

## Young People Take Over – The Geffrye Museum & Tricycle Theatre

*Silver & Gold* was a nine-month action research programme that supported six cultural organisations in London to explore new models for delivering Arts Award. The programme was designed, facilitated and funded by A New Direction. This document is one of five that share the learning from the programme. The full set can be found on the AND website <http://www.anewdirection.org.uk/>

### Introduction to the organisations

#### The Geffrye Museum

Set in 18th century alms-houses in Hoxton, the Geffrye Museum explores the home over the past 400 years with a focus on the living rooms of the urban middle classes in England, particularly London.

*'A series of period rooms lead visitors on a walk through time from 17th century oak furniture and panelling, past muted Georgian elegance and eclectic Victorian style, to 20th century modernity and contemporary living.'*

*Project Coordinator:* Rachael Crofts, Young People's Programme Manager

*Prior Experience:* Trained in Bronze and Silver in 2009. 3 Bronze Awards in 2010.

*Awards:* 10 Silver

*Participants:* 18 young people aged 14-24 years from two existing groups: the Youth Advisory Panel (voluntary) and the Young Consultants

*Aim:* To add value and find a way to embed the delivery of Arts Award within the existing Young People's Programme.



### Model for Silver & Gold:

The Youth Advisory Panel (YAP) supports the museum by designing youth-friendly events and marketing and the Young Consultants act as a focus group for the museum on strategy and policy. Both groups meet on a monthly basis. Members of YAP expressed an interest in accreditation for their work and Silver Arts Award seemed the best fit. Rachael Crofts and the other Arts Award advisor ran 1:1 Arts Award sessions for participating young people after their monthly meetings.

Young people could undertake their chosen arts challenge within activities at the Geffrye or receive support to find suitable opportunities elsewhere. Other aspects of the Award were incorporated into the ongoing work of the groups. For Unit 2: Arts Leadership, young people designed and lead workshops at the museum for other young people (aged 11-16 years) during Easter and May half-term holidays.



## The Tricycle Theatre

*'The Tricycle views the world through a variety of lenses, bringing unheard voices into the mainstream. It presents high quality and innovative work, which provokes debate and emotionally engages. Located in Brent, the most diverse borough in London, the Tricycle is a local venue with an international vision.'*

The Tricycle has a 235-seat theatre, a 300-seat cinema, three rehearsal rooms, cafe and bar.

*Project Coordinator:* Anna Myers, Creative Learning Manager

*Prior Experience:* 3 years' experience of Bronze.

*Awards:* 2 Gold

*Participants:* A group of 6 young producers, recruited specifically to produce the theatre's first ever *Takeover Festival* in April 2014

*Aim:* To establish a long-term approach to delivering Gold Arts Award through the Young Producers project

Model for Silver & Gold:

The Tricycle was planning the Takeover Festival and determined to use the Gold Arts Award to accredit the work of the young producers. The group met fortnightly between September and December and then weekly from January until the Festival in April. Each young producer took responsibility for a specific event and contributed to the overall programming, coordination and marketing of the wider festival.

### What was new?

The Geffrye Museum's and Tricycle Theatre's *Silver & Gold* projects contained a number of 'firsts': the first time they had offered Arts Award beyond Bronze level; and the first time the organisations gave young people the responsibility to design, programme and lead activity at the venues. For the Tricycle, this involved handing over the building to young people for the week-long Takeover Festival and it was also the first time the theatre had worked with young people as producers. At the Geffrye, it was a new venture for young people to act as workshop leaders.

## What worked well

Trinity College London provides good resources to support advisers and young people, with a range of templates to help build portfolios<sup>1</sup>. These are necessarily generic in nature and Arts Award Centres are invited to adapt them as required. The Tricycle produced templates that helped young people understand producing as a new arts practice. The Geffrye produced a comprehensive pack of templates, customised to the venue that guided young people through each stage of the Silver Award. In their evaluations, young people commented on how useful the templates were in providing clear guidance on the nature and quantity of evidence required.

At the Geffrye Museum, Rachael Crofts supported participants' training for the Arts Leadership unit. Each workshop team received five training sessions to design and plan their workshop. This proved to be highly effective and other members of the Learning Team were impressed with the high levels of engagement in the workshops and the young workshop leaders' creative ideas and delivery techniques.

At the Tricycle, the team of Young Producers hosted a Supporters' Reception for donors that had contributed through The Big Give<sup>2</sup> and AND. Supporters were impressed with young people's leadership and the calibre of the artistic programme the young people had produced. This event has aided sustainability as support for the festival has been extended and in some cases increased for next year.

Anna Myers acted as a line manager for the Young Producers which alleviated the concerns of other members of staff about the extra responsibility of working with young people. *'Everyone knew they could come to Anna with any problems'* explained Mark Londesborough, Creative Learning Director.

## Meeting challenges

The common challenges experienced by *Silver & Gold* partners are outlined in the summary document<sup>3</sup>. The Geffrye Museum and Tricycle Theatre encountered other challenges however, linked to their developing understanding of how to adapt Arts Award to meet their needs. These are summarised below.

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<sup>1</sup> Trinity College London manages Arts Award in association with Art Council England and 10 regional Bridge Organisations

<sup>2</sup> The Big Give is an online platform that matches donors with charitable organisations and events. The Tricycle used the Big Give Christmas Challenge 2013 to raise funds for the Takeover Festival and has posted details of the 2015 Festival on the site for new donors.

<sup>3</sup> [www.anewdirection.org.uk](http://www.anewdirection.org.uk)

## Appeal of the qualification

Both project coordinators highlighted the value of an accredited qualification for young people. At the Geffrye, Rachael Crofts found that young people preferred Silver and Gold Arts Award (having originally considered Bronze) as they were attracted to the leadership aspect of the Award. At the Tricycle however, two of the Young Producers were final year university students. They struggled with pressure of work and have yet to submit (and may not submit) their portfolios. Whilst remaining committed to offering Arts Award and using the framework and rigour to structure youth projects, both organisations believe it is important for the Award to be optional, particularly for older young people who may have competing pressures.

## Producing as an arts practice

The Tricycle project used producing as the new arts practice for participating young people. Producing inevitably contains an element of leadership and Anna Myers initially found it hard to divide elements of the project between Gold Unit 1: Personal Arts Development and Unit 2: Arts Project Leadership.

Anna praised the support she received from Trinity in helping her draw the necessary distinctions.<sup>4</sup>For Unit 1, the young producers focussed on how their existing art-form practice and knowledge informed the creative choices they made as producers and how the experience of producing fed back into their own art-form. For Unit 2, the young producers focussed on their individual roles in managing the Festival.

## Underwriting risk

For Silver and Gold Arts Award, young people should be working independently. Both organisations handed over aspects of the venue's programme to the young people, however, and safeguards were needed. On reflection, Anna Myers thought she *'could have let go a bit more'* but voiced her dilemma, *'If they're producing a (funded) festival, it has to happen; if young people don't step up to the mark, we have to step in.'* Anna believed they had struck a good balance but next year, the nomenclature will change with 'Trainee Producers' replacing 'Young Producers.' The project coordinators believe this more accurately describes the role and locates it within a learning framework. It also signals the presence of the support network that is available for the young people and which also underpins the Festival.

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<sup>4</sup> Trinity highlighted the importance of the reflection section in making the distinctions and the use of appropriate language within evidence. For Unit 1, for example, the focus is on 'skills development', 'extending practice' and 'creating new work', whilst Unit 2 refers to 'leadership' and 'events'.

Young people at the Geffrye received the same workshop training that would be given to freelance practitioners. This ensured they considered health and safety, child protection and potential risks associated with their workshops. In addition, a freelance artist and Rachael Crofts attended each workshop in a support capacity: this provided a safety net for the young people and relieved any concerns of other staff members.

## Organisational outcomes

### Key achievements

*'Getting 10 young people through Silver!*

*'Creating the Arts Award resource for the Geffrye. The series of templates created a clear structure for young people; they understood what they needed to do at each stage.'*

*'The Festival itself; there was a real buzz in the building. Young people were at the centre; making decisions; getting things done.'*

*'This was not just a Creative Learning project. All departments were involved in the Takeover Festival so, for example, it's logical for the marketing department to work with the Young Producers.'*

Silver & Gold network partners devised individual evaluation frameworks at the outset of the programme. Alongside delivering successful Arts Award projects (in which young people met their objectives and target numbers of Awards were achieved), objectives and success criteria set out how the organisations hoped to develop with the ultimate aim of embedding and sustaining Arts Award. Key organisational outcomes are listed below.

One of Tricycle's objectives was for *Members of staff across the organisation to understand Arts Award; engaging with the delivery and supporting participants*. All the success criteria for this objective were met or exceeded.

Anna Myers reported,

*'Staff have already offered ideas for next year and there is enthusiasm to engage more fully. Staff have reported previously feeling "daunted at working with young people" but now feel more confident.'*

At the Geffrye, young people successfully engaged with staff across the Learning Department. A success criterion for *Silver & Gold* was to develop a framework and precedent for young people delivering workshops at the museum.

The member of the department responsible for organising holiday workshops is keen to retain young people as workshop leaders as she believes the workshops were more popular as they provided positive role models and inspired workshop participants.

### *Unexpected outcomes*

Instead of leading the holiday workshops at the Geffrye, artists were employed to train and mentor young people in this role. Rachael Crofts was uncertain how artists would respond to this, would they feel devalued? Feedback from the artists was very positive however, *'They were happy to feel they had a chance to feed back into the sector.'*

The Tricycle originally employed a freelancer to manage the Young Producers. When he left the project early, Creative Learning Director, Mark Londesborough, decided that he and Anna Myers would lead the project. Both members of staff felt there were clear benefits to the Arts Award project being lead by full-time staff particularly for facilitating wider staff engagement.

Anna and Mark understand the role and needs of each department and have the internal authority to 'get things done.' They plan to repeat this role for the second year of the project.

### **Embedding Arts Award**

Through *Silver & Gold*, AND aimed to embed sustainable delivery of Silver and Gold Arts Award in the core business of the participating organisations. This section examines the steps taken by the Geffrye Museum and the Tricycle Theatre to embed Arts Award and the extent to which this aim has been achieved.

Both organisations intend to continue offering Arts Award with the groups trialled through *Silver & Gold* and also, in Tricycle's case, to extend the offer to additional groups. The Tricycle is using the *Silver & Gold* project, for example, to inform a new work experience offer to local schools.

Instead of a series of two-week placements spread across the year, the theatre will offer a group of 10 students the opportunity to join a two-week 'mini-producers' project where students will pitch ideas and develop a marketing plan for their chosen event. Students will use the project to achieve a Bronze Arts Award.



At the Geffrye, Silver Arts Award will be offered to new members of YAP in September. The model worked well, there is enthusiasm at the museum for young workshop leaders and the templates produced this year will aid sustainability. The principle change will be the timing of Arts Award sessions.

The 1:1 sessions created considerable extra work for the project coordinator, often taking longer than anticipated and needing to be re-scheduled when young people were absent. For the next project, group Arts Award sessions will take place on Saturday afternoons, focus on a specific aspect of the Award and allow time for young people to complete documentation during the session.

Indhu Rubasingham, the Artistic Director at the Tricycle, is a vocal and active advocate for creative learning at the theatre. Mark Londesborough explained, *'For Indhu, creative learning, engagement with young people is central to the organisation and she holds it on a level with other work. She wants to know, she's there...when the young producers were pitching their ideas for the Festival, Indhu was there.'* This philosophy permeates the organisation and Anna Myers noted, *'People have bought into the notion of the community and educational functions sitting equally with the artistic function.'* She perceived that this helped to embed Arts Award as it was viewed as part of an overall organisational agenda.

## Conclusion

Although both organisations had prior experience of delivering Arts Award, *Silver & Gold* afforded them the opportunity to witness the benefits for young people of engaging with the higher level qualifications, and, through this to assess the Award's applicability to various aspects of their work with young people. For young people working with cultural organisations on youth panels, the leadership aspects of Silver and Gold Arts Award are of particular relevance. Having originally considered Bronze, for example, the Geffrye found Silver was the best fit for the museum and the young advisors and consultants.

At the Tricycle, there was an important recognition of the wider benefits of Arts Award,

*'Not only can young people perceive value in having their work accredited externally, other people who might advocate for what we are doing (our funders, for example) also like the idea of having Arts Award as an independent validation of what they are supporting.'* Mark Londesborough