

CASE STUDY: BOW ARTS

Bow Arts Trust Education Programme

by Rachel Barnett

BOW ARTS TRUST is situated in the heart of the East End of London, where a community of over 150 artists are offered affordable, secure, creative workspace and live/work accommodation. The Trust also runs a popular contemporary exhibition space called the Nunnery Gallery, supporting local, national and international exhibitions.

This case study details the background to the Bow Arts Trust's education programme. This London-wide programme has gained a national reputation for working with and improving the lives and attainment of, thousands of young people from poor and disadvantaged backgrounds. This document considers how it has developed, the benefits of the programme, how it is financed, examples of specific projects, and how high quality practice is ensured.

It is one of a series of case studies published by the NFASP, which highlight good practice in different aspects of studio providers' activities and new models for developing studios. For further details see the Resources section of the NFASP website www.nfasp.org.uk



Scope Year 10 students from Brampton Manor School worked alongside Bow Arts Trust's artists Johnny De Veras and Caroline Jones to research, design and create an imposing, safe and original hanging sculpture for the school's expansive atrium space.

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Key features of the programme

- all provision is led by professional practising artists, performers, and specialists
- collaboration and partnership-working with other cultural organisations, with artists, with different art forms, and with teachers, artists and education teams
- working across art-forms and across the curriculum to enrich learning and living
- giving people opportunities to learn practical skills, be creative, take risks, experiment, explore ideas, communicate, reflect and have fun
- providing opportunities for artists to develop their practice and skills through education work, as well as for paid employment and training sessions
- long term provision where partnerships are built, nurtured and sustained
- partnerships brokered and nurtured by the education department; an experienced team of professionals with teaching, training, arts and community expertise
- a specialism in fine art, with provision across disciplines representing all visual arts, as well as craft, design, dance, music, poetry, and storytelling
- an annual showcase of selected work in the Trust's contemporary gallery space, the Nunnery, exhibiting art that young people have produced through working with artists
- an annual competition and award ceremony in the Nunnery

CASE STUDY: BOW ARTS**FIRST STEPS**

Primarily a studio organisation, Bow Arts Trust aims to support artists' practice through providing affordable and sustainable studio space, exhibition opportunities, professional development, and opportunities for paid work in education and community settings.

Bow Arts Trust started its education programme in 1999 with an Awards for All grant to establish links with schools in the London Borough of Tower Hamlets. Free artist-led workshops were offered to schools, with the outputs exhibited in the Trust's own gallery, the Nunnery. Schools saw the benefits of working with professional artists, and were encouraged to invest in future work with their own funds.

DEVELOPMENT

The programme is now facilitated by three staff and an intern. Projects are run mainly in East London through approximately 36 schools, reaching around 20,000 young people a year, working with over 50 artist/educators. The Trust has developed a cohesive programme, building relationships with galleries,



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Visualising Numbers, a still from a musical book created with Colgrave Primary School

artists, and other education professionals, as well as with councils, social housing organisations, and other cultural partners and funders.

RELATIONSHIPS WITH STUDIOS AND ARTISTS

The education programme supports the Trust's aims to help artists sustain their creative practice by finding paid professional work. The artists involved in the Trust's Poplar HARCA live/work scheme are selected on their interest in education work as well as on the quality of their artistic practice. The studios communicate with the artists through fortnightly newsletters, as well as quarterly open meetings, and various social events. Currently in development is a social networking site, which will allow artists to view and upload details of arts activities in the local area. Bow Arts Trust aims to foster a community feeling between local artists and residents.

Bow Arts Trust offers training and skill sharing sessions to the artists to help them develop as workshop leaders and artist/educators; subjects covered include child protection, health and safety, and workshop planning. Artists working with schools and other groups are given the opportunity to observe experienced practitioners; there is also the opportunity for the less experienced to work with a mentor to gain in confidence and experience.

FINANCE

The programme is financed in a number of different ways. Following the initial pilot project and the advocacy work of the Trust, the majority of workshops are now paid for directly by the schools who recognise the benefits of inviting professional artists into their schools.

Some projects, especially those introducing new schools to the work of Bow Arts Trust, are grant-funded. Previous grants have been awarded by: Arts Council England, The Wellcome Trust, engage, The Big Lottery Fund, The British Council, Awards For All, BBC Breathing Places, Alternative Arts, Find Your Talent and Watch This Space.

Funding also comes from the live/work scheme artists, a third of whose rent goes into a fund to support community arts projects. For more information about the live/work scheme see www.bowarts.org/studios/index.php?code=21

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BENEFITS

Work of this scope brings a multiplicity of benefits, for the workshop participants, for the school or other host organisation, and for the artist.

Benefits for the participants include:

- using a wide range of materials and techniques to engage with and learn about subjects across the curriculum
- raised attainment and achievement and increased motivation and confidence
- on a recent visit, OFSTED highlighted the fact that workshop participants learnt practical skills more effectively when working with professional artists
- improvements in transferable skills such as problem solving, cognitive skills, fine motor skills, lateral thinking and creativity
- developing social skills, including, collaborating, working in teams, speaking and listening, taking risks, experimenting and exploring
- an increased enjoyment and appreciation of art, valuing its place in the community and opening up opportunities and career options within the arts and creative industries

Benefits for the artists include:

- exchanging ideas, sharing skills and expertise
- supporting artistic practice and helping to sustain life as an artist
- stimulating artists' own creativity, giving new ideas for practice
- learning transferrable skills about working with different community groups

A successful project also has benefits for the environment it is located in, whether with a piece of art which



Shaping Up project to improve mathematical language at Crown Lane Primary School, Lambeth, South London

enlivens a school corridor, providing members of the teaching staff with new skills and ideas, or raising the profile of the creative arts across the community.

QUALITY

Bow Arts Trust is committed to providing a high quality arts-in-education experience. This is achieved by working with artists who can communicate their knowledge and skills in a way that is appropriate for each group they work with. Bow Arts Trust attributes the success of their projects to a number of factors, including:

- clear commitment to consultation, co-operation, and communication with all partners from the very beginning of the project
- provision that is informed by an exchange of ideas and dialogue between partners
- rigorous selection and training of artist educators
- defined roles and responsibilities throughout the management of the project
- provision of appropriate materials, equipment, and space
- monitoring and evaluation of projects



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EXAMPLES OF PROJECTS

Bow Arts Trust's projects cover a huge spectrum of groups, subjects, and outputs, including: mosaics, murals, painting, printing, sculpture, and textiles, action research, after school programmes, community programmes, ICT and New Media projects, gallery talks and Inset programmes.

One of the first schools supported by the Trust was St Paul's Way Community School based in the poorest ward in the country. With the Trust's support in 1999 the school was successful in its application to gain specialist Arts College status and soon achieve national recognition by 2002 for its results in Art. The award provides the school with significant funds annually to support the visual arts; within the school, their primary feeder, associated secondary schools and community groups. Working with the school for over 10 years, Bow Arts has facilitated the extensive workshop provision.

A project at Crown Lane Primary School saw Key Stage 2 maths explored with an artist. The children worked with the artist to create a large vinyl window panel visualising nets, 2D and 3D shapes and tessellations and a large perspex pyramid installation

"The project was fantastic, I know next year if I suggest working with an artist from Bow Arts, at least four year groups will be saying yes please."

Head teacher at Crown Lane Primary School



Exploring the language of 2D and 3D shape

"Both classes achieved beyond our expectations. Their language of mathematical shape is beyond year 4 now." Head teacher

filled with 3D shapes. The works make a colourful addition to the school environment and teaching staff noticed a positive change in the children's ability.

Spaces and Places was a project run in connection with the Unilever Children's Art Competition, to exhibit pieces of contemporary art work in response to a theme in the Turbine Hall in Tate Modern. Bow Arts Trust worked with two of the primary schools taking part in the competition and saw both 1st and 2nd prizes for the UK awarded to the art works created through their workshops. Observers noticed a real sophistication in the output from the children, who were working with a professional artist, in terms of their scope, ambition, creativity and skill.

MORE INFORMATION

Bow Arts Trust: www.bowarts.org

General: 020 8980 7774

Education: 020 8709 5291

Email: mbaettig@bowarts.com

abicknell@bowarts.com

For information on Bow Arts Trust's education programme, see: www.bowarts.org/education/index.php?code=31

For information on the Bow Arts Trust/Poplar HARCA live/work scheme, see: www.bowarts.org/studios/index.php?code=21

For information about engage, the National Association of Gallery Education, see: www.engage.org/home/index.aspx

For information on the Watch This Space programme mentioned above, see: www.engage.org/projects/watchthisspace.aspx