



Winter Digital Newsletter 2009

tva
tees valley arts

Opening remarks....

Season's greetings to all our readers, and here's wishing everyone all the best for 2010.

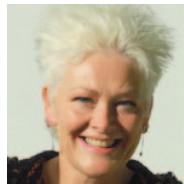
I understand that 2010 will be the year of the tiger – my own sign in fact. Tiger-types are described as 'intelligent, alert, far-sighted and brave' (I'm ignoring any negative traits) and certainly this is what's needed to survive in the arts, plus the additional tiger characteristic of being able to land on ones feet after any upset, ready for the next action.

TVA has had to leap nimbly through the jungle of events (I'll stop with the tiger stuff now) and is preparing for this Christmas in a much stronger and more secure state of health than it did last. The spirit in the office is so positive, and we feel we can truly enjoy our staff Christmas dinner and toast each other in a happy way. We'll do Secret Santa too – now that everyone's understood the rules and there won't be any presents which say who they're from (you know who you are, and unfortunately so did we).

As always, I thank the staff for their unceasing hard work, their patience, their good humour, their resilience and for being fun to work with; I thank Tony Campbell, Chair of our Board, for his unfailing efforts and optimism in the face of challenge; I thank the rest of the Board for their contribution and I offer particular thanks and good wishes to Bob Kerr and Gordon Bates, veteran TVA trustees, who have toiled long and hard at the cultural coal face on behalf of this organisation, and who have now stepped down to spend more time enjoying themselves. Thanks to them for all their time, energy and good sense over the years.

Now that I'm doing the whole Oscar speech thing, I'd also like to offer thanks to Nicholas Baumfield, our Arts Council Lead Officer, who has been a model of support, patience and wisdom throughout the last turbulent couple of years. And finally, I'd like to thank all my colleagues in differing departments in the Tees Valley local authorities; I acknowledge and appreciate the time and energy you've all contributed to building good working partnerships with TVA – some might say that you do not always move with the speed of Usain Bolt, but then we're attempting more of a marathon here, aren't we.....

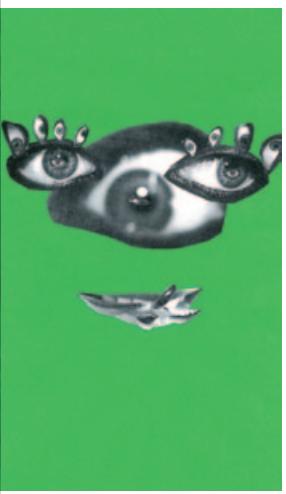
So, dear colleagues, let's collectively embrace 2010, and as Shakespeare's Henry V says – let us stiffen the sinews and imitate the action of a tiger – preparing for landing.....



Rowena Sommerville
Director, TVA



Programme Notes



My activities this quarter have mostly been centred on partnership development and thinking about and managing the organisation. The whole TVA team is having an away day next week as I write this – and we're going to explore the organisation and its future as we see it, our individual roles within that, and then the thorny but very interesting issue of how you measure quality in participatory arts.

This last item has foxed better brains than ours, but I know it's crucial that we don't just look at it and run away – I believe so passionately in the value, the worth and the 'arts quality' of participatory arts. I do not want to see these activities sidelined, or at risk of, in a world where all arts activities have to compete within and against themselves for funding and for profile. I know single artforms will always have their own internal schisms, between traditionalists and radicals say, but opera singers can see and hear other opera singers and productions and arrive at some sort of working consensus as to what has failed, what has worked well, and what has achieved the sublime.

How are we 'community', 'participatory', 'socially engaged' arts organisations to measure our achievements and aspirations? I really fear that if we don't start collectively thinking about this, and measuring up, then there will be little left to measure...ah me. I would welcome debate and thought from colleagues on this. (And incidentally, I'd like to get the TVA Board thinking about this as well, but I don't want to frighten them off, so I haven't mentioned it yet.)



Programme Notes

Breaking news as I write this is that yesterday we appointed the new dedicated Refugee Arts Worker (I know there have been other initiatives before, some of them were me if you see what I mean, but this is definitely on a more serious scale), so a warm welcome to Maurice Dezou. Of course Maurice is no stranger to TVA, but this is a new role for him, for the organisation and for the Tees Valley. I thank the partners who helped with the recruitment procedure – always interesting! I'm delighted to be able to make this work a reality and I thank all the colleagues who have contributed time and effort along the way, and of course many thanks to the Baring Foundation for making this possible.

I hope that Maurice will write a little update on progress so far for the Spring newsletter, so readers will get an insight into this innovative work; and I'll let you all know if we crack the participatory arts thing!



Rowena Sommerville
Director, TVA



Programme Notes



Education

In the last newsletter I mentioned frantic Arts Award and Artsmark activity, and I'm happy to say that events and seminars delivered during Sept/Oct went off well with good attendance and excellent feedback, with one delegate commenting that facilitators were "...excellent and impressive", which we liked very much indeed! Good luck to all schools applying for Artsmark in November, and here's to a very busy Arts Award Training session on 3rd November – looks like we'll have a full house for that.

As ever, I'm busy putting together project & funding proposals with dogged determination; trying to make positive things happen just doesn't seem to be that easy does it! The bonus of being a faux-blonde I've found, is that the grey hairs that will inevitably now be appearing are well-masked, and a touch of concealer and Eight-Hour Cream™ works wonders to perk up a funding-weary face!

This newsletter I've decided that fewer words, more pictures is the way to go, and actually, they say it all! Enjoy this selection of images taken from the Aspiration & Achievement programme over the last few years, along with a selection of wonderful quotes and transcripts.



Education



“Without music and art I'd be lost.

(Goldie 2009)

Every child is an artist. The problem is how to remain an artist once he grows up.

(Pablo Picasso)

There are those (some of them are even in positions of authority) for whom literacy and numeracy and suchlike are skills to be acquired, neutrally, and then later put to use. But what makes education work is motivation – the kind of motivation that drives us to learn to use language as soon as we possibly can after we are born. The arts associate enjoyment with skill, order, insight. Culture and education belong together; in fact essentially are together. The folly would be to separate them.

(Quentin Blake, from Get It: The Power of Cultural Learning)

Sorta feels good...

I like, forget everything.

And... sorta disappear.

Like, I feel a change in my whole body.

And I've got this fire in my body. I'm just there. Flyin' like a bird. Like electricity.

Yeah, like electricity.

(Script from Billy Elliott – the audition for the Royal Ballet School when asked what he feels like when he's dancing).



Jane Gray
Education Officer





Heritage & Environment



Doesn't time fly in the arts when you are busy eh? Since I got back from my fantastic holiday in France in the summer, it barely feels as if my feet have touched the ground. And now they are going under it! Earlier on this year I applied to Natural England's Aggregates Levy Sustainability Fund (yep, that's what it is called) to fund a project that will work with four different primary schools to explore and improve knowledge and understanding of geodiversity, biodiversity and local heritage through a number of exciting creative art forms.

Hopefully you won't be thinking that I am going slightly crazy and trying to out do previous rather bizarre projects with even more off the wall ones. Mind you, I wouldn't blame you if you did, as sometimes I catch a look at myself as I am phoning people trying to borrow 30 hard hats and high visibility vests, and making arrangements for a class of children to visit Hart Quarry, a fully functional quarry in Hartlepool. Or ensuring a creative writer, photographer, performing artist and visual artist fully understand the Upper Lias Palaeoclimate, what rocks were formed then and how and where you can see them in the Tees Valley!

The project kicked off in early October with all four schools visiting their respective local quarry. And this included the very first site visit by primary school children to Hart Quarry, with everyone duly decked out in hard hats and hi-vis vests – what a sight! A big thank you to Paul Allison, Director of Sherburn Stone Company for making the visit happen. A lot of fun was had at all sites while everyone absorbed lots of information and had their imaginations and creative juices sparked by the artists.



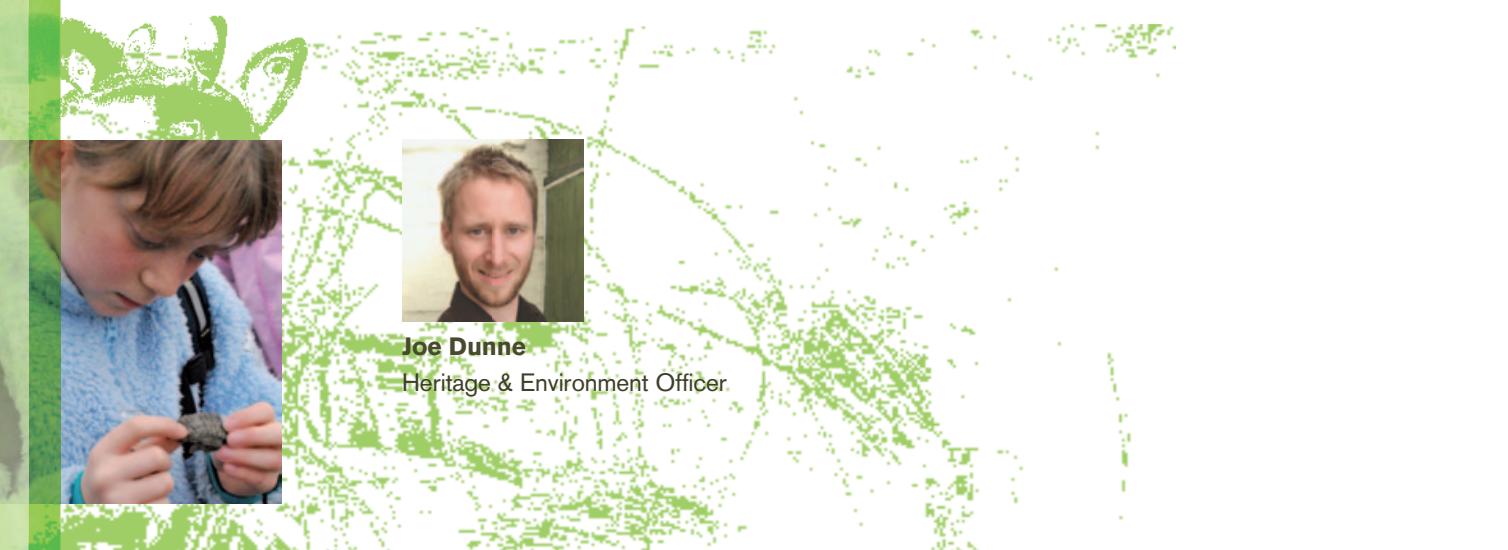
Heritage & Environment

Anyway, life trundles on in arts project management, and Jo Colley, Kev Howard, Bidi Iredale, Adrian Moule are getting stuck into their respective project with schools, enthusing and engaging pupils with rocks, sand, wildlife and history, and producing some extremely fantastic, diverse and interesting work. I would like to thank them for their patience with me and my wacky project ideas, their serious hard work and really rolling with this project and making it what it is, but I also would like to say a big thank you for the support offered by the project partners Steve Ashton (Tees Valley Wildlife Trust), Beth Andrews and the RIGS group, and Robin Daniels (Tees Archaeology), and not to mention all the teachers and head teachers.

And a newsletter entry by me wouldn't be complete without the mention of HLF and Green TV. This project has been with me since the day I started (in March 2008) in one guise or another, and here we are now at the end of the development phase, with a stage 2 application waiting to be reviewed with a decision in March '10. An absolutely monstrous amount of work has gone into this project already, particularly over the last few months, and here's hoping that it all pays off.

At the moment, there are no new odd funds that I have applied to for peculiar projects, so I am looking forward to a relative quiet and relaxing festive period, and hope that 2010 is as fruitful as this last year!

Joe Dunne
Heritage & Environment Officer





StART



I ended the autumn newsletter saying “I hope to continue the momentum with this project and keep the bronze awards rolling in”, this is exactly what happened - all six young people who were submitted for a bronze award achieved one.

So the story so far is

Cohort #1 - Five submitted for Bronze Arts Award – Five Bronze Awards achieved

Cohort #2 - Five submitted for Bronze Arts Award – Five Bronze Awards achieved

Cohort #3 – Six submitted for Bronze Arts Award – Six Bronze Awards achieved

I'm biased I admit it, but it's not just me that thinks stART is brilliant; stART participants, Arts Award Moderators, OFSTED Inspectors and Connexions Advisors have given plenty of positive feedback about the project, this continues and I just have to share it:

“The range of activities offered by the adviser was excellent. The young people responded well to the challenges offered by the Art Award, the level of work achieved was high and the young people reported that they had developed a range of personal skills and understanding as a result of being involved with Arts Award. The work of the adviser is excellent and the centre provides well for the needs of the young people it deals with.”

(Ken Gouge – Arts Award Moderator)

StART

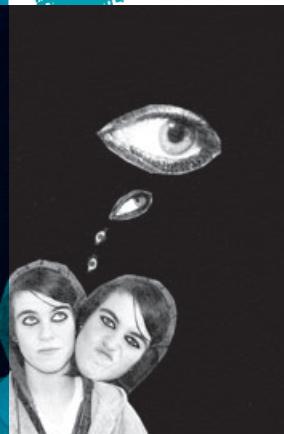
Thanks to Project Support Worker - Nicola Parkin (blogger extraordinaire!) we now have a fab and funky stART blog! This is an excellent means of showcasing the project and is a superb tool for recruiting young people to the project, not only that, there is a wealth of fantastic artwork that now has a digital home safe from being lost, damaged or forgotten.

Check it out at <http://thestartproject.blogspot.com>

Now stART is entering into its final cohort I look forward to seeing the project's completion, the nights are drawing in, time flies, crikey!



Tim Coyte
Projects Officer



Simon Says...

I have been asked to contribute an article for this edition of TVA's newsletter so thought I would write about my Voyages around the Tees Valley in search of a good cup of tea!



As the father of a two year old daughter, Ruby, my weekends often leave me with the task of trying to find places to go or things to do. Fortunately this summer has left me with the opportunity to visit lots of places on cultural sightseeing on the promise that there will be a teacup ride there. Ruby has now become an expert in teacup rides although I suspect that it is the same ride turning up in different locations. So this year she has been on teacup rides at Hartlepool Dockfest, Stockton International Riverside Festival, Stockton Summer Show, Take to the Tees Festival, Pallister Park Fun Day and Stokesley Show. It is good to try and instil a bit of culture into her with the bribery of "there might be a few fairground rides there".



Even though I'm told by Channel 4 that I live in the "worst place in Britain" I'm amazed that there is always lots of great things happening on my weekends off and so after officially giving up on Middlesbrough Football Club on a Saturday afternoon last year, after what seems like a life sentence, I now find myself in the position of actually having an enjoyable time on Saturday afternoons (although I shall wait and see if Gordon Strachan can entice me back).

Even when I have just gone shopping there always seems to be something happening when I am walking back home at Centre Square or Mima where I have encountered a Steel bands festival, street dance, "free running" workshops, an art fair, the Middlesbrough Town Meal and interactive street games. Ruby had a look round the Gerhard Richter exhibition at Mima but we had to take her outside when she started singing loudly when the curator of the exhibition was being interviewed by a TV crew. She did however enjoy the previous exhibition at the Gallery which included a large installation of broken crockery - again enjoying the tea cup theme!

At the end of October I attended Odin's Glow which saw the illumination of Roseberry Topping. It was great to see a new major event for the Tees Valley and exciting to see such an iconic landmark transformed and the village of Newton under Roseberry come to life with some stunning performances and imagery.

I have just returned from visiting my parents in Perth, Australia where I encountered a highly venomous tiger snake not far from the children's playground on my first day there. Say what you like about England, the nearest I've come to anything like that before was probably in a tank at Butterfly World, Preston Park! Western Australia was a wonderful place with lots of great wildlife and fantastic beaches – although they closed one beach one day as a couple of Great White Sharks were feasting on a whale carcass – you don't get that at Seaton Carew!

Simon Smith

Communications Officer

Tees Valley Arts can work with you to plan and set up a programme of creative activities, find a suitable artist, help to frame a budget and secure funding, and then manage the project, both artistically and administratively. If you have an idea you would like to discuss, please contact us:



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Design: www.proportionmarketing.co.uk



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