

Culture, Welsh Language and Sport Committee CWLS(2)-05-04(p.4)

Date: 31 March 2004

Time: 9.00am – 12.00pm

Venue: Committee Room 2, National Assembly for Wales

Policy Review: Contribution of Arts and Sport to Community Regeneration

engage Cymru Response

engage promotes access to, enjoyment and understanding

of the visual arts through gallery education.

engage Cymru values the opportunity to respond to this Policy Review. We are committed to developing and promoting the delivery of a consistently high quality programme of gallery education across Wales and continue to liaise with national policy makers.

engage Cymru shares the Assembly's commitment to re-energising the communities of Wales and focusing on access and access to excellence as demonstrated by our recent programme of seminars 'Galleries and Rural Communities : Tackling Rural Isolation'.

engage : Who are We?

engage is the leading international association for gallery educators, artists and other arts and education professionals, with a growing membership around the world; a powerful network working face to face with many millions of gallery visitors.

engage Cymru is project funded under the Arts Council of Wales 'Capacity Building and Professional Development' Scheme until March 2005. In Wales we have a growing membership of c. 60, including almost all revenue funded galleries : National Library of Wales, National Museum & Gallery of Wales, Aberystwyth Arts Centre, Oriel Mostyn, Ruthin Craft Centre as well as freelance artist educators and academics.

The engage Cymru Development Group which acts as an advisory and support network includes:

- Michael Tooby, Director, NMGW, Cardiff
- Cath Sherell, Education Officer, Aberystwyth Arts Centre
- Lisa Edgar, Education Development Manager, Ffotogallery
- Gwenno Jones, Joint Area Museums & Education Service, Denbighshire
- Robert Lowe, Exhibitions Officer, Oriel Davies, Newtown
- Christopher Naylor, Director, engage
- Angela Rogers, part-time development Co-ordinator

engage Cymru Programme

Professional Development : engage Cymru has just delivered a series of training seminars ‘Galleries and Rural Communities : Tackling Rural Isolation’ across Wales, focusing on what galleries have to offer rural communities. Speakers included:

- Jasper Roberts, Head of Rural Policy, Welsh Assembly
- Rural Executives, Welsh Development Agency
- Senior Arts Officer for Visual Arts, Arts Council of Wales.

The seminars attracted over 90 delegates from a range of sectors, including the arts, regeneration partnerships and youth services.

In 2003 we ran a training programme ‘Galleries and Young People : Tackling Social Exclusion’ and ‘Training and Mentoring’ offering professional development opportunities and networking for artists and the gallery sector

Projects: Opt for Art is the flagship project for engage in Wales which introduced some 15,000 young people to galleries and artists. The Opt for Art report publication was launched by the previous Minister for Culture Jenny Randerson in 2002.

Advocacy: engage Cymru has produced a bi-lingual CD Rom highlighting some of the best examples of good practice in gallery education across Wales . We have also just launched our new Wales page on the engage website.

How Galleries and the Visual Arts Are Contributing to Community Regeneration

There are many issues surrounding community regeneration, as there are factors which lead to communities declining. The visual arts are cross cutting and can affect many areas of our lives. They are a key partner in working towards community regeneration.

Gallery educators are working every day with many thousands of young people and the wider community both within and beyond the gallery. They have a special role within the gallery addressing diversity, disability, inclusion and access issues. They recognise the importance and necessity of working in partnership with other sectors and key agencies to identify and engage disadvantaged communities.

The comments below follow on from proactively soliciting arts practitioners ideas and feedback from recent engage Cymru seminars Galleries and Rural Communities : Tackling Rural Isolation.

Galleries are helping to build the capacity of individuals and communities and release the energies of communities through:

- Cultural empowerment : The visual arts address all aspects of society. Gallery education projects invite us to look at art, consider meanings and values and to question ourselves and our environments. To be in a position to question and challenge is in itself empowering. Those feelings of empowerment are transferred into other areas of peoples' lives; including confidence in decision making.
- Cultural entitlement: breaking down the barriers that have traditionally prevented individuals and communities entering galleries and other cultural spaces and taking part in the arts
- Communication and Presentation Skills : Through encouragement and support, participants in projects find alternative and creative ways of expressing themselves; both visually and verbally. Confident communicators have a voice within communities.
- Galleries as unique learning resources: Gallery educators adopt a variety of learning styles and methods to suit the distinct needs of individuals and sections of communities. Many young people who are under-achievers at school or who are excluded from mainstream education are often motivated and achieve well in creative environments.

e.g. , The Centre for Visual Arts worked with Bryn Cynon Revival Strategy on a Keystart Project which tackles school excluders and truancy. This project adopts the arts as a tool to engage disaffected young people. They worked with Lottery funded animation group Cinetig drawing and animating David Nash sculptures.

Several of the participants had never been in a gallery before but they thoroughly engaged with the process. One participant wrote to Cinetig, "I didn't think I liked art last week, but I do now. This is the best thing I've ever done and I'm going to carry on doing art".

- Unique Learning Resources: Adults who have been excluded from the education system for whatever reason often find openings and in-roads to learning through galleries and gallery education projects through the variety of learning styles adopted. e.g. Ffotogallery worked with young

single mothers via Penarth Family Centre on a project which explored notions of family and family portraits. The skills they developed include visual literacy, communications skills and invaluable IT skills which proved invaluable for other areas of their day to day lives.

- **Sense of Pride:** Gallery education projects such as ‘What Makes Barry’ initiated by Ffotogallery worked with the Princes Trust identifying young offenders in Cadoxton. The project encouraged them to take a fresh look at their local environment and have their work exhibited at the wider ‘What Makes Wales’ exhibition at NMGW. The work was later displayed at the Millennium Stadium during the Duke of Edinburgh conference. The sense of pride adopted by the participants both in themselves and in their local community was a positive and rewarding outcome.
- **Skills/Training:** many of the skills developed through arts education projects are transferrable into other areas of peoples’ lives, including decision making and team working. Also, many of the young people who took part in ‘Opt for Art’ programme chose art as a GCSE option and were encouraged to consider the many openings within the arts as a possible career.
- **Personal Development:** learning through galleries and the visual arts can help audiences/ participants achieve their potential which might not otherwise be fulfilled in the traditional atmosphere of formal education
- **Integration:** Many gallery education projects involve different sections of the community at different stages of the project. Some of the most exciting projects are those which integrate the experience and skills of older and younger members of a given community. Such projects can help break down barriers between the generations and help each generation develop respect for the other.
- **Sense of Place:** Many gallery education projects are programmed to tie in with wider UK initiatives and events, e.g. Museums & Galleries Month, National Children’s Art Day, The Big Draw and World Book Day, as well as a wealth of religious and other festivals and celebrations. Participation on a local community level promotes a sense of place and of the wider picture of Wales and beyond.

e.g. ‘Just a Cool Place’ animation film made with several primary schools in and around Cardiff in the lead up to European Capital of Culture presenting the diversity of Cardiff and encouraging young people to feel importance and significant within the wider picture.

- **Improving the physical environment :** public art; streetscape and environmental art projects involve communities in decision making; design and planning. Involvement and collaboration in how a neighbourhood looks is fundamentally important. Such projects can renew a community’s interest in the place they live and develop sense of pride and ownership in the neighbourhood. Renewed interest in an area adds to residents’ quality of life.

Recommendations

engage Cymru is committed to working with the National Assembly to build the capacity of communities across Wales. We are already beginning to do this through our programme of relevant training and sharing of best practice.

However, engage Cymru is limited in what it can achieve with a part-time co-ordinator on project funding. With long term core funding engage could:-

- Develop further training programmes helping to up-skill the workforce, to bring us in line with our European counterparts.
- Undertake a skills audit of gallery education activity across all revenue funded galleries in Wales.
- Develop further action-research projects, building on the success of Opt for Art, and addressing the needs of those excluded from mainstream education
- Assist in developing the delivery of a framework for a gallery education programme in Wales in line with ACW Visual Arts & Crafts Plan 2002-2007. Based on existing models of good practice and fed by new developments and initiatives this would help create better awareness, appreciation and understanding of the visual arts in Wales and support opportunities for communities and public groups to participate in the visual arts
- Work with ACW and education sector to develop a clear strategy for the delivery of the visual arts at primary and secondary education level
- Develop, in collaboration with other education providers, an alternative accreditation system for arts education addressing the needs of those excluded from mainstream education
- Manage a fund, such as Artfull or Museums & Galleries Month further extending opportunities for people in Wales to engage with art

What is gallery education?

Gallery education is a new and changing body of practice that exists to broaden understanding and enjoyment of the visual arts – through projects and programmes which help school children and the wider community become confident in their understanding and enjoyment of the visual arts and galleries. Gallery education includes projects, interpretation, gallery talks, outreach projects, artists-in-residence in schools, health settings and other environments.

Gallery education is still a relatively new area of work. However, gallery educators do play a special and important role within the gallery.

Gallery education continues to develop in response to changes in audience needs, organisational changes, changes in formal and informal education and changes in art practice.

Gallery educators are:

- Creative catalysts – working with artists, curators and the community to create new projects to help people engage with practising artists
- Audience champions – representing schools' and communities' needs and expectations in the gallery or museum
- Access and education experts – understanding and planning for the needs of different users, including different learning styles and cross-curricular opportunities
- Advocates and project managers – promoting and delivering projects and programmes

Gallery education:

- Unlocks creativity : stimulating people to explore their own creative potential, to make art themselves, and to pursue careers in the creative industries
- Empowers people culturally – building people's confidence with and understanding of artists, galleries, arts centres, art museums allowing them to play a full part in society
- Gives young people the chance to re-engage with art and culture
- Enables people to meet live artists and develop careers in the arts
- Reaches out to community groups to build renewed contact with culture

Who is engage ?

engage is the leading international association for gallery educators, artists and other arts and education professionals, with a growing membership in the UK and around the world; a powerful network working face to face with many millions of gallery visitors. engage was founded in 1988 as NAGE – the National Association for Gallery Education and receives core funding from Arts Council of England.

What does engage do?

engage promotes access to, enjoyment and understanding of the visual arts through gallery education.

engage supports gallery education through the following key areas of work:

Professional development : engage provides training opportunities to promote good practice and helps practitioners pursue careers in gallery education

Advocacy : engage works in advocacy to build wider recognition of the potential of gallery education, and to influence policies and resourcing. Advocacy includes:

- Museum & gallery education strategy (engage is a key advisor to England Department for Culture and Education)
- Addressing Disability in Galleries in Scotland
- Advising ACW on Arts Development Strategy

Publications : engage produces a quarterly critical magazine on gallery education and public art practice entitled engagereview, as well as occasional project/research publications

Projects : engage devises action-research programmes to explore specific aspects of gallery education, and to identify and share good practice across the sector. Current projects include 'envision' researching best practice gallery education work with 14 – 19 year olds. Previous projects include Opt for Art, initiated in and for Wales, which introduced 15,000 school pupils to galleries and artists, encouraging them to opt for GCSE Art.