD-Network organisations were supporting over 30,000 artists annually.

From the start, the APD-Network operated informally, responding to the need for discussion and knowledge sharing by organising networking events and developing joint projects that strategically extended professional development opportunities for artists and trainers.

Organisations in the APD-Network offered a wide range of approaches to professional development for artists. These developed in response to artists' needs, which vary according to artform, training, career stage, ambition, location, and so on.

Due to the high number of organisations, there was the potential for duplication or for gaps in provision. Equally, it was often difficult for artists to identify the most appropriate source of support — sometimes they were not even aware that such support existed.

In 2003, the National Artists Association highlighted the need for clearer signposting to professional development providers:

"The numerous providers of advice and information for artists at local, regional and national level, express frustration that awareness of what they are offering is not as widespread as they feel it should be. This research has highlighted again the need for clearer signposting and the need for providers of services to ensure that the services they offer remain visible, accessible, affordable, relevant and of a high standard."

("Strengthening the Infrastructure for Visual Artists The report of an enquiry, commissioned by the National Artists Association, into the need for a national agency for visual artists", 2003, p10)

The APD-network addressed this need through its website and events, providing a means for organisations and individuals to share their ideas, expertise and resources, and for artists to get a clearer picture of what was on offer.

Launched in 2003, the network website was content managed by member organisations, allowing for the quick exchange of information.

At this stage the APD-Network did not receive any grants or funding. Cash or in-kind contributions from participating organisations supported all activities and projects. A series of conferences were held with national and international contributors and the network promoted itself in print, via the internet and at events such as Fresh Art in London.

By 2004 ACE acknowledged the significant work of the organisation by awarding it over £40,000 to develop its work. This money has supported the continued development of the network.

Since then the network has held a series of meetings for members across the country with a visit in 2007 to Lille in France to explore and compare the culture of APD there.

The bursary scheme that has funded this research (and two other collaborative projects by larger organisations in the network) may be the last activity initiated by the apd-network with the remaining funding received in 2005.

Information currently on the apd-network website is to be transferred to a-n in Summer 2010. It is important to note that Arts Council England's 'Turning Point initiative' is currently stimulating debate over the future of the visual arts across the regions. APD has been highlighted as an area of significant need for investment. Artist-led initiatives have much to offer to the field and should continue to do so.

Peter Slack
Open Spaces Open Places
April 2010

Wales Artists' Research Programme (Wales) **Research into Artist Professional Development in England and Wales**

WARP has been running for two years. The programme is delivered by Sean Edwards, the professional Development officer, working three days per week, with S Mark Gubb as a freelance artist advisor one day a week. Whilst based in Cardiff WARP has a Wales-wide remit.

As mentioned above in OSOP's research WARP has a formal structure of services, perhaps more so than any of other groups visited on our research trips. Schemes we offer are:-

- Peer-to-Peer, delivered by S Mark Gubb. 2 sessions a month and touring sessions around Wales (as needed) at least 6 per year.
- Group Mentoring. Freelance mentoring for groups wishing to initiate a project. Three groups are mentored per year. Each group has approx. 15 hours of contact time with their mentor who is selected in relation to the group's project.
- We have just recently launched the WARP website. The website is designed to act as a major resource from which artists can access advice remotely. The site includes, news, events, a directory of recommended services, archive of mp3s of talks and seminars, advice sheets on professional development and articles. Each artist group mentored

through the programme is given their own page and there is a database of selected artists seen through the peer-to-peer programme.

- A fortnightly e-bulletin that gives news on WARP, WARP users and recommended opportunities.
- Talks and seminars are held regularly at g39/WARP. Gallery talks are held relating to the exhibitions and more practical professional development talks and CV's portfolios, self employment etc are delivered in the resource space. We also work with external agencies such as Chapter Arts Centre to organize larger artist Symposia that cover a range of topics including, marketing, galleries and criticism.
- Peer-to-peer group. An informal meeting session for artists to present their work to a group of their own peers.
- The Resource Space is a bookable space based at g39 with a library of books and periodicals. A dedicated I Mac is just about to be installed that will include CS4 and final cut pro.

The above programme has proved successful over the last two years with demand for P2P greater than can be provided. Feedback is always wholly positive. A number of visits/exchanges were arranged with Eastside Projects in Birmingham last year and also proved a great success in allowing Wales based artist the opportunity to form collaborative relationships with artists from across the border.



The WARP research area (photo Sean Edwards g39)

The APD network's FYP award was used to discover the methods, tools and resources carried out by organisations with perhaps not as formal a delivery structure as WARP. We were particularly interested to look at organisations with resource schemes that are delivered by the users themselves (see Spike Associates and Nottingham). We were also interested in finding out about membership schemes and what benefits these can bring to the artist members.

www.g39.org/warp

ALIAS (South West)

Discussion with Ed Adam (2 days), followed up with a further discussion with Sovay Berryman (Freelance).

Alias is operated as an organically run platform by artists for artists. Its remit is in the support and development of artist led groups at any stage of their development in the South West of England. Its schemes include-

Mentoring This is offered through the provision of 700 hours of bespoke mentoring across a range of groups. All groups are selected via an application procedure which is available from the Alias website. This is followed up with a diagnostic meeting between the group and an Alias consultant in their local area. Approximately 41 groups are mentored per year.

Website consisting of a number of different pages split up into two sections- *Community* and *Advisory*.

Community - Editorial written by a guest artist/arts administrator, Resources- including written documents, advice sheets etc. and Q&A by Louise Short. The links section is edited by the guest

editor so is always changing. This section also contains information on seminar programmes previously run, some with reports, and a Newsboard Advisory- a comprehensive list of what services Alias offer, details on how to apply and a list of past groups with external links for each.

Management Alias has a team of freelance consultants which it can draw from. Each of these consultants are contracted for a set number of hours and are responsible for managing their own time and selecting their own groups. Alias is managed by 5 directors.

Notes

The Alias model has shown a great deal of success since being founded nine years ago. They have become recognized by ACE for the South West and have been able to continue to offer long term mentoring and support. With the recent collapse of 'Arts Matrix' Alias have identified the possibility of branching out into one-on-one mentoring.

The managerial structure of Alias wasn't quite clear, neither did I fully understand how the breadth of projects are selected and evaluated? Alias are considering how the expansion of the ACE region for the South West, (which now incorporates the Midlands) will affect them and are considering rolling Alias out across this wider region.

www.aliasarts.org

East Street Arts (Leeds)

Meeting with Karen Watson, director (full time).

East Street Arts was founded in 1993 to provide studios in the City of Leeds. In that time it has grown to provide professional development and education programme and four studio buildings.

Over the past three years, with a focus on the expansion of studio provision and an exhibition and education programme, Karen acknowledged that the professional development side of ESA has become a little lost and confused. In our discussion she outlined the main strands of what programmes they did run;

Mentoring

There has not been a formal mentoring scheme at ESA but instead a rolling programme that shifts each year according to what is required from the artists and funders. Rather than moving through a whole series of different one off sessions for different people, the mentoring and advice sessions have been delivered to groups of artists through seminars. Schemes have included

- *EATS* – working with 30 Participants across six topics/seminars of mentoring/ support- including advice on portfolios, CV's and accounts. Each session lasted three hours. In addition, each artist was then also given funds to either pay for an individual mentor or to do or try out their own activity (e.g., research trip etc). The officer worked with the artist to develop an individually tailored plan to suit their needs.
- *DCAP* – six participants over 18 months. A fortnightly seminar that included mentoring the participants on a long-term basis in the different aspects of their art practice. Participants included Artist Josie Flynn and Pippa Hale who went on to set up Project Space Leeds as a result of this. DCAP was managed by Karen Watson.
- *ROUTEMAP*- Similar to the above with five participants working as a group to regularly

attend sessions on different topics. The RouteMap programme has been “supported through the use of technology and new media with artists being required to develop IT skills across a number of platforms and applications, including word processing, image editing and organisational software. At each stage of the programme they were challenged to develop their technical skills alongside their artistic practice.” (www.esaweb.org.uk). The participants were guided through these sessions by Artist advisor Nicola Pemberton

Project Space In addition to the above mentoring additional advice is offered to ESA members through the project space. Artists wishing to engage in a curatorial programme are offered mentoring through the use of the project space with support offered through ESA exhibition programme. It is important that both the members' programme of exhibitions and the main exhibition programme are seen to be working as one and any support given to a curated programme will also be given to a members' project- such as publicity, marketing, curatorial funding etc.



East Street Arts' Project Space at Patrick Studios, Leeds (image from ESA website)

Membership: being a studio programme, a major part of ESA remit is its membership groups. There are three strands to ESA membership-

- *Studio Members*- based in the Patrick Studio building.
- *Artist Members*- studio members are expected to have this membership, in order to become a studio member but this membership is also offered to the external Leeds art community. £50 a year allows artists to access the building which is the base of ESA's professional development programme. It includes a resource space with a library of periodicals, a meeting room, computers, print facilities and bookable AV equipment. Artist Members also gain access to ESA series of talks and events and form an important part of the community that feeds into ESA through organising the talks and events themselves. They are also given the opportunity of proposing projects for the project space.
- *Socialite* – a type of a 'Friends' scheme, this is offered to anyone who wants to support and be a part of the wider ESA community. It includes invites to shows, copies of free publications etc.

Events/ Trips A major part of the ESA members programme is a series of annual trips to places that have included Belfast, Glasgow and The Netherlands. They are not subsidised but ESA is able to secure the cheapest flights and accommodation etc. through group booking. This is very popular with around 20 people attending. Visits are arranged with artists groups and galleries in the cities visited. Follow up events are organised back in Leeds where members report back on the trip and write reports for the website – a great example of how the wider community feeds into the website's content.

www.esaweb.org

SPIKE ASSOCIATES (Bristol)

Meeting with Lucy Drane, Associates coordinator (1 day) and Megan Wakefield PHD student at UWE working with Spike Associates and writing her thesis on Artist led peer-to-peer networks.

Set up in 2007 in response to a growing community of artists in Bristol wishing to engage with the studios at Spike, Spike associates offers Support to Bristol-based artists, writers and curators operating in the contemporary visual arts through a membership scheme.

Membership Associates has built up a membership of over 90 artists, writers and curators. The cost is £12 per month.

Resources Spike associates have access to a range of resource and opportunities these include;

- A shared resource space in the building, that allows 24/7 access to a comprehensive library, computers with video editing, flat bed scanner printers etc.
- Lucy is currently investigating a way of being able to turn the library into a lending library as it has been identified that members do not make best use of the books in the resource area.
- There is reading group that meets monthly with texts that includes fiction, non-fiction and artist writings.
- There are a range of bursaries offered to Associates including Travel bursaries allowing associates to conduct research trips, something that has become increasingly popular. Award winners are then expected to present an event reporting back on their trip. Similar bursaries are run to support projects. Past groups have included Rhys and Hannah, Bristol Diving School and currently Central Reservation.
- A weekly bulletin from Lucy detailing what is happening with Spike, other associates and various opportunities.
- 2 Talks/events per month by visiting artists. Associates are responsible for programming this, and events are free with nominal charge for non-associates
- A peer critique that is facilitated by associates themselves.

Notes

The strength of the Associates Programme lies in the fact that they take responsibility for doing what they want to do. It was founded upon the ideas of skill sharing and whilst 'mentoring' is not offered in a structured and organisationally managed way; it is offered informally through the community of artists and projects. Associates is also very well served by the University of West England, which has a number of studios at Spike. This means students encounter the Associates programme whilst studying and feel encouraged to engage with this community and the projects delivered by them, before graduating (see Bristol Diving School).



Spike Island's Associate Programme (image taken from Spike Island's website)

The Associates project is self sustaining, both financially and through its resources. Members have to be based in the Bristol postcode area – this is a large enough community to achieve a self sustaining model.

www.spike-island.org.uk/?q=associates

Nottingham

Met with Jennie Syson (*the Reading Room*), Tristan Hessing (*Moot*), both based at the studio complex One Thoresby Street

There is no formal artist resource offered in Nottingham but perhaps the artist community across the city could be seen as one, something like Spike Associates without the fees. A day visit to Nottingham involved me calling in to visit four artist-run projects: Tether, Backlit, Stand Assembly & Moot.

One Thoresby Street may be the closest Nottingham has to something like East Street Arts. A major studio complex it contains provision for approximately 20 artists studios. It houses Moot, the artist led space, committed to exhibiting artist from outside of Nottingham in order to bring more traffic to the city. It has an attic that is used as a major events space for talks and socials all organized by members of the studio and it also hosts the Reading Room. The Reading Room is a kind of artist resource area/drop in space, where people come for reading groups or to use the rooms' collection of books/ journals etc. This is run by Jennie Syson a freelance curator who also edits the Nottingham Visual Arts website.

Notes

The thing that immediately struck me about these groups in Nottingham is the importance that the University has played. The majority of artists involved in these projects are graduates of Nottingham Trent, and all were offered in their initial year of graduation a small amount of money to develop their projects. The artists involved were subsequently offered occasional teaching or talks at the art school. The students were also encouraged to intern/volunteer with the projects that were supported in previous years (for example Tether helped out at Moot, Backlit at Tether etc.) This has had an undeniable effect on the students' and gave them confidence and belief that you can make things happen after art school.

I wondered how this could be implemented in Wales? One of our groups very successfully ran a project in Cardiff last year. Both of these students are graduates of a local art school and I am consistently disappointed to discover that current students have not heard of the projects and the university has not invited them back.

www.mootgallery.org

www.onethoresbystreet.org

www.hinterlandprojects.com/reading-room

Conclusion

Things shift and there is a vast breadth of models out there that still can be explored. A key issue for me that has come out of this research is the importance of self governance in CPD programmes. It can often be too easy to dictate what artists need when in fact each artist's CPD really needs to be tailored to each individual.

I was particularly impressed with the long term approach taken by ESA through programmes like DCAP and Art Route and would like to investigate ways of bringing such long term, individually focused and tailored mentoring to a group of individuals that could be delivered at WARP. WARP's one off peer-to-peer sessions have their place in the wide scheme of what we offer, but to be able to address artists' long term needs may be beneficial to the aims of WARP and may help the retention of artists in Wales as well as support the development of the art scene in general.

It would be interesting to carry out more research into paid membership schemes, particularly ones with a (relatively) high price tag. If you pay a membership fee it would mean that you might use and treat schemes differently rather than offering everything for free. Would a free offer of services and resources lead to a miss- or underuse / is a free resource ever acknowledged properly?

Sean Edwards,
WARP, April 2010

Final 'Ideas Sharing' meeting between OSOP and g39 with Liz Rowe ESP co-ordinator.

Present at this meeting:-

- Peter Slack (Reach Coordinator, Open Spaces Open Places)
- Trevor Pitt (Curator; independent and with OSOP)
- Sean Edwards (WARP coordinator)
- Chris Brown (g39 Director)
- Liz Rowe (Extra Special People Coordinator, Eastside Projects)

On 14th April 2010 we met to discuss lessons learned from our research into artist professional development. The research proved extremely useful and will help to inform and shape the future development of our programmes of APD.

The WARP scheme run by g39 is more established as a project. For them, the opportunity to conduct this research has allowed them to reflect on their own practice and to exchange knowledge and experience with other more established providers of APD.

Eastside Projects has provided an excellent model of artist-led APD and Liz Rowe provided a challenging critical perspective on the practice of APD.

Among the key questions that Liz raised as essential issues when developing a programme of artists professional development were:

Who is it for?

What is it for?

Why are you doing it?

When g39 and Eastside Projects were developing their APD programmes they started with asking who their audience was.

For g39's WARP programme, the funding agreement determined that their one-to-one advice would be offered to all-comers who completed an application form and submitted images of their work, along with their specific enquiry.

WARP caters for the more ambitious and critically engaged artists through their group project scheme.

At Eastside Projects the Extra Special People (ESP) programme is targeted at artists who are educated to at least graduate level and who are able to engage with critical debate and activities that match the ambition of the venue as a site for challenging contemporary art projects of international significance. Members have to pay to participate in activities and this immediately demands a level of commitment that reflects the ambition of the scheme.

The second and third questions posed by Liz address the fundamental motivation for providing APD.

WARP aims to offer professional development support and guidance to artists across the whole of Wales, responding to individual artists needs. As an artist-led programme, ESP draws upon the experience and knowledge of the artists and curators based at Eastside Projects. It encourages

members to engage 'with a dynamic, ambitious artist-led environment' and this allows the project space to engage with an audience at a high level, encouraging critical debate. Visits to other sites and talks by art professionals serve to raise the ambition of participants and creates capacity to support the ambitious programme of exhibitions and projects at the space.

The representatives from g39 and Eastside Projects considered it essential that their APD programmes were led and delivered by practicing artists. This provided them with insight into the current challenges of developing artistic practice and gave them the confidence to speak with the authority of experience.

What are the lessons for Open Spaces Open Places?

1. Who is our audience?

There is a fairly robust culture of part-time artists in Northamptonshire who are content to produce work and exhibit locally.

There is also a growing population of graduates who have stayed in the area after studying at the University of Northampton and some who have returned to work in the area after studying elsewhere. Many of these artists are studio based and some lack confidence about participating in a critical debate about working in other contexts. Those artists who participated in last year's REACH programme all commented how much they benefited from the experience. This is the specific audience with whom we will engage in the future.

2. What is it for & Why are we doing it?

- We want to raise the level of critical debate around contemporary art practice in our region.
- We want to encourage ambition and a high level of professional practice. We want to raise the profile of visual artists and art in the region.
- We want to develop a national and international reputation for excellent, risky work that will attract artists, curators and audiences to the region.

How will we do it?

- We will contact potential participants and establish a database.
- We will develop a pilot programme of events to launch in September 2010. We will consult with participants and work in partnership with other art organisations in the region.
- We will model our delivery on Extra Special People.
- We will organise events and talks.
- We will use our involvement in the East Midlands Visual Arts Network to support visits to other organisations.
- Finally, similarly to WARP we will offer action research bursaries. These will form part of the Undercurrents project - an ambitious programme of engaged art projects in public space along the River Nene in Northampton.

What next?

Open Spaces Open Places (OSOP) has come to an end. The REACH programme will continue as part of a new organisation: Fly Arts, led by Trevor Pitt and Peter Slack. We are currently seeking funding for REACH and Undercurrents. ACE has described the project as exceptional and has encouraged us to submit our application.

Thanks

We would like to express our thanks to the apd-network for awarding this bursary and to Mir Jansen for her support. We would also like to thank Trevor Pitt, Chris Brown (g39), Liz Rowe (Eastside Projects), Nick Kaplony (Artquest), Josie Walter and Louise Clarke (Connect), Susan Jones (a-n), Ed Adam (Alias), Lucy Drane and Megan Wakefield (Spike Island) and Karen Watson (East Street Arts) for their invaluable contributions.