

Spring eNewsletter 2011

Opening remarks...

Welcome to the TVA Spring 2011 newsletter; the spring solstice is the festival of the goddess Ostara or Eostre, when light and dark are in balance, but light is gaining... this is the time for rebalancing our energies, to consider the balance of our lives – work, play and relationships – and perhaps in the arts world at the moment we're all hoping that our life/work balance doesn't get reconsidered for us. Ah well, celebrate the light, comrades!

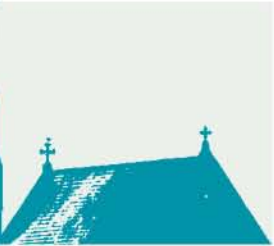
Animals associated with Eostre (who gives her name to Easter and to Oestrogen) are the hare and the snake – hares symbolise life energies (even if watered down as the Easter bunny, like water for chocolate...), and snakes emerge from winter hibernation around the time of the vernal equinox to bask in the sun. Eggs, holding the promise of new life and representing the circularity of the seasons, are significant.

See what added value you get from reading the TVA newsletter! And don't panic that I've lost my remaining marbles and will shortly be found chanting in a corner of a field brandishing a dowsing rod – though I would if I thought it would help. This is a very challenging (official speak) period for everyone, and of course arts organisations like TVA who receive significant funding and strategic support from the Arts Council, are all in a holding queue at the moment, holding our collective breath, and trying not to construct a Plan B which consists solely of holding on for grim death. Big decisions are on their way towards us all, and the sector will undoubtedly be a little differently shaped by April.

At the beginning of February I attended the House of Lords debate on culture, as the guest of Baroness Lola Young – I could pretend that I was invited as an expert witness, (and you know I would do it), but actually all my Cultural Leadership cohort were invited. The leadership course has been fantastic, and very stimulating. Among the many excellent speakers have been Gary Younge (Guardian journalist, 'Who are we and should it matter in the 21st century?'), David Hevey (film maker, *The Disabled Century*) and Professor Richard Wilkinson (sociologist and writer, *The Spirit Level*). These career development opportunities are bound to be imperilled in very straitened times, so I'm lucky to have got in when I did. Participation in thought, activities, debates, and discussions with exciting minds from other areas and organisations can only improve and inform delivery of the day job, and lead to wider networking – for example I have been invited to speak and lead a discussion on judging quality in participative arts for the Northern Salon series of lectures later this year.

Back at the ranch, activity continues unabated, with excellent new projects being developed, excellent existing projects continuing and excellent established ones coming to an end – you can read about some of the activity elsewhere in the newsletter and of course on our lovely website. A notable coup for us has been that the new national Arts Award brochure for 2011 has a picture from our stART project on the front cover, and another inside the back cover – well done us and well done Tim, who will doubtless tell you more about all of that in his newsletter bit.

Opening remarks...



To finish my opening address, I'm going to return to my nature notes theme, and possibly confirm what some of you may have suspected all along – I've got bats in my belfry! Well, I don't actually have a belfry, but I do have bats under my hanging tiles. I'm not sure what species they are, but I will try to get someone to identify that, perhaps when the weather is a little warmer, if they're still there. I've grown used to the idea now, and the Bat Protection Society website tells me that it's an honour, so I'm adopting that mind set. I'll try and get some pictures for the next newsletter.

Meanwhile, stay strong and keep considering that life/work, light/dark balance, my friends.



Rowena Sommerville

Director, TVA



Education

When I deliver Arts Award Adviser Training, I start with an icebreaker (get the groans out of the way now please): I get people to pair up and tell their partner three facts about themselves – but one must be a lie. My three ‘facts’ usually involve acting onstage at the National Theatre, an advertising campaign on the London Tube, and the wish to live on a farm. The last ‘fact’ is definitely true (decide amongst yourselves about the other two), though my wish to live on a farm has come as a bit of a surprise to me and not a desire I would have countenanced ten years ago. However, then I met my husband-to-be, who came with a degree in Agriculture with Crop Management (I know!) and that was it. I’ve fallen in love with a romantic notion of living on a farm, with pretty rare breed animals, cakes baking in the Aga and dogs running alongside the (vintage) tractor.

Anyway, back to my most recent Arts Award training day – and out of seventeen people in a room - where everybody works (broadly-speaking) within arts and education, it struck me as being quite funny that at least two people present should have an interest in farms and rare-breeds. A teacher attending the course turns out to be also a rare-breed farmer, in-between teaching, marking and planning for school. His farm near Darlington (www.pepperfieldfarm.co.uk) has won numerous awards and they use traditional farming methods – looking after the animals in a natural environment and not using additives or preservatives in the produce they make. Perhaps it’s not as strange as it might first seem - I suppose there are links when you sit down and think about it; having a positive, healthy environment where one feels safe, cared for and able to explore, learn and exhibit natural and individual behaviours equates to the animals producing good meat, and to humans having a long, happy and fulfilled life, and that, after all, is what we’re ultimately in the business of – supporting children, young people and adults to fulfil their potential. (Though not necessarily to be turned into chops...)



Education



Meanwhile back at the arts ranch...

Risky Biz participants are currently working with artists Vicky Holbrough and Nicola Parkin, creating fantastic visual arts work and working towards their Bronze Arts Award. They had an excellent day at Bowes Museum, with a tour of the exhibits (including the current Damien Hirst exhibition) and a wonderful drama workshop with practitioner Shelley O'Brien. We'd like to thank Shelley, Lisa Jeffries and all at the Museum for a superb day. In April the young people will be celebrating their work, and their Arts Awards in MIMA, so look out for news on that.

“It's just amazing to look at all the artwork and furniture in the museum. Just the craftsmanship involved in making pieces like this is unreal. It must take a lifetime to make some of these things.” Helen, participant

Big Sky Arts continue to make new music in Hartlepool, and have the opportunity to perform at The Sage in April, which would be so spectacular and a real boost to the group. We're currently trying to find a small amount of money to keep the project going until then, as our current funding for the project runs out at the time you'll be reading this in March. If you can help, or know someone who can, please get in touch!

Young mums in Hartlepool are about to start some new work with writers Bob Beagrie and Andy Willoughby. Following an enjoyable and productive project looking at teenage pregnancy and motherhood, the group wanted to explore healthy relationships, so put in a bid to the Youth Opportunity Fund in Hartlepool, and were successful, so congratulations to them and we're all looking forward to starting in early March.

We had a full house at the last Arts Award Bronze/Silver Adviser Training date, and we have more dates timetabled throughout the coming year, as well as delivering a couple of Gold dates. We're now also Arts Award Welcome, and to see our offer see www.teesvalleyarts.org.uk/artsaward.html

I'm also continuing to work as a Creative Agent for Dance City Creative Partnerships, and am always on the look out for new partnership opportunities, so all in all there's plenty to keep me out of trouble!

See you on the farm!



Jane Gray
Education Officer





Heritage & Environment



I'm at it again - finding analogies between Green TV and the seasons. Spring time heralds the awakening from the relative dormancy of winter of new growth and vibrancy, and Green TV seems to be doing much the same thing:

Residencies and workshops by artists in schools concluded at the beginning of November and since then the artists have been busying themselves with the creation of 'artworks' for the wildlife sites they've been linked to. I have had lots of sneak previews of the works (and so I should, what with being the project coordinator and all), and I must say they are rather impressive, spectacular and really quite interesting. I would strongly advise you to go to the sites and see and enjoy the works for yourself - installation over the coming weeks. Therefore, get down to:

- Maze Park Nature Reserve (near Tees Barrage) to see a 10 metre high steel butterfly mobile fluttering and spinning in the wind, standing proud amongst the unique butterfly and moth habitat that are the conical mounds and surrounding areas of Maze Park and nearby marshalling yards.
- RSPB Saltholme to view the wonderful 'Conflict Zone' film on the TV screen within the visitor centre, and take a walk out and hunt for the thought provoking words that are distributed around the site.
- Redhall Nature Reserve, South Burdon Community Woodland and The Whinnies Nature Reserve that sit on the track bed of the first public passenger railway line, on the Darlington to Stockton Railway line, between Lingfield Point and Middleton St George. There you will be able to view the wonderful animations inspired by the rich history and wildlife of the area (as long as you have a Smart Phone and have downloaded the Green TV App – all info will be there to help you do this).
- Coatham Marsh Nature Reserve at Redcar to try and see the elusive mirror boat, anchored on one of the ponds, peacefully reflecting its surroundings.



Heritage & Environment



- Or collect the beautiful Teesmouth Nature Reserve Green TV 2011 Calendar from Teesmouth Field Centre, which is made using the stunning photographs taken by pupils from Lynnfield and Golden Flatts Primary Schools and local photographer Kev Howard. Then go to the site yourself and get creative with your own camera!

So the installation/s of these works signify the conclusion of Year One, and Year Two is already underway with the recruitment process in full flow, having 10 schools and 5 artists in place by the end of March. Residencies in schools will then start in May and workshops and fun activities for the wider community/ general public over the summer! All go!



It hasn't all been Green TV for me. I ran a couple of my recycling workshops at Belmont Primary in Guisborough, which was really good fun. After managing so many Green TV residencies with so many practical workshops, it was so nice to be the one doing the actual practical delivery. The children created some great work which has helped consolidate their learning and disseminate it to the rest of school through the creation of two large display pieces.

There is also the usual variety of projects in the various stages of development, which includes CCTV (Climate Change Tees Valley) – an exciting project exploring climate change issues with secondary school pupils. That application is in, so fingers crossed that we secure funding as I think it'll be great!

On a slightly more humorous note, in a recent very productive and encouraging meeting Rowena and I had with people from CLEMANCE at Teesside university regarding the Green TV conference in June 2012, when I was describing my background (degree in Fine Art and Masters in Managing the Environment) the micro-biologist professor present commented that this was a very strange combination of interests and that he would be very interested in seeing my gene sequence - !!! You can never say life in science and the arts is dull!



I have been enjoying the increasing volume of wildlife in my garden recently, including the many tits (Blue/Great/Coal) and robins that have been feasting on the fat balls during the extreme weather that we have had. These lovely birds have been tormenting my two young cats that sit, longingly staring at them while they feed. However, one of my cats did sort of get his own back just before Christmas and caught a woodcock (an impressive feat for him as it is a sizeable bird) and brought it to me alive whilst I was washing up. Fortunately for the woodcock I managed to get Tigger to drop it, got Tigger into a different room, and I then captured it (before it flapped and pooped all over the Christmas cake) and released it back outside. It wasn't brought back in by the cats, so I think it survived, which is comforting. Tigger was very much in the bad books, but I was also slightly proud of him - the young fellow is growing up! I'm sure we'll get some nice spring days as the weather improves (surely!), so get out there and explore the great Tees Valley natural heritage for yourself!



Joe Dunne
Heritage & Environment Officer



MusicMix



TVA have been busy converting an office room into a music studio for use on the Youth Music funded MusicMix project.

The MusicMix project is working with young people including asylum seekers and refugees, British people of black, Asian and minority ethnic background, and from the host community; they will work together to develop their skills in playing music, and create and perform original music; they learn about each other; they gain understanding of each other's situations. Their music and performances are a positive statement of cohesion and will be performed to diverse audiences at the WorldFest Youth Event on Tuesday 7th June at Middlesbrough Town Hall Crypt. Original music will also be broadcast on local radio station CVFM.

I am delivering the project with assistance from Gabriel Mulangu, a young person of African origin from Darlington who can speak eight languages! In February we were delighted that Ray Mallon, Mayor of Middlesbrough, was able to visit the project and meet some of the talented young people.



Maurice Dezou
Refugee Arts Worker





The stART Project



Images from the stART project are on the cover and inside the new national Arts Award guide for 2011 – which is distributed all over the UK to promote the Arts Award!

The front cover of the guide shows Lauren and Amy setting up a lighting rig during a photography workshop, and inside the back cover there is a picture of Kristian reading notes on Yoko Ono's Wishing Tree during a visit to the Baltic Art Gallery in Gateshead. These images were taken way back at the very beginning of the project (March 2009).

It is now 21 months since these young people completed the stART project and I am pleased to say that they are all continuing on their journey towards employment (in spite of pitfalls and challenges!). Amy is looking into volunteering at a local primary school after an apprenticeship in accountancy fell through due to unsuitable work placements. Kristian has completed an animal care course at Askham Bryan College and is now with Foundation Learning Provider: Shape. Lauren is doing an access course at Middlesbrough College and will go on to study psychology at Teesside University in September!

All three young people enjoyed their time on the stART project -

“Lauren said, **“I loved it; it was fun and interesting and I learnt to develop patience”** and Amy said, **“I wasn't sure what to expect, but I thought the course was very educational but fun at the same time, you never realised that you were learning. Now I have more confidence to explore new skills.”**”

It is great to see the project receive some recognition through the press, working with young people can be challenging and stressful, so it is always nice to receive some praise.

The stART Project



I have been running stART for over 2 years now (holy mother of catfish!) and I can say that working with young people has been equally as rewarding as it has been challenging. I would struggle to find a line of work which provides as much satisfaction as this, I am directly involved in making a difference to the lives of young people from Middlesbrough, I don't have to analyse data to see this, they tell me!

And then there are the challenges! Yes this comes with the territory but it is the sheer volume and range of issues that make working with vulnerable young people so demanding. The stART team of artists, photographers, support workers and myself can expect to work with young people who have anxiety issues, OCD, suffer from depression, are on the autistic spectrum, are agoraphobic, have learning difficulties, have ADHD, are young parents, are emotionally unstable, have substance abuse problems, are homeless and/or have mental health problems, this is in any one group! I am just scratching the surface when describing the kind of issues that these young people categorised as NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training) are likely to face. It shouldn't take too much imagination to picture a room full of these young people and you'll get an idea of the kind of challenges we deal with (ADHD + anxiety = challenges!)

I have been impressed with the way in which the stART team have worked with this (often) extremely complex range of issues and challenges and feel that a wealth of experience and knowledge has been developed. It is this accumulation of knowledge and experience that allows stART to continue to be successful and to develop new approaches to working with vulnerable young people, which leads me on to thoughts of the future...

Both TVA and Middlesbrough Council are looking for ways to fund stART for the future - we know it makes sense!



Tim Coyte
Projects Officer



Simon Says...



2011 literally started with a bang for me. The night before New Year's Eve I was woken up at 3.30 in the morning with loud cries through my letterbox that our car was on fire and the sound of car horns going off. As I ran into the street in my dressing gown (remembering to pick up our three year old daughter) it emerged that a suspected arson attack had set fire to our car in our car port, which had quickly spread to next door's car and, as two fire engines arrived, proceeded to destroy the car port roof. The fire then spread to the electricity and gas supplies on an external wall, which in turn set fire to the elderly lady's flat below ours, who luckily was not at home that night.

All in all, not a good end to last year or start to this – luckily my in-laws live a couple of miles away and took pity on us. Anyway it all meant I had the best “what did you do on your holiday?” story when we came back to work in January! I haven't checked if it has been added as a statistic on the new crime-mapping website as I couldn't access it (along with millions of other people it seems) but it was featured in the Gazette. As I write this I am still homeless, without gas and electricity some seven weeks after the event - I will never listen to Firestarter by the Prodigy with the same enthusiasm I can tell you!

All this wittering brings me to twittering with the news that TVA are now on twitter and if there are any other tweeters or twitterers (I don't know the correct terms yet!) we can be followed at www.twitter.com/teesvalleyarts We can also be found on a Facebook group if you put in a search for Tees Valley Arts.

Other “t'internet” TVA related news items are that we are presently redesigning our website to give it a new look, so keep your eyes out for that over the coming months. One site I used at Christmas to buy a few presents is www.buy.at/teesvalleyarts which has links to lots of great sites such as Amazon and Play.com, and if you buy anything by clicking through that page TVA receives a small commission – every little helps!

We can also be found on The Big Give <http://new.thebiggive.org.uk/charity/view/8350> which features over 7,000 charities working all over the world. Hopefully the person who won the £113 million on the UK lottery last October might stumble upon us – you never know!

And finally, the dates for WorldFest have been confirmed Friday 3rd June for the Gala Night at Middlesbrough Town Hall and Tuesday 7th June for the Youth Event at Middlesbrough Town Hall Crypt. Sandwiched in between is Middlesbrough Music Live on Sunday 5th June – hope to see you there!

Simon Smith
Communications Officer



theBigGive.org.uk
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TVA can work with you to plan a programme of creative activities, work up a budget, write funding applications, find suitable artists, and then manage the project both artistically and administratively. If you have an idea that you would like to discuss, please contact us:



c/o Tees Valley Arts,
Melrose House, Melrose Street, Middlesbrough TS1 2HZ
T: 01642 264 651 F: 01642 264 955
E: info@teesvalleyarts.org.uk W: www.teesvalleyarts.org.uk

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