

**ARTS
WHERE
I
STAND**

making art an integral part of human existence

essays collected from around the world by Stephanie Knight

Arts where I stand

Introduction

Two years ago, the British Council Scotland hosted a seminar in Edinburgh to which artists from all over the world were invited. It was an event which focused on *reaching communities through the arts*. Over the past fifty years, Scotland has established arts policies and practices for working in this area, however; in many countries of the world, this is an emerging area of arts practice.

At this event a number of artists identified the need to collaborate to create a document which narrates their experience of this field of work in their own countries. A number of artists spoke of their struggles and frustration at the lack of understanding and support offered by their governments and municipalities for this work. Some artists told of their work in dangerous zones – be that time, geographic, political, psychological and artistic zones.

As discussion progressed, it was decided that a way to profile the work internationally and support artists who had little encouragement in their own countries, was to create something which could be given to the Minister for Culture of every country of the world. This collection of essays marks the first stage of that aspiration.

I agreed to collate and edit the essays and also asked for contributions from Borka Pavicevic and Lynne Clark. Both of these women have made significant contributions to the development of participatory and community theatre practice in their own countries. In Scotland, Lynne Clarke has developed one of the finest courses in Community Theatre, at the University of Queen Margaret, Edinburgh. This great achievement is reflected especially in the high level of critical dialogue and engagement that the course fosters in its students, who work towards a Bachelor of Arts in Drama and Theatre with a special focus on community practice. In the Serbia, Borka Pavicevic has been engaged in facilitating critical dialogue and the reclamation of community space in an area that had been dominated by the public display of political extremism and nationalism. Borka's involvement in 'small street scenes' is a direct and organic confrontation and challenge to such domination and loss of community dialogue. Such work is illustrative of the fact that Borka's work is well informed by critical comment, and that it is a living philosophy of international practice.

The collection's other contributions reflect the seminar's international scope, with contributions from participants from South Africa, Venezuela, Colombia, and Patagonia, as well as Scotland and Serbia. In Cape Town, South Africa, Yasmine Colley has been engaged in the formation of arts and culture policy in the city, and in establishing a platform for the arts to facilitate social development. A particularly exciting development in this part of the world is the initiative to develop an international arts and cultural festival in Cape

Town, which would allow local artists to be engaged in the arts on an international level, and provide important sources of income for local people. Similarly, the Guga Sthebe Arts and Culture Centre in Langa, South Africa, provides the community of Langa with a community arts and culture centre that is built entirely from local labour and local materials.

In Venezuela, community space has undergone transformation in an equally exciting, but very different context. Xiomara Jiménez's work challenges the traditional notions of public space, and links zones of experience through creating community-based 'laboratories' for participants. Xiomara and others have taken the traditional museum space and transformed the Jabobo Borges museum into an open and interactive community platform that facilitates reflection and dialogue among its visitors and participants. The centre has moved beyond the traditional scope of a museum, and instead has become a complementary reflection of the community's own interests in matters related to legal and human rights issues and social programmes.

Similarly innovative and critically engaged initiatives have taken place in Bogotá, Columbia. Daniel Vegas and Rolf Abderhalden have helped facilitate the *C'úndua* project, which approaches members of the Bogotá community who have been affected by extreme life experiences, and those who have become disconnected from their community and its developments. The project considers human conflicts to be events that give meaning to everyday life, and the project aims to provide community-based reflection on the meaning of conflict in people's lives.

Maria Clara Reussi's contribution to the collection highlights the importance of reclaiming art as a democratic activity in Venezuela, where engagement in democratic art processes has been undermined by the dominance of media-defined and corporate-owned art forms. She stresses the importance of communities fostering active and democratic engagement in art, rather than becoming a consumer of mass-media-defined and corporate-owned art.

The contributions to this collection of essays are a credit to the courage and endeavour of the people concerned. The written descriptions of the various projects that are taking place globally reflect the honour and humility of those involved. The critical dialogue around community theatre and arts practice is an international one, and one which has helped establish communities of arts practice and practitioners across the globe. At this point in human history, a time when the work of arts practitioners can become intensified by the backcloth of militarism and neo-liberalism, this dialogue makes a crucial contribution to this essential work. However, while such dialogue around community theatre and arts practice may be a critical response to the global political and social climates, it is far from being simply a response to oppression and abuse. Rather, these essays and the work that they describe are conscious contributions that further our understanding

of different ways of thinking, of diverse global structures, and of making art an integral part of human existence.

The contributions to this collection are significant, and present a critical and global perspective on the currents in arts practice and community theatre. However, it should be acknowledged that this collection is still a work in progress, and we hope to add contributions from participants from Israel, Palestine and Vietnam.

Thank you to all of the participants how contributed to this collection and thank you to Lorna Selley for her contributions towards editing and collating. I should also like to thank Judy Elliott from British Council Scotland for her collaboration.

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Arts Where I Stand: Essays from across the world from artists practising participatory and community arts

Alternative roles for memory, art and aesthetics in the process of protecting life and fostering coexistence: the case of the C'úndua Project in Bogotá, Colombia, South America.¹

Daniel Vegas and Rolf Abderhalden

The following paper has the purpose of giving more elements of analysis for understanding the topic of the international seminar *Reaching Communities through Arts* (British Council, Edinburgh, Scotland, June 2004). In order to

¹ This paper has been developed by Daniel Vargas, Executive Producer of the project, with the collaboration of Rolf Abderhalden who works as its Art Director. More information can be obtained at info@mapateatro.org

achieve the above it will take the experience gained by the *C'úndua*² Project during the last three years in the city of Bogotá, Colombia, South America. In general terms this project has worked with excluded communities affected by extreme violent situations, trying to incorporate memory, art and aesthetics in the process of constructing cities, protecting life and fostering coexistence.

The paper will present firstly the context of the *C'úndua* Project through a fragment from one of its community's participants. Secondly, it will address its main purposes and methodology and thirdly, it will try to highlight some of its main results; therefore, it will look at the learning and artistic perceptions. Finally, as a conclusion, it will enunciate the project's basic lessons and the challenges for the near future.

"My companion is the eagle"³

This situation is a very tough relationship. My companion is doing me great emotional harm. Yes, I feel like Prometheus, and my companion is the eagle, and my daughter is the chain. She is the one who unites us. At times I would like, as they say, to break the chain, but she won't let me. It's a strong chain; that link to my daughter is that extremely heavy chain that holds me to the eagle who is my companion. I, Prometheus, who even if I could let go wouldn't do it, because I feel tied to the eagle. Like I am hanging from it, and feel more and more bound as the days go on. Even though he is hurting me, I feel as if I need that eagle. Sometimes, when he says he's leaving, I feel bad. I depend on his being there, as if he were my protection. It's better to live, as they say, like a Prometheus chained and not a Prometheus freed. That's how I feel. He has already hooked me, the chain cuts me, that eagle there on my leg doesn't want to let go. Yes, that's how I feel, one more part of me and another bit of my liver he has eaten; the eagle that was eating my liver, he eats me and he eats me and now I don't get tired but I get accustomed to it. Now it's a custom, day-to-day-to-day. I ask, "Without that eagle, what would I do?" Do you understand me? I say, "That eagle is what gives me a reason for living my life, too."

Bogotá, a metropolis as yet undecided between modernity and backwardness, and home to more than six million people, is a city of contrasts, where "... sometimes a succession of cities on the same site and using the same name, are born and die without having met, unable to communicate among themselves".⁴

The above part is a good approximation of the final *purpose* of this project in each of its phases: to contribute to the symbolic construction of the city by

² The place where we will go after death according to the Arhuaca mythology from the Indians of the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta in Colombia.

³ LUZ ANGELA MORENO, Former Inhabitant of Santa Inés - El Cartucho, Participant in the Prometheus' Laboratory (2002, 2003)

⁴ Calvino Italo. *Las Ciudades Invisibles*. Mexico: Ediciones Minotauro, 1993.

building bridges between different people, re-signifying the daily life of its inhabitants in order to enrich their perspective. *C'úndua* wanted not only to approach those who have been affected by extreme life experiences, but also those who, although they live in the city, have remained distant or indifferent to what is going on around them. The project understands "extreme" experiences to be significant events, life-or-death conflicts, and considers the way they have been or are being addressed, resolved, channelled and assimilated by people or communities. It considers the conflicts that give meaning to daily life in the dimension of reality or in the absence of limits.

El Quinto Trabajo de Heracles: La Limpieza de los Establos de Augias ('Heracles' Fifth Labour: Cleanse of Augeias's Stables') (2004); *Re-Corridos* ('Run-Throughs'), *Prometeo Acto II* ('Prometheus Act II) (2003); *Prometeo Acto I* ('Prometheus Act I'), *Recorrido Histórico por la Avenida Jiménez* ('An Historical Review of Jiménez Avenue') (2002); and *Un Pacto con la Vida* ('A Pact with Life) (2001), have all been actions (laboratories) aimed at exploring the multiple meanings - real or imaginary - generated by everyday ways of living, coexisting, and dying. The starting point are the stories - words, gestures, images, objects (be they individual or collective) - dealing with extreme experiences in the lives of some parts of the populations inhabiting the outlying districts of the city of Bogotá.

Although to a certain extent one of the particularities of the *C'úndua* Project is its lack of a "tight" methodological framework, during the different laboratories it has followed a process. To visualize what is invisible, or what we often voluntarily want to ignore, the process of constructing the project appealed first to memory, to rescuing it in order to generate "spaces of encounter" among the populations affected by different kinds of problems: social exclusion, displacement, the informal economy, family instability, lack of affection, use of psychoactive substances, poverty, hunger. We understand this memory to be "...what is left after something happens and doesn't completely stop happening".⁵

C'úndua did not only work with vulnerable populations. It has also addressed outlying districts within the city, characterized by informal development processes, as in the case of the barrios situated on the north-eastern hills of Usaquén. It also worked in areas where there is urban and social decay, such as the Santa Inés barrio in the locality of Santa Fe, an area known as the Calle del Cartucho ('Lily Street') in the city centre area. Among these populations and territories, where what is public and what is private are in constant conflict and tension, *C'úndua* wanted to contribute to the process of salvaging the memory and redefining limits, based on the city's symbolic representations: expression of the relationships of power and coexistence in collective socialization spaces.

Through art - the aesthetic dimension - the project promoted and used "encounter spaces" to identify possible myths, understood as inclusive and

⁵ De Bono Edward, *El Mecanismo de la Mente*. Penguin, Hammondsouth, 1997.

explicative stories to the entire community. *C'úndua* collectively builds the characteristics of each event in a process that has been called a "laboratory of social imagination". This process uses different approaches, multiple possibilities that are offered by artistic media to present or represent the problems that are identified for each part of the population or district - all in order to put the myth or story on "centre stage". The methodology begins with central guidelines, but is unique in each event and each work group: it is a methodology that is permanently under construction.

For these reasons, and because of the very nature of the project, the results have not always been easy to perceive and quantify. *C'úndua* was relatively successful in its aim to foster work between the different generational (youth, adult, elderly) and ethnic (indigenous and Afro-Colombian) groups immersed in different social problems and coming from different regions of the country. At the group level, an inter-generational sharing of the life stories of the elderly in Usaquén was carried out, by circulating their "books of memory" among the different district schools, and through contact with young people from that locality.

Following its first presentation, the project's methodology, interventions and results tried to question the work with vulnerable populations that are often assisted without any previous knowledge of their particularities and contexts.

C'úndua presented the need to incorporate art and memory into public urban renewal policies - specifically those carried out since 1998 by the Mayor of Bogotá's Office in the central part of the city. Given the serious state of abandonment and social and physical decay of the area, with the highest homicide and insecurity rates in the city over the past decade, renewal meant demolishing twenty hectares of the Santa Inés barrio. From the beginning of its participation, the project suggested considering the possibility of leaving a more tangible mark on its physical space, leaving current and future citizens a symbol and testimony of the extreme life experiences in this part of Bogotá. In this case, the "mark" to be left was designed bearing in mind that "a well built city is not only one whose spaces and buildings are durable and beautiful; it is one whose spaces and buildings hold a sense of the life of its citizens".⁶

C'úndua started with the idea that a population without a memory, without any intention to remember, to assimilate, to leave a testimony and pay homage to its most painful and happiest life experiences, is part of a society that has problems *recognizing itself*.

From an artistic point of view, instead of implementing policy for recreation or socio-cultural stimulation, or given socio-therapeutic practice, the *C'úndua* Project consisted of interpreting - in a critical and autonomous spirit and within the specific framework of *art* - the ideas of a democratic citizen

⁶ Saldarriaga. R. Alberto, "Imagen y memoria en la construcción cultural de la ciudad" en *La ciudad: habitat de diversidad y complejidad*, Universidad Nacional de Colombia, UNIBIBLOS, Bogotá, abril de 2000, p.166.

culture belonging to the city project that the Bogotanos chose at the beginning of the third millennium. That is why *C'úndua* constantly ran up against the complex and unresolved question about the relationship between art and governability.

The effects of the *C'úndua* Project may well have been repairing, dignifying, and thus “therapeutic” or “socializing”, but once again this was never its purpose. It's just that not being tied to a specific end unleashes processes of experimentation. The absence of a specific purpose in art leads to the de-instrumentalisation of processes. The job of the artistic area of the project was to imagine an artistic process within a specific community, starting with a *founders' myth* or *story* that would be capable of generating the production of narratives and images that build subjectivity. And here, the figure of the artist continues to be important as a promoter of *aesthetic agency*: a process through which an image constructs precisely that: subjectivity.

Rather than producing objects, or “works of art”, the job of the artists and facilitators was to orientate and articulate sensitivities -both artistic and non-artistic - in the management of a collective human experience: a bridge between individuals and small collectives and a group of artists and professionals from other disciplines, for the temporary creation of an *experimental community*. This community kept growing and evolving throughout an experimental process, as a small laboratory of social imagination: a laboratory for constructing and re-constructing images and stories from the inhabitants of the narrative space of this enormous city.

Bogotá, like all large Latin American cities, is an immense written page on which, second by second, millions of human experiences are inscribed. Living signs and letters that mesh together to form a physical, political and symbolic map in permanent movement within space and time. The *C'úndua* Project was born into a paradoxical, dispersed, *de-memorized* city, with a question about myth as founding story, generator of all stories, and awakener of memories.

Michel de Certeau states that the dispersion of stories is in itself an indicator of the dispersion of what is memorable. Memory is the anti-museum: it cannot be anchored in any place. Fragments of memory break off into legends, objects and words. There sleeps a past; and some myths lurk within daily events. Therefore the *face*, the *gesture*, the *word* and the *mark* of some inhabitants of Bogotá formed - based on their *singularity* - the body of the images and intimate stories (both visual and sonorous) that were made into *visible* memory for other inhabitants of a wide socio-cultural diversity in Bogotá's public spaces.

C'úndua deconstructed and reconstructed the stories as performances: they do what they say, they create spaces, they perform a task that incessantly transforms places into spaces and spaces into places. But they also create myths: they transform memories into fiction and fiction into memories.

C'úndua did not work with multitudes but with small groups, singularities that were converted into true experimental communities. It carried out its practices inside the barrios, out there where the people live, on their streets or inside their homes, turning anthropological fieldwork into artistic fieldwork, avoiding the analytical categories of the sciences or the moral categories of our subjectivities and giving privilege to encounter, confrontation and experience with others. This is accomplished through multiple artistic productions - drawings, collages, photographs, narratives, plastic events, installations, performances, video-sound installations, sonorous landscapes, daily micro-stories - unconventionally presented in different times and public spaces around Bogotá, away from any traditional museum or performing space.

Perhaps one of the main lessons learnt from the artistic area of the *C'úndua* Project is related to the gestation of an experimental community. It is only possible thanks to a methodology in permanent movement, that does not permit the repetition of schemes and that builds from the interior of the community, and more precisely, from the perspective of its true dynamic, inscribed in concrete time and space.

The development of the *C'úndua* Project has left many lessons. The most important lesson is the redefinition of the role of memory, art and aesthetics in the process of constructing the city and new citizens, and highlighting the increasingly important contribution art and culture can make to a territory's governability and to reaching its development objectives.⁷ Because in the end art - as opposed to badly used power - is inseparable from life. As Zalamea states, "... it is a decisive activity for transforming the idea of the world and how to perceive it ... [that] intensifies the experience of what is real".⁸

The main challenge facing a project like *C'úndua* in the future lies in its ability to adapt to social problems that operate in different contexts and deserve similar interventions to the ones carried out during the period 2001-2004 in the city of Bogotá, and in its ability to continue exploring - from memory and art - novel ways of protecting life and fostering coexistence. The challenge thus lies in showing what the project, in its beginnings, took as its essence: illustrating how, in a country sated and therefore anesthetized by violence, the only certainty and possible alternative is, or should be, to die every instant but with patience, not with violence.

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⁷ British Council, *Arts and Culture for Development In Profile 2003*, June 2003, www.britishcouncil.org/arts

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The Major and Minor Street Scenes

By Borka Pavicevic

There are loads of theoretical works on what the theatre's impact on local community is – this will remain the case in the future. Certainly, both local people and the world at large are finding new and different formulations for something that has existed long since; however, there are also new occurrences which are still nameless. To find a name, to christen something

is like christening someone, of course. Therefore, you must define it, formulate it, give it an identity or describe what that identity signifies.

However, language is often abandoning people today, or they find it difficult to find the right word or phrase in the midst of a limitless number of international phrases, as we strive towards a better or more general understanding of the world. In fact, that forest of words and concepts is not only a communication mode among bureaucrats, but it actually bureaucratizes, destroying any sense whatsoever. Franz Kafka said that every crime begins with spiritual self-mutilation.

If I may say so, in the numerous activities that have taken place at the Centre for Cultural Decontamination over the years, there were scenes and events which we transformed into social event, while there were also moments when a social and political event would fit into our context and be articulated.

At one point, Bertold Brecht talked about a 'minor street scene', a live scene which acts as a warning. Actually, a scene by which one can judge what is happening in that social community and what road it has taken. This is possible for an attentive observer, or someone who wishes to see.

There were many such scenes in our lives and our life's testimony in Belgrade. There were also 'major street scenes', events, meetings, speeches, which by their historical analogy (as well as the mise-en-scene, the way people were moving, how they spoke, how they looked, what they were wearing, how they behaved) apparently showed how the wave of populism was rising in an organized manner, how the society homogenization process was taking place, how the goals were being dictated to it, and how it rose and prepared itself. Naturally, it was all organized into one simple 'we'. We, the people. Perhaps it is one of the more fascinating examples of the role of the 'elite' and of the mimicry of the listeners, viewers, and population.

It is not a bad idea to remind oneself what it looks like when one person (especially a head of state or party), speaks, and listeners and viewers applaud, chant, shout. The speaker himself also shouts to provoke the chanting, and says exactly what the majority wants to hear. Hands are raised in salute at first, and then the hand becomes a fist. And all 'others' become unpopular, and then unbeseeing. Plus, if you add the artistic package – scenes, coats of arms, flags, banners – then this new, horrible page of history can commence.

You can imagine the impression you could make if you also reign over media and TV, if posters on truck windscreens and in shop windows multiply (especially if photos are made from a floor angle, in divination), there is no end to the myth and cult.

The Centre for Cultural Decontamination in Belgrade has been envisioned and established as the 'place for speech' of those people who were in opposition to the 'major street scene'. It began as part of an anti-war movement during the Yugoslav wars, or wars for breaking up the old state and establishing new ones.

Therefore, as a culture outpost for all those people who were against the growth and rampage of nationalism, homogenization, xenophobia, provincialization and finally – destruction and violence.

Since the 'minor street scene' was not detected, and thus grew into 'major street scenes' and then into war expeditions - what remained was to determine whether a cultural matrix, speech and gesture can animate a good number of people to participate or connive in creating the general national psychosis in different ways, and then use the same means to call to pacification and if you wish, decontamination of the public contaminated with real and virtual propaganda images.

That is how we began with the 'minor street scene' creation. The one who points out or warns, where the criticism towards the circumstances and policy we were living in got translated into an affirmation of a different viewpoint and the nature of the creative act itself.

So - in 1996 (the year after the Dayton peace agreement on cease-fire in Bosnia, and before the winter of 1996/97 when day-and-night demonstrations against the Milosevic regime took place – with their characteristic extraordinary scenic elements), the Centre for Cultural Decontamination performed a series of 'minor street scenes', directed by Ana Miljanic, and based on Wilhelm Reich's 'Listen, Little Man'. This is a famous work by German psycho-analysts, authors of (among others) the 'Mass Psychoanalysis of Fascism' and creators of a term 'orgonic energy' as the sort of human energy which confronts every totalitarianism and every petty-bourgeois, as the most fertile ground for fascism.

The performance took place on different locations in Belgrade which were markers, or places, nodes of accumulated and counterpointed political and ideological significance. At the beginning of this event, Ana Miljanic asked the host of city TV to stop his usual speech and ask himself if what he says has any meaning and can he, as a person, agree with what he says. This was at exactly 0800hrs, precisely at the moment when the performance participants were gathering in the Centre's courtyard.

During the day, the following 'scenes' took place:

A young man, one of the centre's employees and a refugee from Bosnia, went to the municipal hall to request citizenship, which was impossible at the time. With the audience in his wake, of course.

Then we all went to the Hyatt Hotel, where the popular 'Swedish buffet' lunch of the newly-growing war class was taking place. Our colleague, currently the Selector of BITEF (Festival of New Theatre Tendencies), who at the time, and for the last 30 years, had been putting Belgrade on the map as a vital point of the theatre and political world – took a Roma family to lunch, among this new 'noble' class.

On Kalemegdan, the favorite part of town and promenade famous for its pensioner gatherings, where they pass the time waiting for their pensions, play chess and sit in the warm sun – it was proposed to them to start dancing, to inspire in them a lust for life.

At the time, Belgrade had an almost impossible and hard-to-describe traffic. We rented a bus, gave it a good clean-up, fixed it and moved it into the traffic. The passengers were amazed that seats were available, that the bus personnel was kind and that everything was clean. I remember that one lady passenger asked whether this was Djindjic's propaganda, if he was agitating as the then opposition leader of the Democratic Party, and today an assassinated Prime Minister of Serbia. (History and life are sometimes amazing, don't you think?).

In one Belgrade district, characterised by the trafficking of all kinds of goods and also connected to one of the biggest local crooks and leader of a paramilitary unit – a young model took off her clothes, in order to put on all those trafficked paraphernalia typical for the female look just being created in the transitional times of this post-war society.

Then, another 'minor street scene' took place among the Serbian refugees from Croatia, then and now present in Belgrade. They played a typical ball game from the parts they came from, so that in the evening, when the performane game came to an end, the Belgrade and Serbian public had the opportunity to hear how those who came in the name of dividing the people into Croats and Serbs, speak closer in linguistic origin to that which is spoken where they were outcast, versus Serbia, where the majority is of Serbian nationality.

'Listen, Little Man' was performed in the evening, in its entirety, with the bus entering the Centre's gate, with an installation of the TV host's photo, who interrupts his show and the 'evil infinity' of propaganda, with the arrival of refugees, and the model showing up with all her bought merchandise, and with a sign than read 'LUST FOR LIFE', which is still on the Centre's gate to this day, and which the Art Group 'Skart' - during their performance - put up in all areas where 'minor street scenes' took place during the day.

Honestly speaking, I believe that this unusual theatre method of Ana Miljanic and the centre had a definite influence on real events that followed, in a theatralisation of space and performance of live scenes during anti-Milosevic demonstrations the same year. I think that this is one of the examples of how a 'place for speech', as in the Centre's case, or the

creation of 'minor street scenes' does in fact have influence on the environment in every sense, and how a Minority in specific historic conditions (or better said - always), can influence the majority. Or, how little by little, art and culture can influence their environment.

Arts an Unfunded Mandate: Policy Issues Related to Arts and Culture in the City of Cape Town

Yasmine Colley

The City of Cape Town Arts and Culture Services was created in 1997 after consulting with communities, academics, theorists and practitioners. In addition, arts and culture forums were set up in the different areas of the City of Cape Town. A Local Arts and Culture Council was set up to advise the city on issues relating to the Arts, and to assist in the formulation of policy.

The White Paper of March 1996 encourages both urban and provincial government to use arts and culture to facilitate social development. Local government is especially important in such activity, as its closer relationship to the community means it can develop projects and activities at grassroots level.

In response to the White Paper of 1996, the City of Cape Town and other local organizations held meetings for public participation to inform the formulation of Arts and culture policy.

This policy was adopted by the City of Cape Town in August 1997. It encourages social development through the Arts and culture, and aims to assist in bringing about change within communities. The policy also aims to ensure that the built environment is adapted to meet the needs of communities and their needs relating to the arts.

Such policy was in part a response to communities' call for transformation and the need for change. The Poverty Alleviation Conference which was held at the Good Hope Centre in Cape Town earlier this year highlighted the economic plight of the craft sector. It underlined the need for Arts to be recognized as a livelihood, not just a recreational activity. The Poverty Alleviation Conference has the long-term vision of seeing the creative industry grow into the largest employer by 2020. More integrated services, a larger local government budget for arts and culture, and a sustainable coordinated sector with an integrated developmental approach were all emphasised as necessary to reach this goal and alleviate poverty.

Formally, government funding was granted predominantly to the "high arts", resulting in a lack of funding for community-based arts and culture projects. Therefore, It was deemed appropriate that previously disadvantaged communities receive assistance towards development and training in the

arts sector, and thus to receive at least eighty percent of the budget formally given to only the “high arts”. These forms of “high arts” are still supported to a lesser extent, with the focus on transformation.

Arts and culture policy also aims to meet the City Of Cape Town’s wider objective of redistributing urban growth to the core urban population. There are currently proposals for the creation of a cultural precinct in the East City precinct, and work is currently underway to incorporate public art into capital projects, creating jobs for artists. Concerts in Parks, a project running for the past four years, has contributed significantly to building audiences and building community cohesion as well as providing jobs for musicians and economic opportunities for vendors. It also encourages the positive use of public open spaces.

Other projects aim to showcase the talent of local artists through community arts projects. Through the grant-in-aid programme, the film commission has participated in the development of immersing black film makers and the related industry.

The policy also aims to encourage networking in the national and international culture industry. Development is currently underway towards a long-term plan for growth, so that the Cape Town Festival may become a cultural world festival.

The City of Cape Town also works in collaboration with national and other local governments in projects aiming to alleviate poverty, encourage urban regeneration and build social capital through projects focusing on cultural spaces and resources, and promoting public art and heritage, among other activities.

An example of this is the Guga Sthebe Arts and Culture Centre which was formed after the community of Langa identified the need for an arts and culture centre in the area.

This need led to The City of Cape Town entering into a partnership with the Provincial Departments of the Western Cape, Cultural Affairs and Sport, and Social Services. Ongoing discussions with these partners as well as with the Langa community led to the eventual approval of an arts and culture centre for Langa. The centre is in a unique building which was designed in consultation with the community. Local labour was used to build the centre.

The Centre is a vibrant place even though staff have had to operate under governance and funding problems. The roles of arts centres are vital in creating opportunities for local artists to showcase their work and have access to local markets. Despite having many teething problems, the art centre is improving governance, and many lessons were gleaned from this partnership.

Research has shown how the cultural sector has contributed to improving the quality of societies. Improvements are found in education, cultural preservation, crime reduction, and benefits to at-risk youth, as well as economic development and social cohesion. Researcher S. Prosalendis is engaged in a current project called the Social Fabric study held at the Human Sciences Research Council of South Africa (HSRC) looking at social cohesion and social capital as ways of measuring and quantifying South African society. Arts and culture policy and practice at local level are seen as strong proponents of social cohesion and social capital. HSRC, through their International Network on Cultural Policy concerning globalisation, cultural diversity and developing countries, stressed that while the demand is global, the supply is local, and our most precious resource are our local cultural producers, our creative workers. They strongly advocate the support of local cultural producers and suggest this is best done at local-level funding.

In conclusion, the Arts and Culture branch within the City Of Cape Town has a coordinating role within the city to ensure that arts and culture is placed on the agenda of the City Of Cape Town. It acts as an entry point for arts and culture projects and programmes and formulates policy for the arts. It is actively engaged in trying to achieve the City Of Cape Town's wider aims and objectives through projects and programmes.

The branch provides opportunities for artists on a local, provincial and National level and plays a consulting role for other departments in the city on issues related to arts and culture. Due to lack of resources it works in an integrated creative way to achieve the vision of the City of Cape Town. It also deals with local grant-in-aid funding and builds partnerships with like-minded organisations to achieve like-minded objectives.

Transference of Mediums: a model for creation ***Xiomara Jiménez***

The Jacobo Borges museum is not a traditional museum, not only because it was not conceived as such, but because we have needed, and been obligated, to respond to situations that are traditionally outside the scope of an art museum.

In this sense, it has been an exceptional challenge for the members of staff who work at the museum, as they must work within an urban space that does not necessarily have the artistic considerations that a traditional art museum has.

For this reason, developing strategies to approach the collective represented by the city of Catia became a priority, in order to try to understand our environment and therefore respond to the collective's interest in cultural matters.

This has been a permanent exercise still in full development that constitutes the starting point of each of our experiences, reflected both in the course of research we have undertaken as well as in the educational projects. It has also opened up our physical spaces for the inhabitants of this community, so that they may engage in discussions about their most imminent problems as members of a collective.

We have learned to look at these cultural phenomena with wider considerations and, at the same time, we have learned to interpret social and cultural phenomena that earlier were considered as problems to be solved by courses of action outside our area of competence. Our objective is to use art to facilitate a creative platform for discussion.

In the course of our work, we have found that we have had to pay special attention to our more immediate audience. We were forced to generate a public audience, and this audience needed to be aware of its own need to go through creative experiences, in order for us to build the museum as a collective space. It was important for us to understand that the public is not only a recipient of experience at the museum, it is part of the museum in a more organic and participative way.

This approach allows us to consider the possibility of dealing with audiences from a more active position, and for this reason we characterize them as “Constructive audiences”.

In this sense we have undertaken to develop exhibitions or joint programmes through focus groups (constructive audiences), which in turn attract the interest of a public that finds in the museum a complementary reflection of their own interests in matters related to legal and human rights issues or social programmes. With exhibitions like *Cuarta Pared* (‘Fourth wall’), *Caballo de Troya* (‘Trojan Horse’), *Niños de la calle* (‘Homeless Children’), and *Eva en ausencia. El lenguaje del duelo* (‘Eve in Absence. The Language of Mourning’) to name only a few, the Jacobo Borges Museum became an appropriate place to discuss crucial issues present in the daily life of a society like ours, and in this extent we have been a mirror of the imaginary and collective identity of the community.

On the other hand, the model for creating an audience also includes the exercise of making museum-like proposals that normally don’t get the interest of other institutions of this kind. However with the aim of creating spaces of cultural transcendence, we have approached spheres more related to daily life and the communications industry, and in doing so have become an attractive place to explore topics as diverse as the relationships between our environment, language, the marketplace, radio, sport, beauty pageants and the world of popular music.

Each of these topics have been explored, resulting in an important volume of exhibitions, where the topic's aesthetics were explored further. These exhibitions explore aspects of our daily life through art, and past proposals include *Momentos de la Radio* ('Radio Moments'); *90/60/90 Mercado de Catia* (Catia Marketplace) and *El Magallanes* (The Magallanes)

Thanks to this exercise, cultural phenomena acquire new aesthetic possibilities in areas previously disconnected with art, with themes coming from different fields of contemporary life.

In this sense, we can say that the museum considers itself as a research and creation laboratory that becomes an agent that produces aesthetic experiences, taking the Art-Community relationship as its starting point.

Even though these projects have been in part the result of acting on our intuitive belief that the roads for research should begin from within our own space, each proposal has also had more external considerations., as we have come into contact with very different realities to our own, however our intention has only ever been to provide a voice to the protagonist in each case.

The purpose of these projects is to provide a language for discussion by way of stimulating the creative capacity of those who have been far from a platform that allowed them to express themselves. In this sense, we act as interpreters and we generate spaces for discussion through the use of resources brought by the artistic event. By doing so, we have discovered a new and unusual way of making ethnography through art.

The main allies of this adventure have been the community itself and the artists who were ready to develop their projects that were based on different thematic proposals.

However even if our starting point has been to pay attention to our intuition, we now need to offer a contribution of what we have been generating as a model for the development of research, which at the beginning did not have any methodological pretense, but that nevertheless today imposes upon us the necessity to think about the forms of construction of a working system, and the voice we use as an art museum in these processes.

In this sense, it is necessary to consider the different points of view that emerge when trying develop a discourse that starts from specific realities. To that end, the museum has had to put itself in an active role within each working field, adjusting its approach to the different perceptions that emerge. At the same time , it has had to position itself as another element to be considered, in such a way that it no longer is a model that originates in the definition of a subject that assumes characteristics recognized in certain circumstances, but rather interacts, engages in dialogues, interprets,

gathers and looks at itself in each of these situations, and in doing so tries to identify the voice with which it wants to speak.

For the most part, our exhibiting proposals have been created with the intention of facilitating the transference of creative mediums, and with the purpose of discovering new languages for creation, and staging aspects of a reality that before were excluded from public spaces such as art museums.

In this sense, we have given form to several experiences through the exchange of resources and procedures coming from different disciplines, both in the field of artistic and literary creation as well as of anthropology and research in other social and cultural areas.

Perhaps the project that best exemplifies the concept of transference of mediums is the exhibition *Cuarta Pared* ('Fourth Wall'), presented by the international artist Alfredo Jar in 1996. With this exhibition, the museum not only got the community of Catia involved in the development of a joint artistic experience, it also gave the same protagonic role to its visions, perceptions and in short, to the ways the inhabitants of the west of Caracas compose their own ideas of space and daily life, through the use of domestic photography, enlarged to large formats, and exhibited as a kind of collective installation.

In this particular case, we can say that the artist generates spaces and proposals for self-representation by working directly with community members, and the museum in turn rephrases the contents by creating museum-like devices or ways of exhibition.

On the other hand, the exhibition *Caballo de Troya* ('Trojan Horse'), 1997, tries to systematize in some sense the methodological backgrounds, revealing another way of approaching specific realities in order to encourage some reflections regarding certain aspects of contemporary society.

The proximity of the long gone Los Flores de Catia Prison emphasized the urgency of creating a project with the participation of guest artists and the inmates of this judicial penitentiary, with a work of dialogical characteristics, through the development of workshops, the design of certain works of art, and a literary and documentary experience that addresses which unapologetically confronts us with a depiction of life in the prisons of our country. The museum at this opportunity interpreted and recreated a reality, and the artists made their contribution by developing their works based on their observations of that reality, generating a discourse that embraced the recording of the event as well as the illustrative point of view, including a somewhat scenic character.

Subsequently, with the exhibition *Niños de la calle* ('Homeless Children') (1999), we challenged ourselves with the construction of an exhibiting and curatorial model based on direct contact with our subject, through holding

workshops as a way to approach the subject and at the same time, as a way of finding out what this reality would reveal by itself. In this instance, the selection of the pieces was based upon streams of information that emerged from field work, and which was supported by the direct relationship with the children in the workshops that functioned as research and creation laboratories. In this sense, the works of art from the exhibition, produced by several Venezuelan and foreign artists, introduce new ideas and perceptions about this subject, avoiding the trap of pretending to illustrate reality.

In similar circumstances, the show *Eva en ausencia: El lenguaje del duelo* ('Eve in Absence. The Language of Mourning') took place, which tried to design an aesthetic proposal resulting from the direct relationship with a focus group of women victims of police and military abuse.

For this exhibition a quite complex platform between research, pedagogic exchange and creation took place, which tried to consolidate the model of transference of creation mediums through the combination of several disciplines.

The literary and artistic exercise workshops allowed an artistic production that was focused in the analysis and interpretation of the corpus of language that resulted from the dynamics of the workshops themselves. In this way, loss and experiencing mourning recompose themselves in an artistic and poetic event, through a selection of texts, works of arts and several exercises developed by the artists and those participating in the experience.

This exhibition is directly related to *Páginas abiertas* ('Open Pages') (1999) and the subsequent publication of *El Platillo de la balanza* ('The Tray of the Scale'); proposals that were carried out under the concept of producing creative projects turned into museum objects developed by members of the community.

In both cases, our activities led to the idea of going through an experience with language, and our main goal was to encourage an approach to the linguistic expression through literary creation, resulting from the need to relate episodes of life that constitute our personal identity.

The idea of transferring creative mediums to consolidate products designed by our constructive audiences has the workshop-laboratory as its central axis, and most of our research with the community arises therein. For that reason, the dynamics of these research processes is based on the ability of performing as an active element within the design of a museum activity that each day tries to become a determinant factor for contemporary society.

Rio Negro
Maria Clara Reussi

The country where I live is rich. The paradox is that fifty percent of its population lives under the poverty line – i.e. the total income of a family doesn't reach three hundred dollars (US) per month. One third of the country's population inhabits the large city of Buenos Aires, where twelve million people are crammed into a small area. I live in the south the country – and the world! – in the Province of Rio Negro, located in the Patagonia region, with around five hundred thousand inhabitants, ninety percent of which lives in urban areas after leaving most of the territory deserted in search for better opportunities. This is the part of the country I can speak of.

Vocational and grassroots

What can we say about community arts in this part of the country? There are very few professional companies – if at all – financially supported by the state, be it city or province. Thus, most of the artistic work can be called grassroots, carried on by artists self-organised in groups or NGOs. Art is not considered a right of and for the people. It is rather seen as a luxury.

In recent times the governments has begun to speak about arts as a tool for development. There seems to be an incipient, although still vague, notion about arts as a way to improve and enrich people's education and quality of life. However, what form this will take and how it will be carried into action remains unclear.

City governments are concerned about the deteriorating educational and social conditions in poor neighbourhoods. With this in mind, they fund some artistic lessons and activities in those spots. However, these efforts are isolated and rarely framed within a plan. Besides, these artistic activities are seen as addressed to children. Not many adults allow themselves to engage in art because it won't guarantee a much needed income. Even if they have plenty of time – i.e. if they are unemployed – they won't take guitar or painting lessons. They'd rather learn to make candles, to see if they can sell them later. Even if they have learned artistic skills when they were young, the thought of improving them doesn't even get a second chance.

Popular artists are gifted people, most of them acting out of vocation and with little formation. Very likely they need to struggle hard to make a living out of their art. They work a lot for free or for the fun of it, just to be known. An acquired common sense tells them that if they can't "make it" - be on TV or sell CDs or books under a big label – it's better to leave it, or to practice it in their spare time, at their own risk.

An issue of mindset

Due to the globalisation of culture, arts are seen as a product to be consumed, according to the rules of a market built under a heavy neo-conservative model, and the mass media has had a major impact on people's readiness and self-esteem. For teenagers – and adults as well – you can always turn the on the TV and watch the "professionals". If you

can't sing like them, don't try. If you can't play music like them, don't try. Otherwise, you can make a fool of yourself and your peers will see you as ridiculous. There is the underlying fantasy that famous artists were never beginners, that as a magical gift they woke up one morning knowing how to do it all in a perfect way. Thus, the notion of a learning process dissolves, not to mention the effort – as if everything happened by just zapping into the right channel.

Community Theatre in Higher Education: Contextual Challenges and Contradictions

Lynne Clark

Community Theatre is an umbrella term covering a wide range of theatre-based activities that are designed to be relevant for a specific group of people, as audience, participants or both. These groups are defined as a community either geographically, or in terms of shared interest. Community Theatre is also the title of a specialist option taught as part of the Bachelor of Arts Drama & Theatre Arts programme at Queen Margaret University College, Edinburgh (QMUC).

The following entry examines the guiding principles that inform Community Theatre as it is taught at QMUC. It reflects on the challenges posed during the teaching process, and outlines the importance of avoiding contradictions between educational philosophy and delivery within the limitations of a university curriculum.

The form and content of community theatre are informed initially by the culture of that community and the questions that are of fundamental importance to its members. Thus, the *context* of such work is a vital element. Many of the groups with whom such work is created are from those sections of society who are marginalised in some way, whose power is circumscribed socially, economically and/or educationally. Such communities are not traditional theatregoers.

Whatever the context, those who work within community theatre require a high level of commitment combined with theoretical understanding and practical skills in both theatre and education. The primary purpose of the specialism at QMUC is to develop effective, reflective theatre professionals with the educational knowledge to function as cultural facilitators, who may enable non-professionals in a range of community contexts to participate in, enjoy, criticise and create theatre.

This is a tall order for students who may be as young as nineteen and who have completed only two years of a broad-based drama and theatre arts degree programme. The Community Theatre specialism at QMUC requires a commitment to the notion of theatre as a potentially transformative force. However individual motivation varies from student to student. Some have

deeply held political views, while others are driven by the desire to support and contribute to the lives of the more vulnerable. Many are seeking a route to continue their own personal development without any clear idea of the nature of community theatre beyond a vague, potentially problematic, notion of 'helping people'. As leader of the programme option, I have a responsibility to enable each individual to navigate their own learning path through the diverse rationale and philosophy that inform the work. I also have my own set of deeply held beliefs and intentions in relation to community theatre. The challenge is to find a mode of delivery, a way of teaching the module, which enables the students to develop their own beliefs and principles while simultaneously supporting their growing mastery of the techniques, conventions and skills that are necessary for a professional practitioner.

Effective community theatre is linked closely to the notion of community development. Development requires change. Theatre that aims to effect change in the macrocosm of society, as well as in the microcosm of the individual's life, is out of necessity political and educational. Not in the broad sense that all theatre is political even when supporting the status quo, but in its perception of theatre as a form of 'cultural intervention' (Kershaw, B.1992). Community theatre has the potential to offer a challenge not only to the individuals who participate in its creation and presentation, but also to the status quo in theatre and in the wider society. The process of community theatre can enable marginalised sections of society to explore, define and express their own cultural identity and empower them to recognise their own ability to effect change. The form and content of such theatre can challenge the values emanating from dominant groups in society and as such, "it presents a challenge also to the state's cultural engineers, in Ministries of Culture, Arts Councils, universities, schools and the media" (McGrath,J.1990).

Any course purporting to educate community theatre practitioners must acknowledge the danger of becoming institutionalised to the point where it absorbs the dominant culture. On the other hand, to express community theatre as some sort of oppositional formula could lead to the creation of political and theatrical dogma which is equally sterile and self-defeating. The programme at QMUC is based on the perception that theatre and education are dialectical processes, posing questions rather than providing answers; engaging students in an active inter-relationship as teacher and learner, performer and spectator. This approach reflects the central educational precepts informing the educational philosophy of the programme.

The programme of study is rooted in a process of self-critical enquiry. This is best characterized as a process of action-research requiring the students to approach their own work and that of others through systematic critical enquiry. "Inquiry (sic) counts as research to the extent that it is systematic, but even more to the extent that it can be conscientiously self-critical. (Stenhouse, L. 1980)

The development of self-monitoring strategies lays the foundation for the students' capacity for research as participant observers. Self-monitoring is also an essential element of professional development for practitioners. Students are required as a matter of course to reflect on their own practice and relate it to relevant theory. They are also required to analyse critically the practice of others. Not only within current contemporary practice in the community, but also within the course itself. This requirement highlights a particularly complex aspect of the programme. The strategies for teaching and learning employed should enable students to develop their creative skills and understanding. The strategies must also reveal the teaching and learning process itself, for an important element of the task undertaken by tutors is the task which students themselves will undertake in the community: that of enabling the creative, social and personal development of others. Participants will be engaged in critical debate about the teaching and learning process. To this extent the form of the module is a major element of its content. It is therefore imperative that the delivery, or form, of the programme of study does not contradict the subject matter, or content. The educational practice with the students should echo the central principles informing best practice of theatre workers within a community context.

The curriculum development of the programme of study emanates from three central tenets:

- that ownership of learning lies with the student with whom the tutor works to develop a shared learning intention, acting as guide and facilitator to the educational experience
- that the teaching and learning process is not linear and can best be described as a spiral in which current knowledge and skills are deepened and refined through active engagement with new problems and new contexts
- that practice without reflection can become empty activism, and the ability to reflect meaningfully upon both the process and the outcome of any creative activity is as important as acquiring the necessary skills and techniques with which to communicate one's ideas.

These principles apply equally to participation in a community theatre project.

However the context for the students' learning is formal education. The outcome is an educational qualification in Higher education. Success in a community context can be seen in terms of personal development and achievement in relation to process towards individual goals. In an undergraduate programme there are criteria that relate to outcome. Assessment is a judgement that carries degrees of success, and consequently the potential for failure. Thus the criteria for judgement must be shared and understood from the start. Not only the intended outcome, but also the stages of the learning journey must be as transparent as possible.

The central educational principles identified above as informing the work of the programme also inform the assessment. If ownership of the learning truly lies with the student then the curriculum must be sufficiently flexible to enable each individual to relate the demands of the curriculum to their own learning goals. If individual goals are seen as part of the curriculum then the ability to identify and integrate one's own learning needs in pursuit of those goals must be assessed. Similarly, if reflection is considered integral to the developmental process within any group in the community, the ability to reflect on one's own practice and the ability to enable this approach in others should be assessed in a course purporting to prepare practitioners. Lastly, the notion of a spiral of learning encourages the repetition of tasks and activities for assessment. Nobody learns a concept by being told what it means. A student cannot be asked to fully engage with the notion of reflective practice without repeating the process in a range of contexts over a substantial period. Reflective practice is itself a spiral of cycles of planning, acting, observing and reflecting. All interconnected and systematically implemented. Indeed the intention is that the practice of critical self-reflection will instil a habit for learning, hopefully for life. There is a further important principle that relates to the programme of study:

- that learning is not confined to the university setting and work-based learning is vital in the struggle to achieve a synthesis of theory and practice.

Work-based learning is integral and not seen as separate from university-based activities: the two feed each other in the primary task of integrating theory and practice.

Community theatre cannot exist without a host community. Its participatory and educational nature necessitates working with a specified group in order to deepen and extend theoretical and practical understanding. Evaluative research, vital to a practitioner's development, cannot occur in any meaningful way unless students have the opportunity to initiate and develop workshops and projects in the community context for which they were designed. This raises another thorny problem when educating for this field of expertise. Best practice in community arts demands collaborative development of projects in a way that encourages sustainability after the professional theatre practitioner has moved on to the next job. Parachuting into a community in order to bring art to a group, in a way reminiscent of dropping food parcels into a disaster area, is cultural invasion of the worst sort. However, effective cultural synthesis can only be developed and maintained over fairly long periods and community theatre practitioners cannot always be employed nor can they always commit to such a lengthy process. Therefore collaboration between the artists and grassroots activists or other professional workers is the most appropriate and enhancing form of practice. Such collaboration does require mutual respect and successful partnerships can take time to nurture. These processes create specific problems for the time-limited student project and a tutor whose focus,

initially at least, is student need. In addition, students are only available to work with a community group as part of their assessed curriculum for a comparatively short period of the year. At QMUC this is for between four and six months, depending on the year of study. It is difficult to maintain a sense of continuity with potential partners and collaborators when the individuals involved change so often and the time scales are so limited.

The most effective among a range of strategies to counteract the problem was the creation of a community development unit within the Gateway theatre, the base for QMUC School of Drama & Creative Industries. The community development coordinator was not appointed to service the community theatre students but rather to establish good practice with a range of community participants. Such groups would, it was intended, be secure in their long-term developmental relationship with an individual and a place. Their relationship with students over the years could be negotiated as appropriate, but could never be guaranteed. The community development work, the professional worker and the collaborating groups would develop their own agenda and be in control of their own identity and future. On this fertile ground good practice could grow and the student body would benefit from whatever opportunities could be found for interaction and mutual support. From this small seed the RBS Centre for Community Arts Research and Practice was born and this volume is one of its many successful shoots.

There is a further, this time unanticipated, benefit from the interaction between course and Centre. The programme has succeeded in its desire to avoid dogma. Avoiding the trap of institutionalisation is more difficult. The Centre, with its roots in contemporary practice and innovative research, has the potential to challenge any complacency within the taught programme. Together it is possible to resist domestication and keep true to the vision of community theatre as a liberating process for understanding and change.