

PEOPLE BRANDS

Our Kingston, Our Future:
Designing, planning and delivering an
arts-based community engagement project

THE LEARNING
REVOLUTION

TRANSFORMATION
FUND

BIS
Department for
Business, Innovation
and Skills

**MAKE
YOUR MARK**

Our Kingston
Our Future...

ttk
Innovation
Town
Kingston

ARTGYM™

Key project Features

314 people engaged
Target group: 19-25 and 55 plus
5 small engagement events
4 large three hour engagement events
1 celebration event
40 meter vision painted
150 stories from the past
114 boxes printed for the River of Feelings
128 vision cards printed
54 unique ideas for a greener brighter future in Kingston
4 big ideas chosen by Transition Town Kingston as key projects
1 documentary

Community Groups and Organisations Engaged

University of the Third Age
Bradbury Active Age Centre
Environment Centre
Inter Faith Forum
Riding for the Disabled
Kingston Federation of Allotment Holders
Town Guides
Tudor Allotments
Kingston Society
Quaker Society
Power of Alliances
Kingston Voluntary Action
Kingston Young Volunteers
Save the World Club
Iraqi Society
Peace Council
Alfriston Day Centre
Pensioners Forum
Age Concern
MeWe Theatre
Seething Festival
International Youth Arts Festival
Cambridge Road Estate Residents Group
United Reformed Church
Refugee Health Forum
Tamil Elders Group
Kingston Borough Council
Kingston Arts Council
Kingston Museum
Kingston University

What went well?

1. Being inclusive and engaging diverse members of the community

The real act of discovery consists not in finding new lands but seeing with new eyes.
Marcel Proust

The key success of this project was being both intergenerational and intercultural. This project opened up access to adult informal learning to various community groups who wouldn't normally attend these kinds of events. We also got diverse groups learning together, which for many participants was a first time experience.

One participant said *"normally these events attract the same people, white, middle aged, middle class women"*! This participant really welcomed the chance to learn from people who were from a different generation, a different culture and a different socio-economic background.

Our challenge in this project was to explore how to build bridges across the two different generations. An elderly lady illustrated the so called "generation gap", when she said of the younger generation, in one of our discussion forums, *"we don't need them and quite frankly they don't need us"*!

We chose to use Appreciative Inquiry as a methodology and to inform the design of the events. We wanted to give people a chance to view their community through an appreciative eye and from different perspectives. For example, we asked the younger age group to interview the older age group on their special memories of Kingston. These stories of Kingston, going as far back as the 30's, helped the younger generation appreciate the richness of history stored in the minds of the Elders. The two different generations then painted, together, positive visions of Kingston in the future.

The connection across generations was captured in this woman's feedback.

"I realize that my vision has come true already, as I have seen different cultures and generations create together. This is the image I painted and it's happening here and now"

Another woman talked about how seeing different generations coming together gave her "hope". This became the key storyline for the documentary:

When creativity is alive and people reconnect, hope grows.



2. The success of knowledge transfer

People Brands has successfully run large scale employee engagement projects for organisations like last minute.com, Lebara, and adidas. One of our project aims was to transfer best practice from our expertise in the corporate sector into the community.

We applied a clearly defined process, which has been successful in corporate employee engagement projects:

Plan: a collaborative process involving learners

Design: based on needs defined by learners

Deliver: co-create learner – generated content and outcomes using interdisciplinary arts.

Communicate: use the learner generated content to inform, educate and engage.

We applied these learner centric principles throughout the project, so people felt respected, that their contribution was important and were contributing towards something important.

Quality and professionalism are key features of our commercial projects, so we wanted to ensure that learners had a quality learning experience. We also firmly believe in enabling learners to create quality outputs and utilised our professional skills from the creative media industries. Proof of concept is that Kingston Museum will be exhibiting the artwork created by learners in May and June during the Summer Arts Season. The Learning and Development Officer gave us this feedback:

Some community projects can look so flimsy and not very professional, but this project shows a real attention to detail and care in creating something of real quality.

This project has been a pilot and has helped us create a strong blue print for **Artgym in the Community**. Now we know this approach works and that we have a useable framework to be rolled out across other communities.



3. The use of interdisciplinary arts as a transformative learning method

Images “represent our imaginative engagement with the world, expressing what is not known or knowable through words alone

John M. Dirkx

The Artgym philosophy and approach to learning, recognizes the role of the imagination, intuition and feeling in transformative learning.

There was a moment during the workshop, when we saw a rich diverse group of people, quietly painting and creating together. The atmosphere was peaceful and harmonious. An old lady painted with a young student, while a refugee family used art to communicate their experience beyond the barrier of the English language. John Dirkz talks about the “mytho poetic” or “soulful” aspect of transformative learning, and that soulfulness is as important of the more rational and cognitive ways of knowing. The real magic we discovered in this event was how people captured the soul of their community through making art together.

A beautiful example of the “mytho-poetic” aspect of learning is captured in this poem written and performed in one of the events:

Three fish

Shop and shop until you drop in Kingston
STOP

Past and present are on the hook: future
LOOK

Three fat chubb glistening in the Hogsmill
LISTEN

How stories shape and link us to a place

THINK

Lucy Furlong

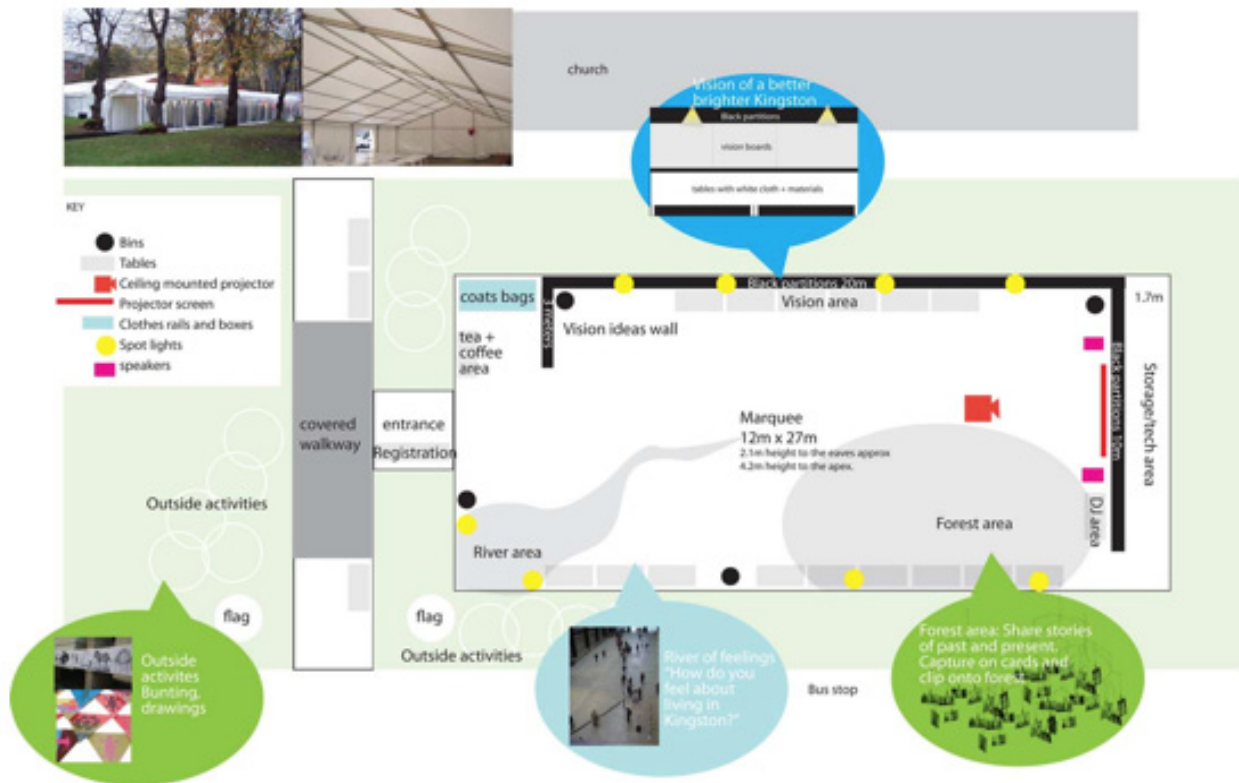


4. An informal and dynamic approach for adult learning

The design of the event allowed people to participate in an informal way, without pressure and with a high degree of freedom to choose.

For example, we created three different zones in the marquee to represent Kingston, past, present and future. Participants were given the opportunity to spend time in a creative activity, in each zone. After 45 minute slots, we invited participants to move zones. If participants wanted to stay longer in a zone they could, and if people wanted to leave the workshop early they could. This was of particular benefit for some of the very elderly who were tired after two hours. No one was pressurized to paint and as a result everybody did!

The act of standing up and moving to different zones, meant that people's energy levels was kept high and maintained a high level of participation. People were encouraged to learn from each other and to physically move from insight to action. The zones were designed to take people through the experience of learning about their community and creating using interdisciplinary arts, to the finale of writing at the ideas wall.



5. The Advisory Group

We formed a group of advisors to help us on different aspects of the project.

Aniela Zaba: Director of the International Youth Arts festival

Robin Hutchinson: Chairman of International Youth Arts festival

Colin Bloxham: Royal Borough of Kingston Principal Arts Officer

Wendy Reed: Director of the Bradbury Active Age Centre.

Caroline Burt: Learning and Development Officer Kingston Museum

Peta Cook: Curator Kingston Museum

Meena Kapila: Kingston Youth Volunteers

Adam Ainsworth – Drama Department lecturer Kingston University

Duncan Grewcock: Course leaders/Lecturer – MA in Museum Studies Kingston University

Vernon Kizza Nxumalo: Director MeWe Theatre

These advisors were like gold for our project! They helped us with recruitment, gave us advice on marketing, opened doors, put us in contact with diverse parts of the community, and promoted our event. They helped us ensure that what we created was relevant, timely and useful. We were non restrictive in how we organized approaching our advisors and this helped in gaining access to these very busy people.

What didn't go so well?

1. Access to community groups

The Borough of Kingston has a very high population of Koreans living in New Malden. We found this community group really difficult to engage and were disappointed that they were not represented at our event. This was partly due to this event clashing with a Korean community event but also because they are quite a “private” community. In hindsight, we would have benefited from having a key member of the Korean community as one of our advisors.

2. Recruiting from the Transition Town Kingston membership

We had hoped to do the majority of recruitment for the events through Transition Town Kingston's 250 members. However, this membership was not as active as we hoped. The steering committee of 6 people was very active and committed to this project, but their membership base turned out to be largely dormant. This meant we had to change our recruitment strategy quite dramatically.

We also discovered that the various environmental groups we spoke to attracted quite a narrow demographic. As one person said at an event organized by Transition Town Kingston:

“It is always the same old suspects, and we are all white, middle class and middle aged”!

3. PR coverage

This is a new area for us and we could have benefited from specialist help. We sent out Press Releases to local, London and National press. We got a lot of attention and coverage from the local and London press and a local radio station, but not from the National Press. I was given specific feedback from an Arts journalist from the Times, who told us the project sounded “too worthy” for Times readers!

4. Road works: the unplanned for risk

We planned in our Risk Assessment for a number of eventualities, but not for major road works taking place just outside the marquee! Our event manager, worked hard with the Council and Utilities people, and prevented drilling taking place during the event. In hindsight, it would have been useful to have checked with Town Centre Management earlier in the project.

What would you do differently next time?

1. Community Partners

Spend more time in clarifying if our community partners can realistically deliver and meet the outcomes of the project. Have one overall project manager across all parties and regularly review key areas of responsibility and accountability throughout the project.

2. Include a PR specialist in the project

Use a PR specialist who has local contacts and also contacts for wider media coverage.

3. Recruitment is a shared responsibility

Recruitment is absolutely crucial to this kind of community engagement projects. Next time we would ensure that recruitment is a shared responsibility across all stakeholders.

4. Rotate overall responsibility in recruitment between partners.

There would be an overall person responsible for recruitment and this role would be rotated between partners, so accountability and ownership is shared in such a key area.

5. Contact the Council and Town Centre management early in the project, if running a large scale event.

Find out about planned engineering, road or building works, and keep in contact throughout the project.

Lessons learned

1. Plan really well and allow for being surprised by the unexpected.

“A plan is like the scaffolding around a building. When you are putting up the exterior shell, the scaffolding is vital. But once the shell is in place and you start work on the interior, the scaffolding disappears”

Twyla Tharp: Choreographer

We benefited from our organizational experience in strategic and project management. The project plan was detailed and visible, on a large board. This helped us all approach a large scale and complex project with a clear sense of focus and structure. The success of this project was in the planning and sticking to the plan but up until a point, and then allowing for the flow of improvisation during the event. For example, we had a number of beautiful unplanned for moments during the event, like dancing at the end of the workshop, a poetry reading and a performance by drama students.

2. Face to face recruitment

We discovered that recruitment for this event was not going to be easy and only was a success through a large amount of face to face interaction with target groups. Although we distributed a large amount of Posters and Leaflets, it was the direct recruitment that signed people up to events. The key to successful recruitment is to target groups not individuals,

and then find ways to engage with them face to face. We ran 5 small engagement events, focus groups, discussion groups, presentations at forums and did on the streets of Kingston Vox Pops.

3. Get the message right

It was important to think about the benefits for learners and what they would get out of the events. We tested a number of messages and our use of language in our focus group and other learner forums. When we “tested” the learner outcome of “creating a sustainable and innovative future for Kingston”, it turned off both age groups! We then changed the message based on feedback to “creating a greener brighter Kingston in the future.” This was much more in keeping with the creative theme of the event: you will notice the use of bright green colours in our choice of media and paint.

We kept our messaging short and simple:

Make your Mark

Making your ideas happen

Have your say

Be part of the movie

These messages have a more universal appeal as they connect to core human values of wanting to be heard, to have a voice and to be respected.



4. Approach a learning project as a learner

We learnt that people were generous with their help, support and advice because of our willingness to be humble and curious. All of our advisors were open hearted in their help, because we were prepared to learn and ask for feedback.

5. Find an event space that is welcoming to diverse groups in the community

We discovered that many places would attract one group but detract another. For example, church halls for people from a different religion or a non religious background.

It was important to find a place which welcomed diverse groups in terms of religion, culture and socio demographic background. For this reason, we chose to hire a marquee in a central place, right in the heart of Kingston. This was an extremely successful option. It was accessible for people in wheelchairs and offered space for people with restricted mobility to move around easily. The atmosphere felt democratic and welcoming to everyone.

Hints and Tips

1. Find 10 key people to form part of your Advisory Group. Keep it informal and on a one to one basis. Be clear about your request and the specific advice you want from each person.

2. Find 10 key community groups/forums/centres which attract your target learners. Arrange to run taster events/ presentations/discussion groups and use this as a chance to test out your ideas, build relationships and directly recruit.

3. Be bold and focus on signing people up to the event. Don't be fobbed off with just leaving leaflets in places, try to speak to people and ask them directly to sign up.

4. Make it easy to sign up. Enable people to sign up on your website and also have manual sign up sheets. Don't let people forget the event, acknowledge their sign up to the event, send reminders and a detailed welcome pack.

5. Make it easy for people to learn. Ensure the venue is accessible and welcoming. Keep the approach, low risk, high permission, with plenty of opportunities to choose and participate.

6. Help people be proud of their efforts. High quality learner generated products create a sense of achievement and pride.

7. Capture the learning throughout the project. Some of the best lessons can be missed because the moment wasn't captured. Capture the project on video and camera.

Section 2: Links with other areas of work

Learning Revolution themes

1. Learning Champions
2. Involved a museum
3. Opened up spaces
4. Partnership working
5. Broadcasting and technology
6. Effective outreach

Did the project help people to develop their skills in any of the following subject areas?

7. Citizenship

Did the project deliver wider benefits in addition to the learning achievements of participants?

8. Increased participation in art and culture, sports, environment, health
9. Participants reporting improved mental wellbeing
10. Participants increasing social skills and developing new networks in their communities
11. Increased engagement in and contribution to the local community and civic activity (community cohesion)
12. Helping to join up existing local services, identify ways to improve access for local people and include their views in future service developments
13. Improved intergenerational understanding and engagement

Steps you been able to take towards securing the future (sustainability) of the project

14. Identifying new sources of funding
15. Using lessons learned to develop and improve the project and deliver a second version
16. Engaging with local authorities and other local services to secure ongoing use of facilities and resources
17. Developing opportunities to continue using equipment purchased for the TF project to support further informal learning experiences

Section 3: Project partners

Please include **your own organisation** first and list all the other organisations you have worked with.

Name of organisation	Type of organisation	Contribution made	Match funding provided? <i>Please state amount and what for.</i>	In kind support provided? (e.g. free premises) <i>Please state value and what for.</i>
People Brands Ltd	Commercial Consultancy	<p>Lead on design, planning and delivery of the project. To include: project and event management; Marketing and promotions; Provision and training of facilitators, filmmakers and photographers; film recording, editing, and post production; design and transformation of learner generated content into learning products; web-site design, website programming and administration; provision of pre, during and post evaluation of learning;</p> <p>lead on recruitment, to include: creating advisory group researching community groups; Contacting and engaging community groups; Organising small engagement events; Promoting on the streets of Kingston; Presenting and speaking at community forums.</p>	<p>Total £24,142</p> <p>Total staffing costs £15,655</p> <p>To include teaching and non teaching staff</p> <p>Total non staffing costs £8,487</p> <p>To include Capital expenditure Digital equipment Administration and office expenses</p>	<p>Staff resources Use of offices Technology Use of facilities and equipment</p>
Transition Town Kingston	Community Action group	<p>Collaborating with People Brands on planning of the project;</p> <p>Collaborating with People Brands on recruitment to include: TTK membership and leveraging relationships with community groups; Supporting People Brands to deliver events; Use some of the outputs form events to implement practical projects and initiatives in Kingston; Encourage and support learners to realise their vision in Kingston</p>	None	None

Section 4: Evaluation of the project

1. How we evaluated the project

What were the aims of the evaluation?

We wanted to evaluate how the Artgym framework worked for community engagement and for informal adult learning projects. This evaluation has helped us create the blueprint for **Artgym in the Community** which we aim to roll out across other communities.

Some of the key questions we aimed to answer

1. How did the **Artgym in the Community** help promote and enhance community cohesion?
2. To what extent did learners value sharing stories and creating art with people from different generations, cultures and socio-economic backgrounds?
2. To what extent did learners increase their creative competence and be inspired to develop their own creativity?
3. What is successful when engaging learners to play an active role in their community's future?

Methodology: An Appreciative Inquiry approach

The appreciative paradigm, for many, is culturally at odds with the popular negativism and professional vocabularies of deficit that permeate society.
David Cooperrider

Appreciative Inquiry (Cooperider) is the lense through which we viewed our design, research methodology and theoretical standpoint. Our questions focussed on what worked, so we could build on and replicate success. Overall we wanted to learn from this experience and also create an evaluation that inspires hope.

We based our evaluation on:

1. Quantitative data from feedback questionnaires and website
2. Qualitative data from feedback questionnaires
3. Documentary, podcasts and filmed learner interviews
4. Ideas board

2. Results of Evaluation

Quantitative data

Measuring the full reach of project engagement

Learner engagement

- 5 small events=103
- 4 large events over one weekend=211
- Total learners engaged = 314

- 2 generations: 19-25 and 55+
- 19-25 age group = 36%
- 55+ age group = 64%

Community groups

- Number of community groups engaged=26
- Number of Local Authority sectors engaged=4

Website: January to April

- Unique visitors=1057
- Number of visits=2090
- Pages=8923
- Hits=36,238

Quantative data from feedback questionnaire

How much did you learn about Kingston today? = **6.7 average (0-10)**

How much did you learn about art making today? = **5.8 average (0-10)**

How much did you enjoy contributing to Kingston's future today? **7.9 (0-10)**

What % of learners would be interested in hearing from Transition Town Kingston? **78%**

Qualitative Feedback

1. What did you learn about your community?

Key Themes

Diversity

"Just how diverse it is"

"How people from other cultures are so keen to get involved"

"The Asian community would like to be more involved in the community. They are lovely people"

"Willingness of a wide range of people to get involved"

"It truly did include people of all ages"

Community

"To learn about different community co-operation in making Kingston a better place"

"I was really fortunate to be here today to hear more about the Kingston Community and meet people who have been here for more than eighty years"

"People are trying and responding to building community"

Future

"A lot of hidden talent and a lot of interest in what Kingston might be in the future"

"There is a desire to change things"

"People do care about sustainability"

"I am not alone in my concerns and visions"

"Empowerment, knowing others share your visions"

Our reflections and learning

The primary emphasis is on multiplicity. If you reduce the languages of the culture to a single mode, if all perspectives are reduced to one, then you truncate the options for action.

Kenneth J. Gergen

The true gold in this project was its diversity. The overriding nature of people's feedback was the pleasure of communing with different cultures and age groups. This in turn strengthened the feeling of community. A sense of community came from the diversity and also the commonality of shared visions and concerns. We have learnt for future projects, to aim for multiplicity of viewpoints alongside seeking shared concerns and hopes. Our key question throughout this project was concerning how to transform community apathy, indifference, inertia and cynicism into community empowerment, hope and action.

We discovered that empowerment comes from sharing stories, co-creating and envisioning together and focusing on what gives hope.

Qualitative Feedback

2. What did you learn about making art today?

Key Themes

Creative Techniques and approaches

Using acetate to print with
How to wield a paint brush
Abstract is beautiful
Simple is better
Mono printing
Art is what you make it
Colored tape is good to draw with

Art for all

You don't have to be good to have fun
Everyone is an artist, just enjoy it
It was fun being me
I can do it with other people
Everyone's input is valid

Art for vision

You have to draw strategy about Kingston
Anyone can contribute ideas to plans for the future

Our reflections and learning

Imagination is more important than knowledge
Albert Einstein

Our approach involved giving people simple art techniques that were easy to master and that created a quality end product. The feedback emphasized the importance of balancing an enjoyable art making process with producing quality art products. If the end result looks “too childish” and amateur, then participants can dismiss both their creations and the process.

The creative process enabled people to feel free to be themselves alongside enjoyable co-creating with others.

Finally, the discovery by participants that vision is a visual process. People found it easier to generate practical ideas for the future (cognitive thinking) once they had painted their vision for Kingston (imaginal thinking).

3. How interested are you in continuing to make Kingston a brighter greener place to live?

Key Themes

Interested, inspired.

More than ever, lots of ideas developed for future projects. Deprived groups especially Great ideas for a sustainable community.

Very, I truly believe it needs to happen and it needs to start sooner rather than later.

Very interested but a pessimist realist.

I want to make Kingston green.

Our reflections and learning

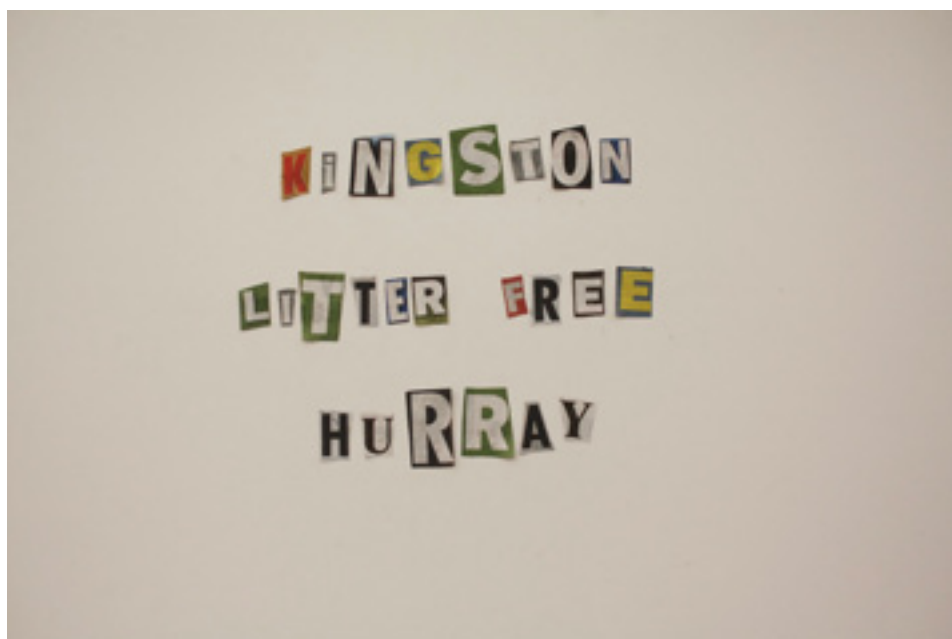
Relationship is the key insight of ecology

Suzi Gablik

The initial messaging and approach had a strong theme of sustainability. This approach was not very successful. It seemed to trigger people's apathy and indifference: green issues are for "greenies" but not for me.

In our recruitment initiatives we dropped the overt message of "sustainability" and focused on the importance of community voice, stories and ideas for the future. This enabled us to engage diverse community groups.

However, during the main event we then introduced a strong environmental theme in our event design, for example the use of green acetate and paint and in the naming of our zones: Forest of memories and River of feelings. Our hope was to use art making and story telling to enable people to appreciate their environment. This seemed to successfully stimulate an interest in contributing to a greener brighter future for Kingston.



Documentary with filmed learner interviews

Hope sees the invisible feels the intangible and achieves the impossible.
Charles Caleb Colto

The Documentary forms part of our overall objective around communicating content to the wider Kingston community and beyond. The documentary aims to promote civic engagement and to empower people in playing an active role in their community's present and future. It focuses on showing the use of interdisciplinary arts in an informal adult learning experience with people learning across generations. We wanted to show in the documentary people learning together, their interactions with each other, and co-creating learner generated content.

This documentary is our visual evidence of how we used the Artgym framework for community engagement and our measurement of success. We are currently previewing this documentary with our advisors prior to showing at our exhibition at Kingston Museum. One of our advisors gave us this feedback:

This project ticks all the boxes of what is important and timely right now: community engagement, community and intergenerational learning and community cohesion.

Listening to the learner interviews shows clearly how much people valued learning from each other, making art together and being part of a diverse community. We want this documentary to be a hopeful example of the power of community in a fragmented world where so many people feel isolated.



Ideas into action

Transforming learning into action is a key principle from our corporate work. The ideas board in the event helped us evaluate people's engagement in playing a more active role in their community's future. All of the ideas were correlated and have been given to Transition Town Kingston who will choose four ideas to transform into practical initiatives. Here is a sample of some of the ideas generated:

1. More community events. Getting together with people you would not usually talk to and doing things you wouldn't usually do. Events like today are great for meeting people and the more people you know in an area the better a sense of community you can have.
2. Create a newspaper or newsletter for the community to voice their concerns, opinions and suggestions.
3. Sunday road closures, so the people can reclaim the streets for children to play safely, walking, street parties, coming out to meet the neighbours.
4. Need to meet up once a month for group gardening.
5. More independent shops, butcher, baker, candlesticks maker.
6. Kingston Library should join the national "Borrow a Person" initiative, where one can 'borrow' i.e meet a person from a completely different background to one's own and talk to them.
7. Growing food on flat roofs. Growing food vertically.
8. Consider issuing more compost to householders.
9. Lots of cycle lanes separated off from the road so people feel safe on them and are more likely to use them.
10. More community litter clearing groups.



2. Planned Learning Outcomes achieved

Artgym

1. To unleash people's creative potential so that they inspire themselves to do great things
2. To facilitate creative collaborations between groups and stimulate powerful conversations
3. To co-create learner generated content and products

Artgym in the Community

1. To unleash large scale collective creativity in local communities.
2. To transfer best practice from our expertise in the corporate sector into the community.

Our Kingston Our Future project

1. To create a vision for a greener, brighter future for Kingston
2. To have a shared learning experience, co creating content using interdisciplinary arts
3. To learn from each other by sharing stories, memories and ideas
4. To learn from different generations and see the world through different perspectives
5. To engage learners in their community's future by, for example, joining Transition Town Kingston.
6. To use the learner generated content to inform and educate the wider Kingston community.
7. To create a documentary of the whole project to promote the use of intergenerational learning and interdisciplinary arts for civic engagement and community involvement.
8. To use some of the ideas generated by the event and translate them into Transition Town Kingston's practical initiatives for the next twelve months.

Unplanned Learning outcomes

The process of iteration using multiple art forms

There were many delightful surprises where people's learning was deepened through using learner generated content to inspire further artistic expression. This included:

Dancing at the end of the first event, led by the Tamil Women Elders Group

Poems written and performed at the event

Two drama students creating an improvised response to people's stories and shared memories.

Two students from Kingston University setting up a stall outside the marquee and inviting learners to make puppets using recycled materials.

Learners choosing to paint with someone from a different culture or generation.

Life beyond the project

Exhibition of Kingston Museum

Showcase of the documentary at the International Youth Arts Festival

Inclusion of the project to form part of two course modules: Drama and Devising in the Community and MA in Museum Studies.

Example of a poem written during one of the events

*A great night life was promised
But clubs don't seem to fall in to that category.
Kebab shops surround me
There to cure a bad hangover
But hangovers don't exist;
Not in this zombie fed area,*

*Kingston Town is not a students' town
More for children and the elderly.
I sit waiting for life to embrace me,
For the rivers to take me along its stream
Upon into London,
Our capital that resembles New York City
Because it too, never sleeps,*

*Greenery and water aplenty,
Yours in luck, if yours a duck,
But this is not the place for me*

*A pretty sight is nice
But sometimes 'nice' is not enough
Where is the chaotic craze?
The drinking, the dancing
The social life I crave"*

Kingston Town Frustration by Christina Styllanou,
March 21st 2010, Artgym

Section 5: Case Studies

Case study 1: Age Range 55 plus



This retired lady became engaged in the project through Transition Town Kingston. This was the first time she had ever attended an event which was intergenerational and involved the interdisciplinary use of the arts.

During the event, she took part in an activity in the Forest of Memories zone. These are her reflections on this activity:

I sat with a young man and we shared our memories and stories of living in Kingston. What struck me was that although there was a vast difference in age and we wouldn't normally have met, we were so similar in thinking. When he said "we are the river", I knew exactly what he meant, that we are all part of the eternal creation. I was surprised that someone so young could be so spiritual in his thinking.

Learning outcomes and benefits:

My vision is for integration and community, and this was happening before my very eyes! There were all these people from different cultures and ages. You don't get these opportunities; there are not a lot of chances for integration.

I discovered that the different ages have a lot more in common than we think. I hope the young people realised that we are not all fuddy duddies and that the older people realised that young people are not all drunk and drug addicts! I think the event really helped challenge some of those stereotypes and showed we have a lot more in common.

Ideas for the future:

We need to engage minorities and build understanding. As individuals, we need to take the time to get to know people who are different.

Case study 2: Age Range 19-25



This is an excerpt from a Kingston university student's blog, which explores her experience of attending the event.

*This morning I attended **Our Kingston Our Future** held in a large marquee at the parish church in the centre of Kingston upon Thames.*

I found out about the event after members of ArtGym came to my university.

I went to the opening workshop which was a great mix of ages, cultures and experiences and had a great time making some 3d art in the 'river' zone, with a partner who turned out to be someone I had had email contact with but never met. A nice bit of serendipity! I then enjoyed translating people's experiences and stories about Kingston in the 'forest' zone.

Everyone seemed to enjoy the event and some great art work was produced in a short space of time. There was a lovely atmosphere, and even a spot of spontaneous dancing at the end of the workshop! I wish I could see the marquee at the end of tomorrow - I am sure there will be a material wealth of art to show for the stories and hopes people have of Kingston. And it is a big, green, positive vibe in the middle of town. Great to see in a place which is nowadays known mainly for shopping but which has a long heritage and some hidden gems.

Case study 3: Bradbury Active Age Centre Discussion forum

In the documentary we captured a discussion forum we held with members. This was one of the smaller engagement events we ran during the project. There were about 18 members taking part in the discussion, with a ratio of 60% female to 40% male.

Some of the questions asked to stimulate discussion were:

What can the different generations learn from each other?
How important is it to bring together young adults and the older generation, to share stories and create a vision for their community's future?

This created quite a heated debate! One lady voiced the sentiments of a number of people:

We don't need them and in a funny sort of way they don't need us!

It became clear that a number of members had little contact with the younger generation, with some people saying they never saw their grandchildren or had little relationship with them. As a result, the discussion centered on if there was any point going to an event which brought them into direct contact with young adults.

We were struck by their reticence to take part in this project based on a lack of desire to build bridges of understanding across the generations. However, what was surprising, some of the members who were the most negative still turned up to the **Our Kingston Our Future** event!



Section 6: Exit Strategy/legacy

Lasting outcomes of the project

Kingston Museum: The artwork created from the engagement events, to include the Forest of Memories mobiles, the River of Feelings boxes and the Vision paintings was exhibited in the Kingston Museum and throughout the Kingston Summer Arts season. This artwork was displayed alongside a photo story of the project and the documentary. We donated material to the museum for their oral history collection.

International Youth Arts festival: This festival ran in Kingston from July 2nd to July 11th, with a 100 events taking place across 9 venues. The documentary was shown in this event during the Youth Arts Film Awards.

Kingston Drama Students: A small group of students were involved in this project as part of their Devising in the Community course module. Learner generated content from the events was used as stimulus for an arts performance that highlights the need for creating sustainable communities.

Transition Town Kingston: TTK took over management of the **Our Kingston Our Future** face book group and database. They contacted all the learners who registered interest in joining TTK. They chose four ideas generated from the workshop and translated them into practical initiatives.

Continuing the project

This project has helped us develop the blueprint for Artgym in the Community, which we aim to promote to other boroughs of London and beyond. The documentary will be used to promote the Artgym framework for community engagement. We would like the documentary to get as wide a reach as possible and Kingston Museum is advising us on how best to promote it as a tool for informal adult learning.

What are the barriers to this?

The main barrier is achieving appropriate funding to run large scale community engagement projects.

What have you learnt that could be used to influence policy?

This oral history is brilliant. I can hardly bear to leave. Congratulations on such a wonderful way to bring Kingstonians together.”

Susan Kramer MP

This is the first project we have done outside of the corporate sector and therefore approached the mammoth task of engaging diverse sectors of the community with a degree of naïve innocence! We didn't realise that bringing together such diverse groups was considered such a monumental achievement! One of our advisors gave us this feedback.

You have no idea what a miracle you achieved. It is incredibly hard to engage a community in learning and especially hard to get young people and old people together and even harder to make these events truly diverse and inclusive.

We believe we have created a template for community engagement based on what has worked well during this project. What comes through loud and clear, as a key lesson from this project is that community learning is all about including multiple stakeholders from all sectors of society. This is informal adult learning the hard way, because people naturally have barriers and prejudices, often avoiding seeking out people who are very different. However, the dividends of the hard work are immense. It is extra ordinarily moving to see people who seem so different, because of their age, background, ethnicity, and culture, realise that after all they have so much in common and so much to learn from each other. As one learner said:

“When you get down to our grass roots you realise it is not Them and Us but We. We may come from different backgrounds but deep down we share the same human values”.

We discovered the universal power of interdisciplinary arts that transcends the barriers of language, culture and generations. The use of different art forms: storytelling, poetry, dance, singing, painting, printing, sculpture and drama, appealing to different cultural backgrounds, learning styles and confidence levels. So for example, music, singing and dance, resonated really well with the Tamil elders, while storytelling was a low risk activity for people who felt nervous about painting. Finally, learning is about collaboration and participation. A learner centric approach engages people because it appeals to a universal need to feel valued and to know that our contribution is of value.

Section 7: What resources have been developed?

We have uploaded all our resources to the School of Everything and these can be accessed using this link:

<http://schoolofeverything.com/person/artgym/scrapbook>

The resources we have uploaded are:

Our Kingston Our Future external website: <http://ourkingstonourfuture.org/>

This website was created to advertise the events, be a place for people to find out more, sign up to the events, and also for them to upload their ideas, images and thoughts around their vision for Kingston.

Our Kingston Our Future Facebook group

<http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=311162624880&ref=ts>

We created a Facebook group as a place to hold open source discussions with the community about the project. We have 173 members of this group and it is still growing. TTK have taken over the running of the group and will be posting up ongoing progress of the ideas created at the events.

Internal Blog site

<http://ourkingstonourfuture.wordpress.com/>

We created this internal blogsite as a place to share our process, progress and learnings between all the team members. This was set up as one of the first stages of the project.

Artgym and Transition Town Kingston co-create their vision

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_37mjv8y120

On Friday 13th November, Artgym and Transition Town Kingston got together in Kingston's Environment Centre to co-create our vision for the project.

Focus Group part one

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_8QQAs6doh4

We ran a Focus group on 16th Dec 2009 with Kingston residents to gain insight on the project. The movie is in two parts, each ten minutes long.

Focus Group part two

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pef0xpKnHSA>

Part 2 of the focus groups video

Artgym comes to Kingston

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K0FJtVufARg>

ARTGYM comes to Kingston...On 6th March we arrived in a busy vibrant Kingston armed with placards, art materials and good humour. Our mission was to find out what people thought of Kingston and spread the word about the events.

Small engagement event at Kingston University

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MlxXfJmyrWI>

We met with Drama students in March to help us plan this exciting project and to encourage them to participate and also to perform at the event.

Small engagement event with Tamil Elders

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ma6lhFT8NA4>

Elders at the Shiraz Mirza Community Hall gave Artgym a very warm welcome!

Small engagement event at Bradbury Active Age Centre

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nRPIFSkf4r0>

Members at the Bradbury Active Age centre in Kingston share with us their views on the generation gap and the feeling of community.

Artgym present at the TTK Power of Alliances

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w8zKRtmdY-A>

On 26th November Louise presented the project at the TTK Power of Alliances talk In Kingston

The Documentary

<http://vimeo.com/10775554>

Artgym comes to Kingston upon Thames to help young and old people within the community to come together to share their stories and create a shared vision for their future. This is the documentary of the event.

Marketing material

Artwork uploaded to School of Everything for posters and flyers

Advertising:

Visuals uploaded to School of Everything for the advertising on lastminute.com

Press and PR:

Press release and clippings uploaded to School of Everything

Learner resources:

Info pack, sign up form and feedback form template uploaded to School of Everything

A selection of images from the events

We have uploaded to School of Everything a selection of images from the events.

PEOPLE BRANDS

29

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