ART + CARE : A FUTURE
Mail Art by Mohammed Yusef features throughout this publication. Mohammed is an artist based in Westmead Care Home in West London. A former accountant and postman, Mohammed’s archive responds to the barrage of mail delivered to the home to coerce older people to enter sweepstakes and other promotional schemes. He recycles envelopes and draws maps of the world from memory.

WARNING: IF YOU DO NOT VALIDATE YOUR OFFICIAL SWEEPSTAKES ENTRY DOCUMENT AND RETURN IT BY THE DEADLINE, YOU WILL FORFEIT ALL PRIZE MONEY THAT MAY BE MatchED TO YOUR ENCLOSED EXCLUSIVE PRIZE NUMBER.

£13,750 IN PRIZES GUARANTEED TO BE AWARDED

THIS SEAL CONFIRMS YOUR ELIGIBILITY TO WIN £10,000 CASH
Bloomberg is delighted to mark its long-term support of the Serpentine Gallery’s groundbreaking social and education projects with this exciting new publication, Art + Care: A Future. Bloomberg has supported Serpentine Gallery’s Projects since 2007 and was a lead sponsor on Skills Exchange: Urban Transformation and the Politics of Care, the results of which are published in this book. We are proud to be associated with a public programme that has established such a significant track record for engaging diverse audiences in dynamic new models of learning and participation.

As a leading financial-information services company providing news and information globally, Bloomberg is dedicated to effective communication across cultures and social boundaries. For this reason, we are particularly pleased to have supported leading UK-based contemporary artists in their collaborations with older people living and shaping London neighbourhoods. Bloomberg’s sponsorship of Skills Exchange is part of a global programme of sponsorships committed to innovation and access in the arts.
The Serpentine Gallery is proud to present Art + Care: A Future, a publication that speculates on future alliances between the fields of art and elderly care. The book is based on essays by key thinkers on issues of aging and the future, and is contextualised by case studies from five years of the Serpentine Gallery’s work in placing artists, designers, researchers and architects in the field of elderly care through the project Skills Exchange: Urban Transformation and the Politics of Care.

There are currently 10 million people aged sixty-five and over in the UK, and by 2050 there will be 19 million. Of those aged sixty and over, 1.1 million live in homes that do not meet minimum housing standard and many face intense forms of segregation and isolation. The needs of older people are complex and studies have proved the importance of artistic and creative opportunities in increasing well-being and reducing isolation of the elderly.

As contributors to this book suggest, beyond these immediate needs the concerns of the elderly intersect with those of many others. Sylvia Federici’s essay argues that decreased welfare-state contributions for the elderly have a significant impact on women, who, with migrant workers, bear the unpaid or underpaid brunt of care. Franco Berardi (Bifo) argues that the postponement of state pensions has equal ramifications for a younger precarious generation of workers, who reach the workforce later in life as a result. It is only through understanding the intersections between elderly care and other social sectors that we can begin to imagine what the future could look like.

How can artistic practices assist in this re-imagining of elderly care and all of its complex interdependencies?

Responding to this question and to broader public debates regarding housing, pensions and the well-being of the UK’s aging population, in 2007 the Serpentine Gallery launched Skills Exchange: Urban Transformation and the Politics of Care. Initiated by then Head of Programmes Sally Tallant and Projects Organiser Louise Coysh, the project was developed by Projects Curator Janna Graham. Through Skills Exchange, the Serpentine Gallery placed artists, architects, researchers and designers into spaces and services for older people in five London Boroughs. Skills Exchange began with the idea that people in the later stages of life possess vital skills, insights and experiences that should be shared and exchanged. The project aimed to bring the voices and concerns of this often marginalised section of society into contact with a range of artistic practices. Through these exchanges, participants in the field of art and care realised that the picture of the elderly that we have seen to date does not reflect the myriad of experiences, desires, plans, ways of knowing and networks that older people possess. Indeed very few Skills Exchange projects in the end focused on older people.

What we heard from our Skills Exchange collaborators was more often related to broader social changes that they wanted to make: the destigmatising of social-housing tenants; the preservation of local street markets; the right to imagination at the end of life, and the creation of more equitable relationships in caring.

Each Skills Exchange project was based on an extended artistic residency in a space of elderly care, through which participants were invited to engage with the creative process to challenge stereotypes and social norms. Projects took place during periods of imminent change – the relocation of a care home, the transformation of a neighbourhood or a point of transition in the cycle of life – since these are the times when elderly people are more often marginalised and excluded. Though each project started with the union of artists and older people, the communities surrounding them grew to include children, students, care-givers, market-traders, local activists, media figures, policy-makers and many others.

Projects by Åbäke & Markus Miessen with Westmead Care Home; Barby Asante with Inspire, Southwark; Marcus Coates and Alex H with St John’s Hospice; Beatrice Gibson with Camden Homes For Older People; and Tom Hunter with Age UK Hackney, resulted in proposals for local areas as well as presentations in the Sackler Centre of Arts Education at the Serpentine Gallery.

These gallery presentations engaged a broader public in discussions, propositions and responses to the issues related to aging and its intersection with broader social concerns. Skills Exchange projects were experienced by over 50,000 people at the Gallery and reached an even greater number through media attention. This exposure heightened the profile of issues and debates of concern to elderly people.

A research team from Goldsmiths Community and Urban Research Unit led by Dr Alison Rooke accompanied each project. With the participants they issued the report Modalities of Exchange. Included in section two of this book, the report outlines the benefits and challenges of exchanges between artists, care workers and older people through the words of many of the project’s participants. The report argues powerfully that art should not be seen as a service for the care sector, but rather a mode of exchange that challenges the marginal status assigned to older people.

We are indebted to all of the project artists, researchers, older people and workers in the care field, the full list of whom is available on the contributors page.

Neither this book nor the Skills Exchange project would have been possible without the very generous donors to the project. Included in this list are Bloomberg, who over five years enabled the Serpentine to build its Projects strand of programming, bringing art to a range of social environments; the Rayne Foundation; the Big Lottery; the Arts Council of England; Camden Council; Westminster City Council; Smoke + Mirrors and Film London.

The Council of the Serpentine is a remarkable group of individuals, whose commitment to the Serpentine enables the Gallery to realise its ambitious projects. We are especially thankful to them for making the Skills Exchange project possible.

We are also appreciative to the Learning Council of the Serpentine Gallery’s dedicated support of the Gallery’s Education programme, ‘Learning Through Art’, which makes a critical contribution to the Gallery’s engagement with people of all ages across diverse communities.

We would like to thank Sally Tallant, Janna Graham, Amal Khalaf, Rose Lejeune and Catherine Hawes for their insightful development of the Skills Exchange Project, as well as the rest of the Serpentine Gallery team who assisted in the realisation of the various exhibitions, programmes and publications associated with it, including Mike Gaughan, Matt Glenn, Kathryn Rattee, Sophie O’Brien, Lucia Pietroiusti, Eleanor Farrington, Joceline Howe and Nicola Lees.

Julia Peyton-Jones Director, Serpentine Gallery and Co-Director, Exhibitions and Programmes

Hans Ulrich Obrist Co-Director, Exhibitions and Programmes and Director of International Projects
FREE INSIDE
THIS BEAUTIFUL
PHOTOGRAPH
JUST FOR YOU

7 DAY REPLY REQUESTED

Say YES! to this notification within 7 days and you will receive a DOUBLE CHANCE
OF WINNING and there are 15 additional prize award opportunities!

PLEASE OPEN IMMEDIATELY

IFAW Registered charity number 1024806.
# CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Title</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ESSAYS</td>
<td>On Elder Care</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Silvia Federici</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>When Old People Fall In Love II: The Aesthetic-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Politics of Ageing and the Dark Side of Desire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Franco Berardi (Bifo)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>How Old is Old? Designing Participation Tactics to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nurture the Ingenuity of Ageing for Our Future Selves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yanki Lee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Grave New World Tomorrow to-morrow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sally Tallant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Towards an Autonomy of Care</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Janna Graham</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REPORT</td>
<td>Modalities of Exchange: A Summary Report – Goldsmiths Centre for</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Community and Urban Research (Alison Rooke and Janna Graham with</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cristina Garrido Sánchez, Ananda Furlauto, Laura Cuch, Mara Ferreri</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&amp; Katey Tabner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PROJECTS</td>
<td>The Trip</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Marcus Coates with St. John’s Hospice, Hackney</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Future’s Getting Old Like the Rest of Us Beatrice Gibbon with</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Camden Homes for Older People, Camden</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Sound of Home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Markus Miessen with Westmead Care Home, Westminster</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Barter with the Future Self</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Åbäke with Westmead Care Home, Westminster</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A Palace for Us</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tom Hunter with Woodberry Down Estate, Hackney</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Trading Spaces: An Investigation into the Future of London Street</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Markets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Barby Asante with InSpire History Group, Southwark</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIOGRAPHIES</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
On Elder Care

Silvia Federici

Introduction

“Care work,” especially eldercare, has come in recent years to the center of public attention in the countries of the OECD in response to a number of trends that have put many traditional forms of assistance into crisis. First among these trends have been the growth, in relative and absolute terms, of the old age population and the increase in life expectancy (Kotlikoff and Burn 2004), not been matched, however, by a growth of services catering to the old. There has also been the expansion of women’s waged employment that has reduced their contribution to the reproduction of their families. (Folbre 2006: 350) To these factors we must add the continuing process of urbanization and the gentrification of working class neighborhoods, that have destroyed the support networks and the forms of mutual aid on which older people living alone could once rely, as neighbors would bring them food, make their beds, come for a chat. As a result of these trends, it is now recognized that for a large number of elderly, the positive effects of a longer life-span have been voided or are clouded by the prospect of loneliness, social exclusion and increased vulnerability to physical and psychological abuse. With this in mind, I present some reflections on the question of eldercare in contemporary social policy, especially in the US, to then ask what action can be taken on this terrain and why the question of elder care has been absent in the literature of the Marxist left.

My main objective here is to call for a redistribution of the ‘common wealth’ in the direction of elder care, and the construction of collective forms of reproduction enabling older people to be provided for when no longer self-sufficient and not at the cost of their providers’ lives. For this to occur, however, the struggle over elder care must be politicized and placed on the agenda of social justice movements. A cultural revolution is also necessary in the concept of old age, challenging its degradation as a fiscal burden on the state and the younger generations (on one
side), and (on the other) its mystification as an ‘optional’ stage in life that we can ‘cure,’ ‘overcome,’ and even prevent, if we only adopt the right medical technology and the ‘life enhancing’ devices disgorge by the market (Joyce and Mamo 2008).1 At stake in the politicization of elder care are not only the destinies of older people and the un-sustainability of radical movements failing to address such a crucial issue in our lives, but the possibility of generational and class solidarity, which for years have been the targets of a relentless campaign by political economists and governments, portraying the provisions which workers have won for their old age (like pensions and other forms of social security) as an economic time-bomb and heavy mortgage on the future of the young.

1As Joyce and Mamo point out in “Graying the Cyborgs” (2007), driven by the quest for profit and an ideology privileging youth, a broad campaign has been underway targeting the elderly as consumers, promising to “regenerate” their bodies and delay aging if they use the appropriate pharmaceutical products and technologies. In this context, old age becomes almost a sin, a predicament we bring on ourselves, by failing to take advantage of the latest rejuvenating products.

1. The Crisis of Elder Care & the Era of Neoliberalism

The present crisis of elder care, in some respects, is nothing new. Elder care in capitalist society has always been in a state of crisis, both because of the devaluation of reproductive work in capitalism and because the elderly, far from being treasured, as they were in many pre-capitalist societies as depositories of the collective memory and experience, are seen as no longer productive. In other words, elder care suffers from a double cultural and social devaluation. Like all reproductive work, it is not recognized as work, but unlike the reproduction of labor-power, whose product has some recognized value, it is deemed to absorb value but not to produce it. Thus, funds designated for eldercare have traditionally been disbursed with a stinginess reminiscent of the 19th century Poor Laws, and the task of caring for the old, when no longer self-sufficient, has been left to the families and kin with little external support, on the assumption that women would naturally take on this task as part of their domestic work. It has taken a long struggle to force capital to reproduce not just labor-power ‘in use,’ but the work-force throughout its entire life cycle, with the provision of assistance also for those who are no longer part of the labor market. However, even the Keynesian state fell short of this goal. Witness the Social Security legislation of the New Deal, enacted in 1940 in the United States, and considered “one of the achievements of our century” (Costa 1998: 1). It only partly responded to the problems faced by the old, as it tied social insurance to the years of waged employment, thus excluding unwaged house-workers from it, and provided assistance only to those in a state of absolute poverty.

The triumph of neo-liberalism has worsened this situation. In some countries of the OECD, some steps were taken in the 1990s to increase the funding of home-based care, and provide counseling and services to care-givers. (OECD 2006; Beneria 2008: 2-3,5) Efforts have also been made to enable caregivers to ‘reconcile’ waged work and care work. In England and Wales, whereas it is reckoned that 5.2 million people provide informal care, starting in April 2007, caregivers for adults were given the right to demand flexible work schedules. (Carmichael et al.: 7)2 But the dismantling of the welfare state and the neo-liberal insistence that reproduction is the workers’ personal responsibility have triggered a counter-tendency that is gaining momentum and the present economic crisis is accelerating.

2Beneria cites as an example a law passed in Spain in 1999 mandating employers to provide ‘different forms of temporary leaves to facilitate care work’ (p.5), followed by a more extensive one in 2009-7 “funding a portion of the expenses individuals household spend on care.” (ibid). In Scotland, the Community Care and Health Act of 2002 ‘introduced free personal care for the elderly’ and also redefined caregivers as ‘to workers receiving resources rather than consumers... obliged to pay for services.’ (Piana Carmichael et al.: 7).

The demise of welfare provisions for the elderly has been especially severe in the US, where it has reached such a point that workers are often impoverished in the effort to care for a disabled parent. One policy in particular has created great hardships. This has been the transfer of much hospital care to the home, a move motivated by purely financial concerns and carried out with little consideration given to the structures required to replace the services the hospitals used to provide.3 As described by Nora Glazer (1993), this development has not only increased the amount of care-work that family members, mostly women, must do. It has also shifted to the home “dangerous” and even “life threatening” operations that in the past only registered nurses and hospitals would have been expected to perform.4 At the same time, subsidized

3According to various surveys, as a consequence of these cuts, ... 20-30 millions family members in the US provide care that has been transformed by nurses and home workers. Family care gives supply about 80% of the care for ill or disabled relatives and the need for their services will only rise as the population ages and modern medicine improves its ability to prolong lives....With more terminally ill people choosing to remain at home until their final days, family members or friends now serve as informal caregivers for nearly three fourths of sick or disabled older adults living in the community during their years of life, according to a report in the Archives of Internal Medicine of January 2007 (Brody 2008).

4At the same time, subsidized
home-care workers have seen their workload double, while
the length of their visits has increasingly been cut for-
ing them to reduce their jobs "to household mainte-
nance and bodily care." (Boris and Klein: 180) Federally financed
nursing homes have also been taylertized, "using time-
and-motion studies to decide how many patients their workers
can be expected to serve." (Glazer, ibid.: 174)

4As a consequence of this "transfer," the home (Glazer writes) have
been turned into a medical factory, where dialyses are performed
and housewives and aides must learn to insert catheters, mediate
wounds, while a whole new sort of medical equipment has been
manufactured for home use. (Glazer 154ff.)

The globalization of elder care in the 1980s and 1990s
has not remedied this situation. The new international
division of reproductive work that globalization has pro-
moted has shifted a large amount of care-work on the
shoulders of immigrant women. (Federici 1995: 57-8, Pyle
2003: 283-9) As is generally recognized, this development
has been very advantageous for governments, enabling
them to save billions of dollars they would have had to
pay to create services catering to the elderly. It has also
enabled middle class women to pursue their careers and
has allowed many among the elderly, who wished to main-
tain their independence, to remain in their homes without
going bankrupt. But this cannot be considered a solution
to elder care. Beside conferring a new legitimacy to the
neo-liberal doctrine that governments have no responsi-

bility for social reproduction, this policy is condemned by
the living and working conditions of the paid care workers,
which reflects all the contradictions and inequities that
are characteristic of the process of social reproduction in
our time.

It is because of the destructive impact of economic lib-
eralization and structural adjustment in their countries
of origins that thousands of women from Africa, Asia, the
Caribbean Island, and the former socialist world, migrate
to the more affluent regions of Europe, the Middle East
and the United States to serve as nannies, domesticos, and
caregivers for the elder. To do this they must leave their
own families including their children and aging parents
behind, and recruit relatives or hire other women with
less power and resources to replace the work they can no
longer provide. (Pyle 2003:282; Hochschild 2002) Taking
the case of Italy as an example, it is calculated that three
out of four "badanti" (as care workers for the elderly are
called) have children of their own, but only 15% have their
families with them. (Di Vico 2004) This means that the
majority suffer a great deal of anxiety, confronting the fact
that their own families must go without the kind of care
they now give to people across the globe. Arlie Hochschild
has spoken, in this context, of a "global transfer of care
and emotions," and the formation of a "global care-chain."
(2002: 26-7; 2009: 134-6). But it is a chain that most of-
ten breaks down, as immigrant women become estranged
from their children, stipulated arrangements fall apart,
relatives die during their absence.

Equally important, because of the devaluation of repro-
ductive work and the fact that they are immigrants, often
undocumented and women of color, paid care workers are
vulnerable to a great deal of abuse: long hours of work,
no paid vacations, or other benefits, exposure to racist
behavior and sexual assault. So low is generally the pay
of home care workers in the US that nearly half must rely
on food stamps and other forms of public assistance to
make ends meet. (New York Times, 1/28/09) Indeed, as
Domestic Workers United—the main domestic/care work-
ers organization in New York, promoter of a Domestic
Workers Bill of Rights—has put it, care workers live and
work in "the shadow of slavery." It is also important to
stress that most elderly people and families cannot afford
hiring care-workers or paying for services matching their
real need. This is particularly true of elderly people with
illnesses who require day-long care. According to statistics
of the Cnfl of 2003, in Italy only 2.8% of elderly receive
non-family assistance at home; in France it is twice as
many, in Germany three times. But the number is still
low. (Di Vico 2004) A large number of elderly thus live
alone facing hardships that are all the more devastating
the more invisible they are. In the 'hot summer' of 2003,
thousands of elderly people died, throughout Europe, of
dehydration, lack of food and medicines or just the unbear-
able heat—so many died in Paris that the authorities had
to stack their bodies in refrigerated public spaces until the
families came to reclaim them.

When family members care for the old, the tasks falls
mostly on the shoulders of women5, who for months or
years live on the verge of nervous and physical exhaustion,
consumed by the work and the responsibility of having to
provide care and often perform procedures for which they
are not usually prepared. Few jobs are as demanding as
adult care; not surprisingly, a high percentage of family
caregivers show symptoms of clinical depression. Those
who have jobs outside the home are especially penalized.

5The Bill of Rights Domestic Workers United has campaigned for
was finally introduced in the legislation of New York State in
November 2010, the first in the country to recognize care work as
work. Similar campaigns are presently taking place in other parts
of the US, especially in California.

6However, in the US the number of men caring for elder parents has
been steadily increasing. (New York Times)
Though the number of adults caring for their parents has greatly increased, employers have made it difficult to help workers carry out this task. On the contrary, when the power relation is in their favor, they expect workers to spend more hours on the job and are reluctant to make any concessions. Thus, according to a recent AARP report, workers caring for their parents, in the US, must hide the fact that they are caregivers for fear of being refused a raise or losing their jobs, well-knowing that layoffs are always around the corner. They also fear the resentment of their co-workers (Abrahms: 12) Particularly stressed are those referred to as the "sandwich generation," who simultaneously are raising children and caring for their parents. (Beckford 2009) The crisis of care work has reached such a point that in low-income, single-parent families in the US, teenagers and children, some no more than eleven years old, take care of their elders, also administering therapies and injections. As the New York Times has reported, a study conducted nationwide in 2005 revealed that "3% of households with children ages 8 to 18 included child caregivers." (New York Times, March 2009: A18). 6

6According to a recent AARP report, in 2009, the number of US family care givers providing care for an elderly was estimated at 42.1 millions, the estimated monetary value of their contribution amounting to $856 billions. aarp.org/bulletin, September 2011, p19.

Other countries where children have become care workers include Britain and Australia, which often recognize them the right to participate in "patient-care discussions" and ask for compensations for their work. (New York Times ibid.)

The alternative, for those who cannot afford buying some form of assisted care, are publicly funded nursing homes, which, however, are more like prisons than hostels for the old. Typically, because of lack of staff and funds or these institutions provide minimal care. At best, they let their residents lie hours in bed without anyone at hand to change their positions, adjust their pillows, massage their legs, tend to their bed sores, or simply talk to them, so that they can maintain their sense of identity and dignity and still feel alive and valued. At worst, nursing homes are places where old people are drugged, tied to their beds, left to lie in their excrements and subjected to all kind of physical and psychological abuses. This much has emerged from a series of reports, including one recently published by the US Government in 2008, which speaks of a history of abuse, neglect, and violation of safety and health standards in 94% of nursing homes. (New York Times, 8/30/08) The situation is not more encouraging in other countries. In Italy, the country beside the United States that I have most researched, reports of abuses in nursing homes perpetrated against disabled or chronically ill elders are very frequent, as are the cases in which needed medical assistance is denied. 8

8See on the topic: Francesco Santanese "Violenze e abusi dovuti alla mancata applicazione delle leggi" in Prospective Assistentiali, n.169, gennaio marzo 2010. Prospective Assistentiali is a journal in existence since 1968 dedicated to struggle against social exclusion, especially of disabled and older people. Santanese’s article can be read on line: http://www.superrando.it/content/view/6754/121. According to government controls realized in 2010, one third of institutions for the elderly violate the legal norms.

2. Eldercare, the Unions, & the Left

The problems I have described are so common and pressing that we would imagine that eldercare should top the agenda of the social justice movements and labor unions internationally. This, however, is not the case. Unless they work in institutions (hospitals, nursing homes), as is the case with nurses and aides, care workers are usually ignored by labor unions, even the most combative like COSATU in South Africa. (Ally 2005: 3) Unions negotiate pensions, the conditions of retirement, and healthcare. But there is little discussion in their programs of the support systems required by people aging, and by care workers, whether or not they work for pay. In the US, until recently, labor unions did not even try to organize care workers, much less unpaid care-workers. To this day, care workers working for individuals or families are excluded from the Fair Labor Standards Act, a New Deal legislation that guarantees "access to minimum wages, overtime, bargaining rights and other workplace protections." (Boris and Klein 2007: 182) And the US is not an isolated case. According to a ILO survey of 2004, "cross-national unionization rates in the domestic service sector are barely 1%". (Ally 2005: 1) Pensions too are not available to all workers, but only to those who have worked for wages and certainly not to unpaid family caregivers. As reproductive work is not recognized as work and the pension systems compute benefits on the basis of the years spent in waged employment, women who have been fulltime housewives can obtain a pension only through a wage-earning husband and have no social security in case they divorce. 

http://www.ansa.it/notizie/rovibrich/cronaca/2010/02/06/ visualizza_news

Labor organizations have not challenged these inequities, nor have social movements and the Marxist Left, who, with few exceptions, also seems to have written the elderly off the struggle, judging by the absence of any reference to elder care in contemporary Marxist analyses. The responsibility for this state of affairs can be in part traced back to Marx. Elder care is not a theme that we find in his works, although the question of old age had been on the revolutionary political agenda since the 18th century, and mutual aid societies and utopian
visions of recreated communities (Fourierist, Owenite, Icarian) abounded in his time. (Blackburn 2002: 32, 38-41; Nordhoff 1969).10

As Robin Blackburn points out, it was at the time of the French Revolution that the first proposals for paying pensions to people in old age and want appeared. Tom Paine discussed the issue in the second part of Rights of Man (1792), so did his friend Condorcet who offered a plan that was to cover all citizens. On the footsteps of these proposals, “The National Convention declared that 16 Fructidor was to be the date of the Fête de la Vaillance and that there should be old people homes established in every department... The Convention adopted the principle of a civic pension for the aged in June 1794, just a few months after the abolition of slavery” (Blackburn 2002: 40-1).

In Marx’s time, forms of assistance against sickness, old age, and death, as well as unemployment, were provided by the “friendly societies,” workers’ clubs organized on the basis of trade, described by John Foster as “the one social institution that touched the adult lives of a near majority of the working population” (Foster 1974: 219). Moreover, while the zenith of utopian socialism was in the early part of the 19th century, as late as the 1860s communist experiments, committed to protect their participants brought about by the capitalist[s],” coming into place only when the workers “have ceased to belong to themselves,” being purely functional to the increase in the efficiency and productivity of labor. [Vol.1, Chapter 13: 449, 451]12 As such, it leaves no space for the manifold expressions of solidarity and the many “institutions for mutual support,” “associations, societies, brotherhoods, alliances,” that Kropotkin found present amongst the industrial population of his time. (Kropotkin: 208, 221) Yet, as Kropotkin noted, these very forms of mutual aid put limits to the power of capital and the State over the workers’ lives, enabling countless proletarians not to fall into utter ruin, and they sowed the seeds of a self-managed insurance system, guaranteeing some protection against unemployment, illness, old age and death.

Marx was concerned with understanding the mechanics of capitalist production and the manifold ways in which the class struggle challenges it and reshapes its form. Security in old age and elder care did not enter this discussion. Old age was a rarity among the factory workers and miners of his time, whose life expectancy on average did not surpass twenty years at best, if his contemporaries’ reports are to be believed. (Marx, Vol.1; Secombe 1983: 75-7) Most important, Marx did not recognize the centrality of reproductive work, neither for capital accumulation nor for the construction of the new communist society. Although both him and Engels described the abysmal conditions in which the working class in England lived and worked, he almost naturalized the process of reproduction, never envisaging how reproductive work could be reorganized in a different, non-exploitative society or in the very course of the class struggle. For instance, he discussed “cooperation” mostly in the process of commodity production overlooking the qualitatively different forms of proletarian cooperation in the process of reproduction which Kropotkin later called “mutual aid.”11 Cooperation among workers, in Marx, is a fundamental character of the capitalist organization of work, “entirely


10 For Kropotkin’s concept of Mutual Aid see in particular the last two chapters of the homonymous work. Peter Kropotkin, Mutual Aid: A Factor of Evolution. (1902)

12 As cooperators,” Marx writes, workers “merely form a particular mode of existence of capital.” The productive power they develop “is the productive power of capital.” (Ibid.)

Typical of the limits of Marx’s perspective is his vision of the last stage of capitalist production as articulated in the famous “Fragment on the Machines,” in the Grundrisse (1857-8), where he projects a world in which machines do all the work and human beings only tend to them, functioning as their supervisors. Whether understood as a utopia or a dystopia, this picture ignores in fact that, even in advanced capitalist countries, much of the socially necessary labor consists of reproductive activities and this work has proven not to be easily replaced by mechanization.

Only in part can the needs and desires of non-self-sufficient older people, or people requiring medical assistance, be addressed by incorporating technologies into the work by which they are reproduced. The automation of eldercare is a path already well traveled. As Nancy Folbre (the leading feminist economist and student of eldercare in the United States) has shown, Japanese industries are quite advanced in the attempt to technologize it, as they are generally in the production of interactive robots. Nursebots giving people baths or ‘walking [them] for exercise,’ and ‘companion robots’ (reboi dogs, teddy bears) are already available on the market, although at prohibitive costs. (Folbre 2006: 395) We also know that televisions and personal computers have become surrogate ‘badants’ for many elders. Electronically commanded wheelchairs enhance the mobility of those who are sufficiently in charge of their movements to master their commands.

These scientific and technological developments can highly benefit older people, if they are made affordable for them. The circulation of knowledge they can provide certainly places a great wealth at their disposal. But this cannot replace the labor of care workers, especially in the
case of elders living alone and/or suffering from illnesses and impairments. As Folbre points out, robotic partners can even increase people's loneliness and isolation (ibid.).

Nor can automation address the predicators—fears, anxieties, loss of identity, loss of the sense of one's dignity—that people experience as they age and become dependent on others often even for the satisfaction of their most basic needs, like walking, eating, washing, defecating. It is not technological innovation that is needed to address the question of eldercare, but a change in social relations, whereby the reproduction of our lives is no longer subordinated to the valorization of capital and is organized as a collective process.

3. Women, Aging & Elder Care In the Perspective of Feminist Economists

For a start, we need to recognize (as some feminist economists like Folbre have done) that the question of eldercare is essentially a gender question. Although increasingly commodified, most care work is still done by women and as unpaid labor that does not entitle them to any remuneration and pension. Thus, paradoxically, the more women care for others, the less care they can receive in return, because they devote less time to waged labor than men and many social insurance plans are calculated on the years of waged work done. Paid caregivers too are affected by the devaluation of reproductive work, forming an 'underclass' that still must fight to be socially recognized as workers. In sum, because of the devaluation of reproductive work, practically everywhere women face old age with fewer resources than men, measured in terms of family support, monetary incomes and available assets. Thus, in the United States, where pensions and Social Security are calculated on years of employment, women are the largest group of elderly poor and the largest number of residents of low-income nursing homes, the lagers of our time, precisely because they spend so much of their lives outside of the waged workforce in activities not recognized as work.

Science and technology cannot resolve this problem. What is required is a transformation in the social/sexual division of labor and, above all, the re-cognition of reproductive work as work, entitling those performing to a compensation, so that family members providing care are not penalized for their work. The recognition and valorization of reproductive work is crucial also to overcome the divisions which the present situation sows among care workers, which pit, on one side, the family members trying to minimize their expenses, and, on the other, the hired care-givers facing the demoralizing consequences of working at the edge of poverty and devaluation.

Feminist economists working on this issue have articulated possible alternatives to the present systems. In *Warm Hands in a Cold Age* (2007), Nancy Folbre has outlined the reforms needed to give security to the aging population, especially olderly women, taking an international perspective, and pointing to the countries that are in the lead in this respect. At the top, she places the countries which provide almost universal systems of insurance. At the bottom there are the US and England, where elderly assistance is tied to the history of employment. But, in both cases, there is a problem in the way policies are configured, which confirms an unequal sexual division of labor and the traditional expectations concerning women's role in the family and society. This is one crucial area where change must occur.

Folbre calls for a redistribution of resources re-channeling public money from the military-industrial complex and other destructive enterprises to the care of people in old age. She acknowledges that this may seem "unrealistic," equivalent to calling for a revolution. But she insists that it should be placed on "our agenda," for the future of every worker is at stake, and a society blind to the tremendous suffering that awaits so many people once they age, as is the case with the US today, is a society bound for self-destruction.

There is no sign, however, that this blindness will soon be dissipated. With the pretext of the economic crisis and low growth, policy makers are turning their eyes away from it, everywhere striving to cut social spending and bring state pensions and social security systems, including subsidies to care work, under the ax. According to the dominant, obsessive refrain the presence of a more energetic elderly population, stubbornly insisting on living on, is making every social form of assistance unsustainable. It was possibly thinking of the millions of Americans determined on living past 80, that Alan Greenspan, in his memoir, confessed that he was frightened when realizing that the Clinton Administration had actually accumulated a financial surplus! [Greenspan 2007: 257]

But even before the financial crisis of 2008, for years policy makers had been orchestrating a generational war, incessantly warning that that the expansion of the 65+ population would bankrupt the Social Security system, leaving a heavy mortgage on the shoulders of the young. And as the crisis deepens, the assault on elder care, either in form of cuts to services or cuts to pensions, intensifies. Already in Greece, since 2010, pensions have been cut by 25%. In England, the ideology of the "Big Society" means the attempt to place social services on a voluntary basis,
possibly be picked up by laid off women. Meanwhile, in the US, conservative politicians (like the Republican candidate Rick Perry) call the Social Security system a “Ponzi Scheme,” or mechanically repeat the system is collapsing and must be drastically restructured.

For sure, no one is arguing for an increase in government funding of elder care, or a reduction of working hours to make space for eldercare, or a remuneration of this work. (Watson and Mears 1989: 193)

It is urgent, then, that social justice movements intervene on his terrain to prevent a truce solution to the crisis at the expense of the old, and to bring together the different social subjects implicated in the question of elder care: care workers, families of the elders, and the elders themselves who are now told they are in an antagonistic relation to the young. Examples of this kind of alliance are already visible in the struggles over elder care, as nurses as patients, paid care workers, and families of their clients are coming together to jointly confront the state, aware that when the relations of re-production become antagonistic both producers and reproduced pay the price. Meanwhile, a “communing” of future productive work is under way.

Communal forms of living based upon “solidarity contracts” are presently being created in some Italian cities by elders, who in order to avoid being institutionalized, pool together their resources, when they cannot count on their families or hire a care worker. In the US, a younger generation of political activists has been discussing creating “communities of care,” aiming at socializing the experience of illness, pain, grieving and the care work involved, in this process reclaiming and redefining what is means to be ill, to age, to die. These efforts need to be expanded. They are essential to a reorganization of our everyday life and the creation of non-exploitative social relations. For the seeds of the new world are not to be planted online, but in the cooperation that we can develop among ourselves, which is most tested when confronted with the task of ensuring that the lives of those who are tied to wheelchairs or hospital beds do not become a living torture, as it is so often the case in our society.

13The organization of “communities of care” is the project of some anarchist activists, on both coasts of the United States, who are inspired by the solidarity work done by Act Up in response to the spread of AIDS in the gay community in the 1980s, which, against all odds, marked a major turning point in the growth of that movement. Information on “communities of care” can be found in a variety of zines produced on this subject. On this topic see “The Importance of Support: Building Foundations, Sustaining Community” In Rolling Thunder. An Anarchist Journal of Dangerous Living. Issue Six, Fall 2008, 29-30.

Bibliography


WHEN OLD PEOPLE FALL IN LOVE II
THE AESTHETIC-POLITICS OF AGING AND THE DARK SIDE OF DESIRE
Franco Berardi (Bifo)

In his film Cloud Nine (Wolke 9, 2008), Andreas Dresen stages a simple love story: Inge is married to Werner, but she meets Karl and falls in love with him. She decides to leave her husband and goes to live with her lover. One night, while she is sleeping in the arms of her beloved Karl, Inge receives a phone call: Werner has killed himself.

Well, so what? It’s a simple love story, as I said. But I neglected to note something important: Inge, Werner and Karl are between seventy and eighty years old. Dresen has made a beautiful movie: Cloud 9 breaks a silence, a sort of denial of the sexuality of older people. But is it really a denial? Love between old people is a subject that, with very few exceptions, has not been touched upon in literature and cinema, and one about which we know very little. This is for the simple reason that old people have never existed. Until some decades ago, people aged over sixty were such a small minority that they were lonely and rare – sometimes surrounded by an aura of respect and veneration, but more often rejected and pushed to the margins of society, and always alone, deprived of the means for survival, unable to form a community. A hundred years ago, one might have read about a person who lived into his eighties, but he was such an oddity that he became considered either the wise old sage or the crazy person; in either case, the exception. The problem of sexuality, of the body, was totally out of the picture because it was not a social reality.

So, we know nothing about the sexuality of old age. I discover every day what this means, but we have no literature about it. King Lear is of course an old person, but he is a father, not a lover, and you can’t imagine his bodily existence on a sexual level. Dresen’s movie breaks this ignorance and locates old age in the body in a way that is absolutely new, because he speaks about it as a normality. Old people in love are not freaks.

Other references that come to mind that are very different in this respect.

When I was twenty-five years old, I saw Hal Ashby’s Harold and Maude (1971), the story of a woman of seventy-nine, and a young man who asks her to marry him. At the time, I didn’t really understand it, but it was beautiful for me as a yippie. It was a very delicate, intelligent movie and I loved it precisely because their problem was the problem of freaks – strange people, so hippy that they were strange even for hippies like me!

In Jun’ichirō Tanizaki’s book Diary of a Mad Old Man, the title character falls in love with the wife of his son. It’s platonic love; he buys beautiful things for her, but nothing happens. However, it’s not so platonic. It’s all about looking, imagining, stalking. He talks about his craziness, his desire for his daughter-in-law. He is presented as a ‘Mad Old Man’.

Jou Pu T’Uan (The Prayer Mat of Flesh) by Li Yu is a novel from the seventeenth century. It is a frankly erotic, almost pornographic novel, which is about an old man who wants to have sex. He needs sex. So what can he do? He has sex with a dog. It’s totally surreal. But still he’s a freak.

In contrast, Cloud 9 is about the new reality of aging and the body. The West has always been obsessed with the fundamental mythology of youthful energy. This is not only the central feature of sexuality, but also of politics, arts, beauty. ‘Energy is eternal delight’, says William Blake. But we know that this point of view is a social problem, a cultural problem. And it is probably going to change – not only because older people now have a consciousness of their social existence, but also because social perception is shaped by changes in circumstance.

Ten years ago, the middle-aged parents were the wealthy people in the family. Now, these forty-year-olds are no longer the richest. Now, it’s common for the sixty- and seventy-year-olds to pay for their nephew’s or grandchild’s education. People of my age are paying both for their children and their children’s children. The market is paying special attention to this relatively rich generation with products like Viagra: to give a new value to the sexual life of old people means to give a new value to the consumerist life of old people. It’s interesting
to note from Italian statistics, however, that these products are primarily used by younger people. Thirty percent of sexual-performance enhancing drugs are used by twenty-year-olds, thirty percent by thirty- to fifty-year-olds, and ten percent by those over fifty years old. The magazine asked the question: ‘What will we do when so few young people are available for so many old people?’ This was the beginning.

The recent extension of average life-expectancy has so far been postponed because you can avoid paying two salaries. Because I take my pension, i.e. get my salary, and a young person takes my place and gets his salary, there are two salaries. This way they only have to pay one salary. And the young person is unemployed or a slave, available to do any kind of free or precarious labour.

And amazingly it’s the old who are blamed for this. When we hear statistics about youth unemployment, they’re often accompanied by the statement: ‘It’s because people are living so long!’ Young people are ideologically counter-positioned against the baby-boomers: ‘Those communists who are living so long – they never die. So you can’t find a job!’ But in Europe, the ‘precariat’, who have postponed their pension or who have never had one, are still possible thanks to the postponement of pensions, not because of the increasing well-being of the elderly. Due to this, young people have been put in a situation where they never find a job. They have to accept any kind of blackmail.

So far, this kind of manufactured ideological animosity has been working. But it is time for forging new solidarities between the young and the old. In my personal case, when I reached fifty-nine, I decided to stop. So I found a way to be expelled from the school for four months and a half. Then I went back to the school and discovered a policy from 1984 saying: ‘From now on, all the students are supposed to do two years of unpaid work. If you don’t accept the unpaid work, you’ll be expelled from the school.’ So I said, ‘Don’t accept that deal! Don’t take private pensions. Look what happened to the Canadian lumberjacks.’ Luckily in Italy a minister for young people accepted the deal; but not so few: 30 per cent. And now, we’re seeing what happens when you do this: pension funds are increasingly in danger; you can have a good pension if things go well, but you will have a bad pension or no pension at all if things go badly. Things are going badly just like they did for the Canadian lumberjacks.

While much has been made of the privatisation of pensions, there has been less discussion about their postponement. My own story is indicative of this phenomenon. In 1978, I was offered a contract of permanent, regular employment teaching in an evening school. I refused it because I wanted to be a precarious worker. In the 1970s, we thought that to be precarious was good. In 1986 they called me in again and told me I had to sign. Again, I refused: ‘It’s good to be precarious!’ In 1987, they told me, ‘If you don’t accept the regular job, you’ll be expelled from the school altogether.’ So I said, ‘OK, I like my job’, and I signed the contract. I asked when I would receive a pension. They told me, ‘When you’re fifty-eight years old, because people usually die at fifty-eight.’ So when I was fifty-eight, I went to claim my pension. They said, ‘Sorry, you won’t have your pension at fifty-eight, you’ll have your pension at sixty.’ I protested. I left my job. I went to do something different for a time. In 2002 I received my pension. And it was a shock to me.

The pension is the new carrot on the stick. And millions of people are in this situation. This is not simply about delaying payment. The truth is that you have an old person who will be able to manage, or physical deterioration, but by the fact that he or she is a few years older. The pyramid was once constituted by the memory of the past social civilisation, the political force, to defend their existence and place. This was the beginning. In it, the many people who were living in the house, or visited, recount their reminiscences as the rewriters who lost their furniture. Meanwhile, the TV set shows the beginning of the Gulf War, the bombing of Baghdad in January 1991. So the metaphor is that the House of Utopia is ending and the war begins.

Co-housing was an important step in thinking about what could be, of people living together, taking care of one another, sharing skills, going beyond the very individualised ideas of ageing that we have today. However, if we manage to create an exemplary situation, it’s not only about old people living together. We have discussed pension privatisation and postponement, fake generational conflict and the absent aesthetic perspective on the ageing body. We must also face the problem of exhaustion, not only as a problem, but as a cultural possibility.

Modern culture is based on the mythology of energy, Blake’s ‘energy of eternal delight’, of growth, of expansion. ‘Exhaustion’ is the un-speakable word of Western culture. In this conception, exhaustion is perceived as a lack of something that we need and that we are not going to have or that is lost. It is a metaphor that informs our social movements since the 1960s, the idea elaborated by Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri and others, of an energetic necessity, the non-recognition of the multitude. This and Anti-Oedipus, the great book by Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari upon
which it finds its foundation, present exciting but romantic notions. They belong to the tradition of the mythology of energy.

But energy is not infinite! Human intellectual energy and desire are not infinite!

In their late work, *What is Philosophy?* Deleuze and Guattari acknowledge this, in a reconsideration of the problem of desire. They speak of becoming old and of friendship and love. Friendship becomes a condition for sharing knowledge. And at the end of the book, in the chapter on ‘Chaos in the Brain’, they write that at a certain moment, you perceive the suffering of the universe as Chaos, going too fast for your brain to comprehend. In the relationship between the speed of the world and the relative slowness of the brain, there is suffering, which is the other side of desire. This dark face, the dark side of desire, is the result of a Universe that is going too fast. In Guattari’s later work *Chaosmosis*, he speaks of the spasme chaosmique, the ‘chaosmic spasm’. The chaosmic spasm is the perception that one is no longer able to follow the rhythm of the chaotic (or energetic) desire. Guattari calls for a new balance between the brain and universe.

Desire is not only energy and speed. It is also the ability to find another rhythm.

I want to embrace this dark side of desire. Otherwise, I am unable to face old age. But it is not only a problem of old age; it is a problem of the reality of politics. The reality of social life is not only the pleasure, the energy, the excitement of the acceleration of social knowledge. It is also the suffering that this implies.

From here, how do we problematise the mythology of energy, the Neoliberal rhetoric that states ‘I want to be active!’ What does active mean? Let’s try to see things from another point of view: the point of view of relaxation, of no responsibility, of self-care, the strong caring about the weak. I can tell you that being exhausted isn’t so bad. How do we treat the problem of exhaustion as the contour of a possibility? Not only by facing and dealing with death, but by discovering the richness of facing death. How do we inscribe the reality of death into the political and aesthetic agenda of a social group that is currently, and not only for biological reasons, weak?

The older generation of Europe could become the subject of a cultural revolution aimed at preparing Western society for a long-lasting agreement on the redistribution of wealth and resources. Such a cultural revolution would start with a critique of this energetic juvenilism permeating modern culture. The ideology of unbounded growth, and the cult of aggressive competition, are the foundations of capitalist development; they also nourish the romantic and nationalist ideologies that have aggressively mobilised Western society in late-modern times.

A mature culture aspiring to ‘ungrowth’ and the reduction of the consumerist push due to the activation of solidarity and of sharing, seems today – I must concede – a very unlikely possibility. The recent elections have shown that the European population is determined to defend its privileges by all means possible. But this stance cannot bring anything good with it, and is already bringing a lot of evil. An inter-ethnic civil war is lurking in daily life, and we are going to see it explode with unimaginable violence. Young people accustomed to very hard living conditions are surrounding the fortress. They are bearing the unconscious memory of centuries of exploitation and humiliation, and they are also bearing the conscious expectation of those things that advertising and global ideology have promised them.

During the past several decades, Europe seemed to be a continent of peace and social justice, but now it is sinking into a sea of sadness and cynicism. Young people seem unable to change the social conditions, and are wandering in the labyrinth of a society that lacks solidarity and relaxation. The older population could be the bearer of a new hope if they were able to face the inevitable with a relaxed soul. They could discover something that humanity has never known: a love of the aged, of the sensuous slowness of those who do not expect any more good from life except wisdom, the wisdom of those who have seen much, forgotten nothing, but look at everything as if for the first time.

This text is composed of edited excerpts from Franco Berardi’s *After the Future* (2011) and a recorded conversation with Janna Graham that took place in Bristol, September 2012.
HOW OLD IS OLD?
DESIGNING PARTICIPATION TACTICS TO NURTURE THE INGENUITY OF AGEING FOR OUR FUTURE SELVES

Yanki Lee

1. Introduction: Ageing and design

According to the United Nations 2009 report, the global population of people aged 60 and over is 680 million, representing 11 per cent of the world’s population and the figure is increasing very year. Specific questions are raised for/by design researchers to this global phenomenon: who should be our research subjects and where is the starting point to design for ageing?

Historian Peter Laslett once stated that ageing is ‘a unique experience for each individual’ and his famous slogan was ‘live in the presence of all your future selves,’ which promotes a life-course approach to address ageing issues. In other words, ageing is a condition that we will experience in our life course.

In the beginning of 1990s, Laslett’s concept was adopted by Professor Roger Coleman who extended it into the DesignAge programme at the Royal College of Art, the first design movement in ageing. Its motto was ‘Design for Our Future Selves’ and was set up as what Laslett described as ‘an arranged marriage’ of an art & design school with the University of the Third Age (U3A). The relationship was claimed as ‘a new collaboration between older people and young designers, and a new approach that is part of a growing trend towards a more thoughtful and respectful design process.’ The goal of this mutual relationship was to develop better designs that include the needs of all users with the starting point focused on the needs of older people.

2. Typology of design participation

As we know from other forms of participation in design, particularly those in the area of housing, user involvement can range from mission-oriented tasks reduced to their instrumental value for top-down designers and developers to more emancipatory forms, in which the design process is undertaken by and with the people who are to be the most effected. This ethical dimension of design participation is not always clarified, causing some participatory projects with older people to fall short of Laslett’s goal of creating a more ‘thoughtful and respectful design process.’ This text argues that, in order to avoid tokenistic approaches to participation, more emphasis should be placed on the issues of ‘how’, that is on the concrete circumstances of participation in design practice rather than repeatedly returning to the ‘why’ or to grand claims of user involvement.

While there has been a great deal of excitement about collaborative design in recent years, it is important to note that these questions are not new. The first attempt by the UK design community to formally address user participation in the design process was an international conference entitled ‘Design Participation’ in 1971, which was sponsored and organised by the Design Research Society (DRS), the multi-disciplinary learning society for the worldwide design research community.

In a climate of widespread growth of community action and social movements fighting for social democracy in the 1960s and early 1970s, the conference was the first to define ‘Design Participation’ and bring ‘everyman’ into the field (Banham 1972). Its aim was to discuss the importance of user participation in different forms of design practice and establish a community in the design field concerned with such issues.


2 In 1999, the DesignAge programme became a research centre with extra funding from the Helen Hamlyn Trust. The overarching term, ‘Inclusive Design’ was announced in collaboration with the Engineering Design Centre (EDC) at Cambridge University and association with Design for All/Universal Design movement. Since then, many design projects addressing age and ability were conducted and from my observation, majority of them followed the problem-solving approach/ scientific methods. The design researchers started with propositional logic or scientific hypotheses in order to identify the ‘real’ nature of the problem.
Since then, participation has become important within design as an economic necessity (Turner 1972), an element of government policy (Ward 1985) and a political initiative targeted at neighbourhood renewal, regeneration, employment, etc (Broome 2005). Beyond the creation of places and things, participation in design has extended to the design of experience, services and processes (Suri 1990). Additionally, involving end users in design has become an essential component of design research (Sanders 2006).

Different design ideologies are referred to by different names by practitioners and academics; for example, at the Royal College of Art, Product Design is called Design Products and Interaction Design is termed Design Interactions. Inclusive Design, which was introduced as design for social inclusion (Coleman 1984) with the focus on older and disabled populations, but has since expanded its definition to include other marginalised groups.

Because the fields and uses of participation are contradictory, deriving from both altruistic ideas of emancipation and empowerment and driven by economic and political projects seeking to seduce publics into top-down processes, the term ‘participation’ is today somewhat controversial. Architects and other professionals involved in housing development are regularly criticised by emancipatory and self-organised groups for using the ‘people’ over ‘user’, because, in their words, “…Frequently, UCD becomes merely ‘user testing’ and is brought in at the end of the product development cycle. Users are often too concerned in a task-centric way that fits into current technology-led business models.’

### 3. Design for the Ingenuity of Ageing

Through my own work as a designer/design researcher I have attempted to demonstrate practices of participation in design through a number of projects. Through these I have developed a design participation typology. Following other attempts, e.g. Arnstein’s ladder of participation (1969) and Christina Lindsay’s typology (1972) of participation (1969) and Christina Lindsay’s typology (1972), this typology attempts to distinguish other ways in which people practice participation and articulate its characteristics. For the design community, community participation projects become part of Design Participation when there design inputs in the processes or when designers take the initiative. When Public Participation projects involve community, especially involving the public realm, they will start to merge with the domain of Design Participation.

Table 1 intends to distinguish between different ways in which people practice participation and articulate its characteristics. For the design community, community participation projects become part of Design Participation when there design inputs in the processes or when designers take the initiative. When Public Participation projects involve community, especially involving the public realm, they will start to merge with the domain of Design Participation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of Participation</th>
<th>Operating Space</th>
<th>Initiative</th>
<th>Expected Outcome</th>
<th>Approach</th>
<th>The roles of architects and designers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Community participation (CP)</td>
<td>User World, Concrete Space</td>
<td>Social workers from NGOs or users, especially from grassroots community</td>
<td>Social service - oriented (social justice)</td>
<td>bottom up approach</td>
<td>Advisers to give professional advice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Participation (PP)</td>
<td>Expert World, Abstract Space</td>
<td>Policy-makers or public service agents/public sector</td>
<td>Policy-oriented (citizen education)</td>
<td>top down approach</td>
<td>Producers under the instruction of public policy makers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design Participation (DP)</td>
<td>From Realm of Collaboration extends to the other spaces</td>
<td>Designers or users</td>
<td>Design – oriented (design innovation)</td>
<td>can be top-down or bottom-up</td>
<td>Strategists aiming to develop innovative design or better design to improve people’s lives.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Table 1 Comparisons between community, public and design participation |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Space of operation</th>
<th>What’s Design Participation for?</th>
<th>The relationship between the designers’ space and the users’ space</th>
<th>The role of ‘designers’</th>
<th>The role of ‘users’</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Designers’ space</td>
<td>1. Innovation (designer only)</td>
<td>Co-designers/ facilitators</td>
<td>Masters/ authorities</td>
<td>Imagined user/ representatives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Realm of collaboration (between designers and people)</td>
<td>2. Collaboration (designer-driven)</td>
<td>Co-workers/ partners</td>
<td>Co-designers/ facilitators</td>
<td>Co-workers/ partners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Users/design space</td>
<td>3. Emancipation (user-driven)</td>
<td>Stimulators</td>
<td>Creative people/ advisors</td>
<td>Co-designers/ facilitators</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Users/design space</td>
<td>4. Motivation (user only)</td>
<td>Craftsmen/ builders</td>
<td>Active clients</td>
<td>Co-designers/ facilitators</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 indicates where the Design Participation practices operates, the purpose (also suggested their names), the designer/user relationship and finally the roles of designers and users.

Table 2. Design Participation Typology

36
Although there is no hierarchical intention as in other classification systems, there is a difference between the use of names to ‘class-
sit’ the field. In Design Participation for ‘innovation’ and ‘co-participation’ practitioners are mission-
oriented. For them, knowledge is reduced to its own rules. They are conducting Design Participation activities with other de-
signers for people. The ‘emancipation’ practi-
tioners, on the other hand, are designing with people. These three types of Design Participa-
tions with designers’ involvement cover the ideology of ‘Co-Design’. However, the world of de-
sign is undergoing a massive change: de-
sign is becoming an everyday activity rather than a professional study (Lee 2007). In this con-
text, the Design Participation for Motiva-
tion becomes more important and moves to-
wards the co-design domain, even though they are initiated by people in concrete space. Within this fourth zone, the users have au-
tonomy to steer the design process and have no fixed rules. This latter form of design par-
ticipation has been described ‘The Alternative Culture’ by Banham (1972: 17), who concluded that the only real Design Participation is ‘do-
it-yourself’ where participants invent their own rules.

4. Challenges in the Design Field

While design participation and co-design are on the rise, it is clear that designers are still often situated at a distance from user-initiated initiative or DIY or autonomous pro-
cesses. There are a number of challenges to overcoming this.

The first challenge is that aesthetic pro-
cesses as it is currently understood in design, is still the core knowledge of design profes-
sionals and seen to be separate from the issue of participation. Much of design research, and participation in research in design in particu-
lar, is being conducted by other experts such as psychologists, sociologists and anthro-
pologists, who are concerned with the effects and influence of designing than its forms. Very few design practitioners who are work-
ing in the high stress design field feel that they have the time, the training or the inclination to pursuethefindings from design research done by these ‘outsiders’ (Mitchell 1993). This means that there are gaps between design or participation research by ‘outsiders’ and cre-
ative design practice by ‘insiders’ (designers) because of a lack of collaboration between the
two groups. This creates a situation of inef-
ficacy for those who have conducted and en-
gaged in bottom up research processes and whose findings are not incorporated into design-
signs. It also means that professional design-
ers are somewhat buffered from the political stakes of communities and participatory pro-
cesses in their designs, a distance that can be useful for commissioners engaging partici-
pation only to be seen to be involving users. The relation between design and people-led research could therefore become more cre-
ative and consequential for all stakeholders, and especially users if there were to be more professional designer involvement.

The other issue that can stand in the way of efficacious user involvement is the focus in the design field on innovation, understood in rela-
tion to the field of design-in-itself. It is quite possible that what is necessary in re-framing the relationship between designers and users is more of a focus on paralogy rather than in-
novation. As Jean-Francois Lyotard (1984: 61) explained,

‘Paralogy must be distinguished from innovation: the latter is under the command of the system, or at least used by it to improve its efficiency; the former is a move (the importance of which is not recog-
nized until later) played in the pragmatics of knowl-
edge ... The strong point of the ‘move’, the peculiarity of the latter is to be denied the minimum consensus, precisely be-
cause it changes the rules of the game upon which the consensus has been based.’

A focus on paralogy is then an understand-
ing of the new shift in knowledge or reasoning that moves beyond a challenge or movement within design and amongst designers and has the potential to ‘change the game’ of the core assumptions in which a design process is situ-
ated, that is changing the hierarchical order of design in such a way that groups might change the hierarchical order of the social fabric.

In many ways this reflects new thinking in the area of Design Participation, such as the work of Ehn, who alters the designer/non-de-
signer paradigm to the concept of communi-
ties-of-practice organized around designing socio-material design things defined as ‘...mean-
 ingful, potentially controversial assemblages for and with the participants in a project’ (2008, 84).

Moving away from an over-emphasis on the design professional and into that of ‘commu-
nities of practice’, involving designers and non-designers seems to be a logical way for-
ward, but one that must be adopted by not only designers but training and commissioning bodies if it is to take place.

5. Design for the ingenuity of ageing

Ehn’s assertions suggest that it is likely bet-
ter to start from individual people’s solutions in dealing with their own ageing problems, especially engaging with those who have more experience, i.e. the elderly. However, it is possible that designerly ways of research-
ning can assist older people not only in solv-
ing the problems but to understand the problems to begin with. For many social is-
sues, problems are identified by public, cor-
porate or NGO bodies and not citizen groups themselves. Designers trained in the arts, on the other hand, ‘...are capable of ‘capturing fleeting moments and structures that others find ephemeral, imaginative, and unstable for serious research. They are also trained in re-
framing ideas ... and to imagine problems and opportunities to see whether something is necessary or not. (Koskinen, 2012)

Recently I have had opportunity to test these ideas through work on the Tsinghua Uni-
versity campus in Beijing. In addition to 30,000 students and staff members, there are over 6,000 retirees still living on the campus. Many elderly residents are ageing actively. They had been encouraged to move, the accommodation for life, pensions equally to half of their previous salaries and more im-
portantly well connected communities and a respected social status. As a distance from paralogy provides the conditions for older and other people to become communities of practice in the making and shaping of their lives.


Cruigwhite, Working Together: A New Approach to Design, Royal College of Art, UK. 1997


Laslett, P. A Fresh Map of Life: Emergence of the Third Age, Palgrave Macmillan. 1998.

Lee, Y., Design Participation Tactics: involving people in the design of their built environment, unpublished doctoral thesis, the Hong Kong Polytechnic University. 2007.


Lee, Y. The Ingenuity of Ageing. The Helen Hamlyn Centre for Design, Royal College of Art, 2012


Lindsay, C., Involving people as co-creators. In The New Everyday: Views on Ambient Intelligence, pp. 39-41. 2003 (The O10 Publishers: Rotterdam)


GRAVE NEW WORLD
TOMORROW
TO-MORROW
TO MORROW

Sally Tallant
The population of the UK is aging. Over the last 25 years, the percentage of the population aged 65 and over increased from 15 per cent in 1981 to 17 per cent in 2010, an increase of 1.7 million people. Over the same period, the percentage of the population aged under 16 decreased from 21 per cent to 19 per cent. This trend is projected to continue. By 2032, 23 per cent of the population is projected to be aged 65 and over compared to 18 per cent under 16.

The latest population estimate has been the number of those aged 85 and over, the “older old.” In 1981, there were around 690,000 people in the UK aged 85 and over. Since then, the number has more than doubled, reaching 1.4 million in 2010. By 2037, the number of people aged 85 and over is expected to be 2.5 times larger than in 2010, reaching 3.6 million people, an increase of 5 per cent of the total population.

The numbers in each of these aged 65 and over is also falling. In 1981 there were 154 women aged 65 and over for every 100 men of the same age, compared to the current average of 127 women for every 100 men. By 2037 it is projected that the 65 and over sex ratio will have fallen to 115 women for every 100 men.

The notion of “care” implies vulnerability and “need.” There is an inherent interdependency between “cared for” and “caring for.” And the questions of whose agency and active participation in the world is valued becomes of utmost importance. People over working age in “good health” do not often consider themselves amongst those “needing care,” but perhaps it is time we should all review our perspective on this, as a lack of planning now is very shortsighted. Things around us appear to be bleak now we should consider the future shock that is in store for us. What kind of future can we envisage for ourselves, we are getting older and more towards the end of our lives?

The current conservative legislative and political shift towards a more individualized social model along with the disinvestment in, and dismantling of, the Welfare State has created a situation where there is a growing distinction between rich and poor and a new explicit emphasis on age and reference.

Source: Mid-year population estimates, Office for National Statistics. The National Register, Office for Scotland; Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency.

Another critical point is the increasing perception that the (e) working class is lazy and undermining the result of a perverse and monopolizing mentality. In the UK there is a progressive conservatism that is attempting to shift responsibility from the state to the individual. This is being articulated as the “Big Society,” a notion that citizens and communities will take responsibility for services. The implication is that community demands will be made at the expense of others, and some people have much more control over their time than others. There is an inherent inequality in how this will impact on communities that currently struggle to make ends meet. The idea is that people should do unpaid work to be legitimate in terms of public value is a patronizing intrusion into civil liberties; in other words, moral choices are being crowned and articulated as moral obligations. People who can afford it can choose to spend their time “usefully” and lead deserving lives. For the rest—the majority of people—these are not choices but expressed as a culture of obligation that emphasizes moral failures and expanded duties.

As the aging population increases we are told that we should prepare for older age that we should make sure that we are “deserving” of the care that we will inevitably need. In the current economic situation, there is a reality that both the future of pensions and early retirement seem more and more remote to a younger generation of people. This suggests the need for a new understanding of older people and their contribution.

Representations of age and related policies often reinforce perceptions of older people as marginal, dependent and powerless. The reality is that this demographic group has time and energy to engage critically, creatively, productively and often voluntarily in society. The key here is the element of choice, when this becomes an obligation there is a danger that skilled social work will be replaced by a culture of authoritarian and面貌劳动.

We are making the most of, and trying to extend, our youth, pushing the duration of our lives as far as we can and ensuring that we are kept busy, employed, and useful. How can we resist the current trends and thinking, and value the contribution and lives of others when individual voices may be lost in the noise of the many who simply need to be treated? Is it possible to see the contribution of this growing number of people who are no longer working but are still useful and meaningful? Can a complex culture of knowledge production and sharing lead to the possibility of employing the skills and knowledge amassed over a lifetime of experience rather than simply employing the labor of individuals for a brief period of their lives? What role do cultural producers and artists have in shaping this future?

If science fiction offers us glimpses of the future, we can look forward to an ever more populated world where we will be medically adjusted to enjoy our lives. The bleak images contained within Aldous Huxley’s Brave New World and Philip K. Dick warn that we should not rely on society that we need to take responsibility. We need to demand that a universal approach to care is not “rolled out” but rather that individuals should have the opportunity to participate in a rich cultural life and community until the end of their lives.

In the model of a flexible, elastic community, has extended the boundaries of mutual adoption societies. Each person takes part in a birth and death, bringing these aspects of life into the everyday and ensuring that these stages of life are both better understood and integrated into living.
their children and grandchildren... we help them in so
on practicing the art of living even while they are dying.
Knowing who in fact one is, being conscious of the
universal and impersonal life that lives itself through
each of us—that's what one can help the dying to get
practicing to the very end."

It is easy to underestimate and overlook some of the
things that are actually done well in the cultural sector. The "art
world" operates at great intensity and pace and is perceived
as being driven by new ideas and values; but in fact we work
in an environment that values the work of cultural producers
throughout their lives; it is not unusual for an artist, architect,
or writer to be making new work in their eighties and nineties.
People working in the cultural sector have a wider social role
to play. There is a need to develop complex intergenerational
situations where it is possible to work throughout a lifetime,
potentially to be valued and make a contribution until the end of
life. This is already an extraordinary reality for artists, writers,
intellectuals, and those who choose to invest in cultural capital.
Is it possible to look at this model of community and extend
its reach?

The histories of community-based, feminist and public
practices are significant in terms of how we consider questions of
value in relation to art. The work of an artist who took to the streets
and to neighborhoods in the 1960s, 70s and 80s, and who believed
passionately in the idea of cultural democracy rather than the
more top-down idea of the democratization of culture developed
socially engaged and collaborative practices. Significantly,
this group included artists and writers such as Suzanne Lacy,
Artistic Director of the Whitney Museum in the USA, and Artist
Placement Group (APG). The Art of Change (Uma Ratan
and Peter Dury), Owen Kelly and others in the UK. These
practices are intricately linked to the subsequent gentrification
of neighborhoods, to changes in policy in which art becomes
purposely linked to many forces of power. What we have learned from
these movements between the spaces of emancipatory education
and the processes of neo-liberalization underscores the complexity
of our current experiments in this field.

The Serpentine Gallery in London has an integrated
program of exhibitions, education, public programs, and
architecture. Artists, architects, writers, and cultural producers
work across all of these strands of activity and it is an extremely
intergenerational program. Many of the artists, architects,
and writers who are involved in the program are of an older
generation. Oscar Niemeyer was ninety-six when he built his
permanent pavilion for the gallery. Gustav Meier, Maria
Lassnig, Richard Hamilton were in their sixties when they worked with us.
Shift Exchange, Urban Transformations and the Politics of Care
is a Serpentine Gallery project inspired by Ivan Black's model of co-learning through an exchange of skills. Artists
have been working in collaboration with elderly people, market
traders, care workers and young people to develop skills and
develop ideas for social and architectural change. These complex
projects have led to the production of works of art through
interventions, live performances, and installations, all of which have been
exhibited at the gallery. Critically, they have unfolded over a
period of four years. Each project has had its own duration and time
to develop its own model of collaboration with individuals,
groups and care providers.

Caring Culture: Art, Architecture and the Politics of Public
Towards an Autonomy of Care

Janna Graham

‘Old people remain the most separate, abstract and exceptional for the longest period of our lives. We carry this ostracism to the point of turning it on ourselves.’
Simone de Beauvoir, The Coming of Age

In 2003, Canadian artist Vera Frenkel, created a virtual world, The Institute, or What We Do for Love, in which unemployed curators – victims of a de-funded arts sector – looked after ageing artists – castaways from a dilapidated health-care system – in a nursing home. It was at a time when hospitals were closing across Canada on such a spectacular scale that to describe these cuts to social welfare as acts of war on the poor no longer seemed hyperbolic. At the same time, a similar attack was taking place on the cultural front. Arts funding morphed from its 1970s ethos of general support for the lives of artists (with one head of the Canada Council for the Arts even declaring that government funding could be used equally for artists’ dental work as for the making of works of art) towards funding contingent on the marketing of artists’ works and the propulsion of their careers into the global market.

A decade earlier, I worked for the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. I was fresh out of university, starving, but committed to community-led television, and was offered the opportunity to become a freelance producer on the programme ‘50 UP!’ It was a show for older people that had historically been used by seniors’ advocacy groups to share information and lobby on health care. The show was under new management, and the previous producers (unionised, with stable contracts) had been laid off to make room for a younger, more ‘creative’, flexibly employed group of freelance producers, who were called upon to project a more vibrant image of ageing. I was asked to pitch segments on seniors in fashion, sex and the elderly, and what older people could teach twenty-somethings about swing dancing, the latest craze on the local club scene. Those who did not ‘sex-up’ the aged in the weekly pitch meeting were not awarded a segment. Those who were not awarded a segment did not get paid and generally worked for free for those who did. There was no one over the age of forty working on the show. Where, prior to this moment, there had been an alignment between the work of middle-aged media producers and older actors in the field of elderly care, a new set of precarious workers was now charged with a re-branding, relegating the concerns of low-income pensioners to the realm of silence.

These two situations – Frenkel’s fictionalised futuristic Institute where precarious young creatives looked after creative old people, and a TV show where a young, creative flexibilised labour force was charged with the re-branding of the old – foreshadowed an imminent rhetorical animosity between the young and the old. It is now commonplace to hear that the young of today are bearing the burden of ‘an ageing population’ who have taxed the welfare state and sunk the country so far into debt that no-one could possibly expect to be taken care of in their old age. Such divisive narratives habitually ‘forget’ expenditure related to war, bank bailouts and corporate tax subsidies.

When, a decade later in 2008, I inherited the project Skills Exchange – an attempt to intervene into the field of elderly care through which creative workers (artists, designers, architects) in the London were literally to swap skills with residents and workers in care homes, hospices and activity programmes for older people – this contingent relation again came to the fore. How, before the backdrop of a crumbling Welfare State, Big Society voluntarism in the social-care sector, and the dubiously instrumentalised position of the creative worker as harbinger of the ‘new’ (pitted against old social housing, old benefits programmes and old working contracts) could we collaborate to counter the cynical and deeply patronising tendencies of a newly fabricated division between the creative, the young and the elderly?

The project, initiated by then Serpentine Head of Programmes Sally Tallant and Curator Louise Coysh, was situated in five spaces of elderly care: two care homes, two social programmes for older people in neighbourhoods undergoing massive redevelopment, and a hospice. Almost all of the older participants were on State support. Through funding necessity and institutional convention, the nar-
ratives surrounding the Skills Exchange project on my arrival – derived from both Serpentine Skills Exchange and the corporate elite and the artists and activists. For the project to be possible, one must appreciate the idea of the artist’s autonomy was sometimes allowed, sometimes imposed, and served to align and act in solidarity with their partners in the social field. Many of the Skills Exchange projects oscillated between notions of autonomy, social utility and solidarity. Marcus Coates, for example, posed the question ‘What service can an artist provide?’ to those working in and using a hospice in St John’s Wood. Where in past works he has assumed, even parodied, the role of the artist-as-shaman/consultant/jall-seek, designing bespoke rituals for conflict resolution in areas he knew little about, his collaboration with hospice workers and day-service user Alex H adopted a much less heroic understanding of artistic utility. Alex H made use of Coates’s input as an artist, asking him to travel on his behalf and observe and narrate what he saw, while at the same time acknowledging his position in doing so and questioning the very premise of what could be relevant or helpful at the end of one’s life. In this way, Coates and Alex H created a vehicle in which the notion of service in favour of one that could accommodate the feelings of futility and impossibility that he was experiencing in relation to the project. While conversations between Alex H and Coates did not activate what we might conventionally understand as political solidarity, they did suggest that the point of departure for artists interested in being involved in processes of servicing, rupture or social change is an open discussion with their collaborators around the issues of power, equality and doubt at the core of any relationship.

Other Genealogies

The problems of heroic, avant-garde or helping narratives in social art are not particular to the APG, but to those who describe the field in general. Like those who are more engaged in social art fields, its champions and practitioners can be overly fixated on justifying their practices using the terms and conventions of the field of art as their primary reference point, or relying on unspecified and generally liberal notions of ‘good’. In so doing, they’ve produced a blindspot to one of social art’s greatest potentialities: its capacity and indeed necessity to link with other fields of life whose proponents share similar desires for a new ethics that possess the skills for realising it. In the words of artist Suzanne Lacy, the challenge is: ‘to politicize yourself as a person and then learn to politicize yourself as a person and then learn…’ Creating a descriptive and relational terrain that is based on desires and commitment to social change, rather than just other professionalised communities, shifts the focus, provides other criteria and uncovers the genealogies of fields whose practitioners have more experience in creating collaborative and equitable social projects than have historically been characteristic in the production of art.

Through Skills Exchange, we wondered if it would be possible to instigate solidarities between those who fall on either side of constructed divides – between the young and the old, between the artistic and care fields – but also to be clear about the co-relation of political, social and aesthetic stakes. Could we move away from the configuration in which the artist was positioned as God-like clairvoyant, somehow endowed with the ability to ‘give voice’ to those who are frozen by their desolate and often those always already without? How could we create hybrid and truthful articulations of the exchange and take place when everything was the care field (mediated by the practitioners, particularly when the fields of Art and Care share this cloak of the good, the noble and the satisfying while its practitioners work under conditions that bear evidence of the very opposite? Who would be our teachers?

Residential Radicals

In Simone de Beauvoir’s book The Coming of Age, she surveyed articles written in the 1950s with reference to over 500 people who had reached the age of 100 in three different countries. The characteristics they shared included active involvement in political and social issues, an interest in the future, and the desire to co-habit in an inter-generational context. These observations were echoed by the Grey Panthers, a US-based network of older and younger people and communities. In the 1970s, this group struggled for shared housing or ‘congregate living arrangements’ and the right to create ‘families of choice’. In turn, the work of the Black Panthers, and involving some of its members, the group has historically contested the idea that decisions...
about social needs should be solely placed in the hands of technocrats, or professionals asked to ‘serve’ the elderly, desiring instead that social assets should be paid for by the State but placed under community control.

In their idealistic aims, such movements were much more equally relevant precursors to Skills Exchange co-designers and artists in the arts. Elements of this ethos were expressed by many of the project’s participants, who shared the idea that constructed social segregation – of the unproductive urban poor – was socially and personally detrimental. Skills Exchange did not create ‘families of choice’ or manage to enable autonomous community-led decision-making lobbies for State resources, but in many cases it did create preliminary contact zones for encounters between seemingly opposing groups.

In this regard, we might equally look to the histories of experimental or institutional Psychotherapy, such as those found at La Borde Clinic in France. La Borde was founded by Jean Oury in the 1940s on the legacies of St Alban, a refuge for resistance fighters in the 1920s. Led by Catalan psychiatrist François Tosquelles, St Alban was described as ‘a combination of psychiatry and traditional local activities, based on the desire to more fully understand the mental state of the patients, cleaners, cooks, interns, philosophers, artists and other outsiders. ‘Doctors would work as administrators, psychiatrists would do the dishes’, Oury describes. Pay was also a matter of redistribution, with greater amounts allocated to the less desirable tasks. The rotating distribution of tasks enabled the constant reinforcement of the practices at La Borde, and promoted new modes of reflection allowing Skills Exchange. The Grid was a loose reference point for the work of design collective Åbäke and care worker Phyllis Etukudo at the Westmead Care home in Westminster, who not only focused on making shifts in the daily practices of the home, but also on the ways in which staff and participant routines in both spaces of care and spaces of art reinforce social segregation. To break these patterns they worked with staff at the home and at the Serpentine Gallery to map desires across the two institutions and enact points of convergence and exchange, including an art swap, a birthday party, tours and a cake-making class.

For Beatrice Gibson, George Clarke, Sally Mercer and other Skills Exchange collaborators at the Camden Homes for Older People, the creation of collective ‘linguistic’ configurations that centred around the non-linear spoken responses of those with dementia, rather than the medicalised notions of patient progress, was the basis for the development of a collective script. In this they linked experiential work and understandings of PAR’s methodologies with reference to those in the cultural field, referencing the BBC’s Play for Today, the scores of Cornelius Cardew and the Scratch Orchestra, and BS Johnson’s House Mother Normal.

Other Criteria: PAR

If genealogies of institutional intervention provide a more detailed set of possibilities through which to understand the terrain in which social and aesthetic realms meet, non- or anti-institutional histories are equally important. The legacies of Participatory Action Research (PAR) for example, address what a collaborative research might look like from a wider, non-institutional perspective. PAR came about in the 1970s when researchers left the university to offer skills and methodologies of social analysis to poor and disenfranchised communities involved in anti-colonial struggles. Responding to groups such as the Bhoomi Sena or Land Army – who were disaffected with the experiences of the paternalistic agendas of social workers and researchers – PAR practitioners put their skills and training to work in the generation of collective findings that could be used by those directly impacted. They suggested that dialectical logic enabled them to work from the basis of shared social contradictions – between co-researchers with sociological training and those with ‘organic’ knowledge of conditions – to verification of findings no longer needed to enter the academy and privately owned publishing companies when one could assess their relevance through the situated home or struggles with social justice. Suggesting that the widely regarded notion of academic neutrality simply masks the orientation of knowledge production towards society’s ruling classes, they were also critical of dialecticians from the avant-garde intelligentsia whose sense of superiority often blinded them to their own abuses of power. Our attempts to adopt PAR methodologies in both the research and aesthetic components of Skills Exchange were not always successful, for a number of reasons: because projects were framed by an art gallery and therefore from their onset embodied the conflicting goals of artistic commissioning and critical community action; because not all of the communities were already organised themselves and did not enter into the project with a sense of political ambition or agency; because there was not enough time to develop consensus on how to understand and make use of PAR’s methodologies; because of habitual tendencies to validate the role of art rather than understand itself in relation to community groups; because groups were in a relationship of dependency with care homes and support services, some dealing with chronic illnesses; and, most importantly, because of the time and budget constraints on care workers, artists and researchers.

The projects that came the closest included that organised by InSpire history group in Southwalk with artist Barb Asante and researcher Christina Garrido Sánchez around the pending privatisation of a working-class street market, as well as the work of the Woodberry Down’s Estate Coffee Group, who, by working with artist Tom Hunter, aimed to change stereotypes about council-housing tenants. Intuitively, these projects adopted PAR’s four main strategies in:

a) departing from collective dialogue to ascertain aims of the investigation;

b) engaging in a co-articulation of art, care and social research;

c) putting collective ideas into action and testing them;

d) producing and diffusing knowledge within and beyond the context of their struggle.

In the case of the former project, this allowed for inter-generational exchanges between older market union organisers in East Street Market and younger activists in the city. In the case of the latter, a film was made about the history of the estate and used by the coffee group in the community as well as by organisers in other neighbourhoods facing gentrification.

While in art terms the project – which unfolded over four years was a lengthy one, project ends often felt like beginnings. Where one aim of the project: to ensure that more people were exposed to the concerns and lives of working-class older people was met, it is unclear whether the PAR projects will have achieved what is the final aspiration of any PAR project: their ongoing continuity outside intervention. The issue of collective narration in the project’s representation and entry into the field of art also remains only partially solved. All the projects, at some time or another, slipped out of collective narratives, with artists or myself asked to take on the role of author and the work credited singularly. Researchers at times privileged artistic authorship or their own analysis over cultivating and representing the polyphony of voices in the project. When projects entered into the space of the Serpentine Gallery, then, it is not always challenging habits of centring art and authorship over the social role of participants.

At the Carer’s Congress, a meeting held between the different groups involved in Skills Exchange to reflect on its processes and impacts, the following observation was made about the persistent use amongst artists and care-workers of infantilising language to speak about their older collaborators, and about artists’ tendencies to focus on their own field: ‘today we did actually reproduce some of the stereotypes related to older people in the framing and in the way people talked about projects... old people are sometimes over-professionalised and tend to talk about their own process... Challenging the language that we usually talk about these things is so important.’

Care Workers, Culture Workers, Non-Workers: Towards an Autonomy of Care

Many of these shortcomings can be read in direct proportion to the conditions under which those who participate in projects live and work: care workers, culture workers and low-income pensioners frequently operate in conditions of precariousness. The projec
ect’s greatest insight was to give a glimpse of the possible points of solidarity between them. If not artistic autonomy, and not quite political autonomy, perhaps what it revealed was the potential for what we might describe as an Autonomy of Care. This could be understood as an underlying principle fought for by all those who attempt to care in environments that are no longer designed with this in mind. Autonomy would not indicate a group that has left the system, like the PAR practitioners who left the university, but the idea that caring—or the kind of critical, equitable and resistant caring described in many of the genealogies above—is under threat in most aspects of life, but particularly in the places deemed as spaces of care today. Short funding cycles, reduced labour pools, movement from contractual to freelance (and increasingly piecemeal) staffing, budget cuts, endless restructurings, tendering and rebranding of bids, the rebranding of communities—all the conditions that surrounded and indeed shaped the Skills Exchange project and its participants at every turn—render those who continue to care part of a quietly resistant community. The autonomy of this community is not located only in the care field or in a fictional elsewhere, but at the intersection of fields and in the midst of practices that are equally ambivalent in themselves as they are in conflict with the dominant policies shaping lives and communities.

If an Autonomy of Care exists, it is not yet a conscious or articulated struggle, but one that is in the making and whose barriers also form its ground. We heard whispers of this in our discussions at the edges of the project: anger and sadness over staff reductions; the closure of tea groups and day centres; cuts to cultural institutions; the demise of multi-year funding; reduced time for training and reflection; constant movement from one workplace to another to make ends meet; articulations of loneliness; the demands of new forms of measurement—for better outcomes in less time; and fear at the crumbling foundations of state support, such as they were. We saw glimmers of its potentiality in project activities that attempted to reflect on these conditions and engage with their struggles, though sometimes not directly enough. And there was a profound sense of energy in the rare moments when all of the constituencies involved were able to share the same space, raise questions about their own practices, and imagine what it might be like to continue.

For this Autonomy of Care to proceed there is much more work to be done and many underlying questions. How do we make use of art’s resources to stage our concerns publicly and honestly? How do we secure the time we need to listen and collaborate across sectors, particularly with those for whom crisis is regularly imposed? How do fields of work avoid becoming paralysed as they attempt to survive new regimes of austerity? It is through asking and attempting to answer these questions that we can begin to map the equation Art + Care = a Future.

This analysis is derived from the exhibition The Individual and the Organisation: Artist Placement Group 1966–79 at Raven Row, City autumn 2012. [Is this note in the right place?]

Ina Conzen-Meairs, ‘From 0–1 to 0+1’ in Art After Physics, Museum of Modern Art, Oxford, 1992, p.29. [Again, not sure this is the right note]


Of course, there are many exceptions to this generalisation, including the feminist collective work of the 1970s and 80s, the histories of artist participation in the struggles against HIV/AIDS, art produced in the counter-globalisation movements and, perhaps most prolifically though most often invisibly, in arts groups working within anti-racist and anti-colonial struggles. Unfortunately, these practices have had very little influence on mainstream notions of the artist or on artistic training, which still tends to rely heavily on individual artistic production and careers.


Modalities of Exchange
Exchanges of Time

- Skills Exchange revealed that the highest benefit for participants was found in those projects that engaged in consistent relationships and regular visits over a period of 1-2 years.
- Longer durations allowed those involved to develop ethical relationships, that were truly interrogative of power, isolation and discrimination.
- Participants suggested that key to the future of an ethical relationship between art and care is the adequate resourcing of time for all those involved.

Exchanges of Space:

- Skills Exchange projects provocatively interrupted the routines of the various settings – care homes, community centres, day centres – to which older people often feel assigned and isolated by creating physical exchanges, trips, walks, and public space performances.
- Participants communicated that changing spaces enabled them to see each other beyond their role as ‘older person’, ‘carer’ or ‘artist’.
- Care workers suggested that changes to the environment and spatial routines increased the memory capacity of those with dementia.
- Speech therapists suggested that introductions of new elements to the care environment expanded speech patterns.
- The projects reiterated the crucial role of group work and the need to restore and build on spaces in which older people can meet, particularly at a time when so many of these spaces are at risk.

Exchanges in Strategy:

- Skills Exchange participants suggested an overwhelming interest in exchanging strategies concerning how they might more effectively intervene in the representations of and changes to their environments.
- This was posed against definitions of ‘fixing’ their problems or illnesses.
- This sense of strategy provoked participants to engage inter-generationally and beyond their immediate constituencies to find others engaged and interested in these issues.

Exchanges of the Past and Future:

- Many participants felt that reminiscence projects can frame older people as subjects immersed in nostalgia and unable to adjust to the global multi-cultural postmodernity.
- Participants suggested that where this work can neutralise activism, by positioning older people as those who lived through historical change rather than agents of that change, ‘Memory Work’ enables participants to make use of their past in decision-making about the future.
- This orientation of the past towards the future is also the basis for strong-intergenerational connections.

Exchanges of Empathy:

- Where many of those working in care suggested that in their training they had been told ‘not to get attached’, Skills Exchange Projects demonstrated the importance of empathy on both sides of relationships of care.
- Attention to the interests and involvement of care workers enabled deeper and less ritualised relationships between them and residents.
- Gallery workers, artists and visitors equally valued the learning and exposure they were offered in the process, describing this as changing their perceptions from a sympathy or ‘helping’ mindset to an empathetic way of relating to aging.

Exchanges of Trust:

- Participants suggested that critical elements for the building of trust included:
  - Taking time to listen to each other before imagining the work.
  - Consistency in visitation: the embedded model.
  - Open discussions of ethics in the production of the work were central to success.
Acknowledgements

It feels like a long time ago that I was approached to be the research partner to the Skills Exchange project. This came about at the end of an earlier participatory project that we ran at the Centre for Urban and Community Research (CUCR) concerned with older people and participatory planning: Mobilizing Knowledge. The Skills Exchange project has endured while people changed jobs, moved to other countries and completed their studies. I would like to thank the following people for time and energy spent on this research project. Their commitment and interest in the project often went beyond the call of duty. Thanks to Ben Gidley, at Compaś Centre on Migration, Policy and Society, Oxford, who was central to the research before he left CUCR, the CUCR research assistants: Cristina Garrido Sánchez, Ananda Ferlauto, Laura Cuch, Mara Ferreri and Katey Tabner for their hard work and dedication. Thanks also to Janna Graham, Cath Hawes, Amal Khalaf and Sally Tallant at the Serpentine. It has been a pleasure to work with you on such an interesting and enjoyable project. Thanks go to the artists for the time they gave to thinking about and reflecting on the research questions and their co-operation with the research assistants. Finally thanks go to all of the partners and participants who took part in the project, for their generosity with their time and conversation.

Introduction

Skills Exchange: Urban Transformation and the Politics of Care was a collaborative art and social research project that took place between January 2007 and April 2012. It brought together an international art gallery, artists, community and care-workers, older people and the agencies and institutions who work with the elderly and various social agents such as market traders, housing activists, young people and others to explore and generate new dynamics of relationship and exchange.

The project took as its field of investigation the elderly in the city, and specifically the civil spaces available for older people to participate in. These included spaces of care and sociability and citizenship. Here people from different backgrounds and specialisations have worked to generate exchanges that intervene into dominant definitions of people, services and the nature of social inter-connections within a context of demographic and urban change. Dominant formulations of ‘care’ often place the elderly in the role of the ‘serviced’ or ‘cared for’, as those ‘without’, or ‘after’ the peak moments of their lives, while the artist or social-worker are placed in the role of the ‘skilled’ or the ‘carer’. This project, in contrast, begins from a notion that artists, older people, care-workers and others might exchange their skills, and, in this process, alter roles and well-rehearsed relations through processes of creative exchange. In examining these modalities of exchange the research examines the underlying or prevalent understandings that underpin the exchanges that took place and the space of possibilities the project points towards.

The ideas behind Skills Exchange stem from readings across a number of ideas including Ivan Illich’s notion of ‘useful unemployment’, the theories of Michel Foucault, DW. Winnicott, Felix Guattari, Celestin Freinet and Jean Oury regarding the political and therapeutic benefits of exchanging social roles, experiences from the field of social and participatory design, and from artistic practices such as the Artist Placement Group.

Skills Exchange was initiated through the Projects area of Serpentine Gallery, a gallery for modern and contemporary art located in London’s Hyde Park. The Serpentine’s Exhibition, Architecture, Education and Public Programmes attract up to 800,000 visitors in any one year and admission is free. As a core strand of the Serpentine’s integrated approach to programming, Serpentine Projects challenge where art is experienced and by whom. Projects build on over ten years of experience producing art in the social realm, linking national and international artists with dedicated collaborators from organizations specialising in mental health, education, elderly care, housing and homelessness and migrant support. These projects take place both in and outside the gallery and address processes of social and political marginalisation.

While Serpentine Projects have historically been based on the artist-led residency model, with one or a small group of artists working intensively on projects with one particular constituency, the Skills Exchange project is the first in which social and cultural impacts have been the basis for both collaborative art-making and a long term participatory action research project at multiple sites across London. Beyond the production of the project, Skills Exchange has attempted to track the value and complexities of raising both artistic and social questions in the context of care in the city.

Skills Exchange was funded by Bloomberg, the Rayne Foundation, the City Bridge Trust, The National Lottery through Big Lottery Fund and Camden Homes for Older People. It was delivered in partnership with Age Concern Hackney, Westminster Housing Care Services; Camden Homes for Older people; the InSpire programme at the Crypt, Southwark; St John’s Hospice, Camden; and Westmead Care Home, Westminster.
Researchers

The Centre for Urban and Community Research (CUCR) at Goldsmiths, University of London, was the research and evaluation partner for Skills Exchange. CUCR were commissioned because of our background in work concerned with older people. Past projects undertaken by the Centre have included: Mobilizing Knowledge, which brought planners and older people together to consider the impact of aging on urban experience and how planners might better listen to older people; Extending Creative Practice, a European project which explored the potential of digital storytelling to address the digital exclusion of older people. CUCR also have a long track record in participatory action research and collaborative art, working at the interface of experimental research methods and the possibilities of art as both a form of engagement and an expression of sociologically significant ways of seeing and knowing the world. 

Aims of the Project

At its onset Skills Exchange aimed to:
✔ Improve intergenerational relationships
✔ Reduce the discrimination against older people
✔ Improve awareness in national and local government, who are the developers and providers of older people’s services and are responsible for examining issues and possible solutions for housing and caring for the aging population.

Once projects began and teams of older people, artists, researchers and other community members were organised, aims were re-figured by working groups set up around collective interests. In most cases these aims were changed so that they would orient towards pressing social questions that situated older people within the fabric of community and not outside and separate. Even those who were most isolated were passionate about the world outside of their doors, how it was changing and what of their knowledge might be used to make an impact. Groups turned their attention to issues of public housing, to the importance of markets for the sustainability of history and community, the importance of thinking about the future, and the re-organisation of relationships to facilitate real exchange within and across spaces of care.

Understanding the ways in which the aims of the original Skills Exchange proposal were re-shaped by the concerns of participants was the basis for our study, as this in itself represented a significant shift in power: from those who imagine older people, artists and other social segments as marginalised, to those older people who define themselves and their desires using very different terms from mainstream and social policy perceptions.

The primary assessment of the groups who participated in this study suggest that in order to meet the project aims the project had to move from a model of service delivery, in which users and their needs were predicted within their assigned social segment, to one of real exchange in which the people involved (artists, older people, care workers and others) participated actively in defining the processes of social change important to them, in which they listened to each other and in which they articulated the methods and contents for shifting social perceptions. As such, the research sought to identify and elaborate on the different modalities and circumstances of exchange developed through the Project.

The research also re-positions the concept of care. Care is understood by project participants as not only a kind of labour that takes place in places such as care homes, day centres and medical settings, but the ways in which older and other people care for/care about each other, for their neighbours, as well as their neighbourhood or estate. Familiar social spaces such as the street market or the housing estate, or less familiar ones, such as the hospice for example, are sites where older people enact feelings of care, rather than merely being the cared for. Realms such as the imaginary, the memorial and the poetic are, as articulated by participants, of significant importance.

The research thus speaks to both broader social contexts — preconceived institutional attitudes which hold the meaning of being older in place, the policies around care and aging which reduce the possibilities of agency, and the processes of gentrification and re-housing which impact upon the possibilities of older people’s participation in the city — and the micro-political processes and interpersonal encounters which marginalise older people.

Research Methodology

Principles of exchange and participation have been integral to the research methodology. Central to the research has been the role of five research assistants who have had a long —term engagement with the project, charting, and in some moments stimulating, two core aspects of the project:
✔ The ‘Skills Exchange’, that is the shifting of roles from stereotypical perceptions and habituated patterns of relating to more generative means of engaging their immediate social contexts, and
✔ The degree to which the project enabled participants to increase the efficacy of their engagement with local, urban contexts.

The Skills Exchange research assistants

Cristina Garrido Sánchez, Ananda Ferlauto, Laura Cuch, Mara Ferreri and Katelyn Tabner worked as part of the team of artists, agencies and participants as the projects unfolded. The methodology was based in the methods and principles of Participatory Action Research (PAR) Initiated and named by practitioners in the global south, PAR re-orders the traditional positioning of the researcher as a silent observer and the research subjects as the object of the study, to suggest that research questions, outcomes and therefore the role of the researcher who are the basis for the study and who are most likely to be effected by its findings. Research in PAR is oriented towards realising social justice and social change collectively and thus speaks directly to the aims of Skills Exchange.

While the methods used in this study, which included ethnographic participant observation, facilitated discussions, mapping, interviews, and research diaries, did not always differ from more traditional sociological research methods, PAR mobilises these methods towards larger social questions about the distribution of power and voice, both within groups and the wider society. Thus the role of the researcher is active and one that can be questioned and re-shaped by the group.

For this reason, in the studies that follow, research assistants have taken on different roles. In some projects they have worked alongside the artists and participants from the outset of the project, instigating group reflection on the process and the exchanges that took place as they unfolded. In other cases — where groups did not have regular meetings — they have worked with participants individually, relaying reflections to other participants. In others, the role was related to the recording of events as they took place or tracking people’s reflections after the fact. The research participants, whether older
people, those who work with older people, or artists and other cultural workers, were co-researchers on this project. They played an active role, often deciding on the shape of the methods used. At times this meant that groups refused methods and suggested other means to get at the same questions, thereby shaping the research and the artwork as it developed. These subtle refusals and discussions led to moments of reflection — between artists, older people and research assistants.

Other aspects of the research overlapped directly with artistic process i.e. the making of interviews, recordings of group conversations. They were not replicated by university researchers but were made use of in the overall project analysis. The research archive thus includes art works and social initiatives, opening events and manifestos in addition to interview transcripts and social mappings, each oriented towards the cultural and socio — political changes groups hoped to enact. The openness, conflictual responsiveness and reflectivity of the groups were integral to the development of the projects from artistic, research and social perspectives. At best this meant that all involved learned to create inspiring responses to the many contradictions between institutions, participants and social contexts to which they were responding. This included not only the arts, art-making, research and/or social care, or indeed the busy schedules of participants, this full ambition of embedded and reflective research was not realised. Here we have the opportunity to reflect and learn.

Who This Report is For

This report is aimed at two (hopefully overlapping) audiences. First, it is aimed at those interested in, recipients of, involved in or making decisions about the provision of social activities, care and residence to Britain’s aging population, which also overlap with those planning for other sectors. The sites that the Skills Exchange took place in included: a social programme for older residents of a social housing estate undergoing regeneration; older people living independently in the community; a hospice; a local market; and two residential care homes. The findings, therefore, are relevant to a wide range of institutional and residential settings in which older citizens find themselves. Second, it is aimed at those interested in, involved in or making decisions about cultural production in socially engaged settings. The project involved six important contemporary artists working across a number of media (film, architecture, design, visual art and participatory art), a major public gallery, and several public sector partners. The findings, therefore, speak to a range of issues around the conduct and commissioning of artistic practice and the role of culture in assisting people to reach their social and aesthetic aims.

The Structure of the Report

This report is a qualitative assessment making use of material generated by five projects or studies set up by the Skills Exchange Project. It does four things:

1. Reviews the ways in which art is discussed in social care and social care is discussed in art and where Skills Exchange located itself
2. Surveys each case study and its findings on its own terms
3. Reads Modalities of Exchange across the studies
4. Summarises these Modalities of Exchange for consideration by funders, policy makers and others.

Situating the Studies: Older People, Urban Change and Economies of Care

As we have described, the laboratory for these artistic interventions has been a range of social settings where older people come together in the city: care homes, social groups, day centres and hospices, as well as estates and neighbourhoods. The project was concerned with the spatiality of older people and the geographies of service and care that older people experienced. However, these micro-level geographies that the project encountered must be understood within wider demographic trends on aging, economies of care and the macro-economic and political context of aging in the city.

These are discussed in turn below.

The Demographics of Aging in the UK

Over the past two centuries the global population has been aging due to an ongoing decline in fertility and increasing longevity. It is predicted that in the developed regions of the world a third of the population will be aged 60 or over by 2050. These changes will impact on human life: family composition, living arrangements, urban planning, social support, economic activity and social security. The UK is getting older, as older people are living longer and people are having fewer children. While only a tenth of the 1940s generation was childless, a fifth of the 1980s generation will be. This has led to an increase in the percentage of the population aged 65 and over and a declining proportion of those aged under 16. In the UK there are currently nearly 12 million people of state pension age, and about 650,000 people turn 65 each year. There are now more people in the UK aged 60 and above than there are under 18. In the United Kingdom, in 2005, according to estimates based on the 2001 Census of Population, there were more than 11 million people of state pension age and over (11,244,000). It is estimated that between 2006 and 2031 the UK population will grow from 60.6 million to 71 million while over 65s will increase from 9.7 million in 2006 to 15.8 million in 2031, from 16% to 22% of the population. Over this period, the number of people aged 65 and over increases from 1.2 million to 3.9 million over that period, yet half will have some form of disability. With these trends in mind it is worth considering the limits of language commonly used to describe older people. Even the terms used to describe older people are debated over and problematic. The terms ‘older people’, ‘seniors’, ‘elders’ and ‘the elderly’, are used in a range of settings but these terms can hide differences among older people themselves. A recently retired person is likely to have different abilities, needs and expectations than someone in their mid-eighties for example. The social and geographic contexts in which they are living are also key to understanding when and where it is useful to analyse this age group and its needs as separate from those of the community overall.

Economies of Care

In the next decade the care of the aging population will be a significant challenge for policy makers, as the demographic changes to the UK population has profound effects on all UK governments. The cost of care to the national purse will gradually increase as the proportion of the population who are elderly grow at the same time as working-age taxpayers gradually becomes a smaller proportion of society. Simultaneously, in a late-capitalist economy which demands a mobile, flexible workforce who can adapt to changes in the global employment market, extended families will be more likely to live away from an older relative and be less available to provide day to day familial care. Today in the UK, as in many other post-industrial societies, demographic pressures, as
The Work of Caring

Exploring the social, cultural and political contexts within which care occurs is important in understanding the ways that care is experienced and recognised (or not) and the prevalent understandings of those who are involved in the work of care. The social nature of caring means that it is an activity which is both paid and unpaid, and work and not work. Much of the care and support that makes up care is embedded in close social relationships. Whether care is undertaken for love and/or money and whether paid or unpaid, it can be understood as a form of emotional labour i.e. working on the feelings of others with an aim of affecting their emotional state. Sociological research in this field examines the ways care is embedded in relationships of affection, duty and obligation with classed, gendered and racialised characteristics. For example, research by the University of Leeds finds that Black women aged between 50–59 are disproportionately concentrated in jobs as care workers/care assistants, in the social care sector. In 2009 women made up around 80% of social care workers and between 85 and 95% of workers in direct care and support providing jobs. This is clearly a sector that has historically been reliant on women, who combine low paid part-time work in social care with unpaid caring responsibilities for families. Feminist sociologists have explored the gendered nature of care work, challenging the trivialisation of women’s caring role and have asserted the significance of being involved in care as significant in the production of women’s subjectivity and moral frameworks. Recent work has explored the cultural and social norms and discourses that inform and compel women to adopt caring responsibility and respectability. The contexts within which individuals are involved in caring activities frame and influence what is seen as care, the ways care is performed and received, and how different roles and identities are read. The social care employment sector, which includes care assistants in residential care homes and in-home care services, is one of the lowest paid sectors of the labour market (Low Pay Commission 2010). In spite of the introduction of the National Minimum Wage in 1999 average pay levels for social care workers, particularly in care homes, have remained at or just above the minimum wage with pay levels being lower in the private sector compared to the public and voluntary sector.

The median hourly pay rate for care workers during 2009 was £6.45 (Hussein 2010: 6). Unfavourable employment conditions such as shift work and a lack of career opportunities have made this sector unattractive to a range of groups of potential workers in the UK. More recently, there has been an increase in the employment of migrant workers from within and beyond the European Union, meeting high levels of demand (particularly in London) due to significant difficulties in the recruitment and retention of social care workers due to unfavourable employment conditions such as shift work and lack of career opportunities have made it unattractive to a range of groups of potential workers in the UK. Such conditions do not always make it favourable to risk-taking and experimentation with methods of care and exchange. As one worker suggests: … there can be a lot of tension for key workers and care workers about how much they do get involved because they know that they have got a set activity for a set amount of time, so to bond and talk to the residents in a time out of the normal daily routine… a lot of the care workers used to come up to me at the beginning of the session to say “Am I just here to sit and support? Am I here to take part or...?”

Sally Mercer

Older People and Urban Change

People’s experience of the places they live changes as they grow older. Their needs, experiences and ability to move around the city changes and does their ability to partake in all that cities have to offer. However, ageing should be considered a positive experience. Longer life should be accompanied by continuing opportunities for health, participation and security. The World Health Organisation has adopted the term ‘active ageing’ to express the process by which we can achieve this vision: “Active ageing is the process of optimizing opportunities for health, participation and security in order to enhance quality of life as people age.” Here the word “active” refers to continuing participation in economic, cultural, spiritual and civic affairs, not just the ability to be physically active or to participate in the labour force. Active ageing aims to extend healthy life expectancy and quality of life for all people as they age (Hanson 2004). Just as ageing impacts on our experience of the city and our access to it, it also impacts on our experience of home. As people age their needs change. While people generally prefer to remain in their home for as long as possible, close to family, friends, neighbours and familiar routines, the demands of caring for older people and the needs of older people often result in a change in what was home, whether this is an adaptation of ones own home, a move to sheltered or supported housing or a care home. Paradoxically this happens when home becomes of greater importance to older people as they spend more time in it, especially if health or mobility deteriorates (Gilroy, 2008). Current research indicates that 90% of older people in the UK are living in ‘mainstream housing’. The remainder live in care homes and supported housing. It is worth noting that 35% of the homes discussed above, combined with societal and political pressures to provide cost effective services, have led to older peoples care services being fragmented due to the increased marketisation of care services. Older people’s care services cross the public, private and voluntary sectors. Care services purchased from the private sector, made up of both ‘for-profit’ and ‘not-for-profit’ providers, has recently become the major provider of domiciliary services for older people living in the community, while local authorities have been reducing their capacity. Today many local authorities’ main responsibility in relation to older people’s care is to supervise the spending of public funds for the provision long-term care, i.e. to ensure that these funds are used effectively and appropriately, and to organise care services for people who are entitled to them. The social and health impact of dementia and its implications for care provision is also a topic of considerable debate in discussions of aging in the UK. It is estimated that 820,000 people in the UK are living with dementia, with considerable associated economic implications. The majority of the work of caring for older people with dementia is unpaid and carried out by family members. No interventions have yet been developed that prevent, change or reverse the progressive decline of brain functions. People with dementia are at an increased risk of physical health problems and become increasingly dependent on health and social care services and other people. The progressive nature of the disease associated with significant changes to daily living activities, behaviour, appetite and eating habits may make people more susceptible to other diseases. Working with people with dementia clearly presents considerable challenges for care organisations.
occupied by older people (60+) in England fail the decent homes standard (approximately 2.7 million households). Over three quarters of a million people aged 65 and over need specially adapted accommodation because of a medical condition or disability and 145,000 of them reported living in homes that do not meet their needs. Unsuitable housing can lead to older people becoming, for all practical purposes, confined to one room, which can contribute directly to their isolation and exclusion and (lack of) access to the city.

The most severely isolated and lonely are those people over 75 years of age, and women are at greater risk of isolation because they live longer than men. Isolation and loneliness are also particular risks for older people from minority ethnic or immigrant groups and for people who live in rural areas. A suitable home environment can be crucial to independence, health and well being in later life. The introduction of the National Strategy for Housing in an Ageing Society (DCLE, 2008a) aimed to improve housing choices and provision for older people, as well as ‘future proof’ homes so that they will meet the lifetime needs of future generations of older people, thereby reducing the cost of residential care. Designing more accessible and easily adaptable ‘lifetime housing’ has been promoted as a long term cost-effective way of improving older (and disabled) people’s independence and quality of life. ‘Lifetime housing’ has been promoted as a long term cost-effective way of improving older (and disabled) people’s independence and quality of life. 21. In the improving older (and disabled) people’s lifetime housing’ has been promoted as a long term cost-effective way of improving older (and disabled) people’s independence and quality of life. 21. In the

Participatory Art in the Care Field: The Evidence Base

There is a considerable body of research concerned with older people and the benefits of arts participation. This body of research seeks to identify the value of participatory art using different methodologies, being evaluative, quantitative, concerned with identifying and evidencing impact systematically.

There is a long history of the therapeutic uses of art and creative activity for those in need of social and health care. There is considerable quantitative and qualitative research which has sought to evidence the value of participation in arts for older people and the sick 22 and to demonstrate the value of people, who may be isolated or stigmatised, coming together to be creative in an unstructured setting. A great deal of the research in this area is quantitative, coming out of the field of health science and occupational therapy. A review of the key literature and published by the Baring Foundation, found evidence of the ‘tremendous potential’ for participatory art to improve the quality of life for older people’s mental and physical well being at individual, community and societal levels. Participation in art, whether visual, performing arts such as dance and theatre, playing music and singing or storytelling, was found to enhance mental well-being, improve cognitive functioning and self-esteem, increase enjoyment of life, improve memory and creative thinking. It also found evidence of the development of meaningful social contact, friendship. Significantly for the Skills Exchange project, the Aging Artfully report found that participation in art has the potential enhance older people’s sense of ‘giving something back’ to the community while raising awareness of age discrimination, and positively transforming attitudes to older people while challenging and breaking down pervasive self perceptions and external stigmas of being older that pervade popular societal culture (MHF 2011: 50).

The main outcomes that are repeatedly identified in this research are: enhanced perceived control; building a sense of self; expression; transforming the illness experience; gaining a sense of purpose; and building social support. Research into the impact of art and cultural programmes on older people in particular finds that participants report higher overall ratings of physical health, fewer visits to the doctor, less medication use, fewer instances of falls, and fewer other health problems. It also found that participants had better morale and less loneliness and increased activity than a comparison group 23.

Research by the Baring Foundation entitled Aging Artfully 24, which consisted of 120 UK case studies, for example, sets out some of the personal and social benefits of the arts for older people, these include health benefits (improving physical fitness and co-ordination, reducing isolation, improving mental capacity, self esteem and confidence) and benefits to personal and community relations (generating intergenerational respect and understanding, finding common ground, building up relationships with non-family members). A subsequent systematic review of the impact of participatory arts on older people 25, also commissioned by the Baring Foundation, found evidence of the ‘tremendous potential’ for participatory art to improve the quality of life for older people’s mental and physical well being at individual, community and societal levels. Participation in art, whether visual, performing arts such as dance and theatre, playing music and singing or storytelling, was found to enhance mental well-being, improve cognitive functioning and self-esteem, increase enjoyment of life, improve memory and creative thinking. It also found evidence of the development of meaningful social contact, friendship. Significantly for the Skills Exchange project, the Aging Artfully report found that participation in art has the potential enhance older people’s sense of ‘giving something back’ to the community while raising awareness of age discrimination, and positively transforming attitudes to older people while challenging and breaking down pervasive self perceptions and external stigmas of being older that pervade popular societal culture (MHF 2011: 50).

This research review argues for the active support of participatory arts by local health, social care and mental health improvement agencies. Furthermore the Aging Artfully report identifies a clear need for arts organisations to reach out to day centres, residential and nursing homes and hospices. Reaching older people in what is sometimes termed the ‘fourth age’ i.e. people who have begun to experience limitations to their physical and mental fitness. This group often requires artwork that comes to them as they may not be able to access art as an audience even when cultural activity is aimed at older people. The Aging Artfully report highlights some of the potential for art in improving residential care environments by reinforcing older people’s sense of themselves, improves the mental health of people with dementia, improving the care environment with visual arts and improving the job satisfaction of carers 26. The Aging Artfully report makes a strong case for the role of culture in enhancing care settings, suggesting that the provision of an arts based cultural activity could be a factor that inspectors include when approving care provision. Certainly it would be helpful for regulators and care providers to meet arts organisations with expertise in this area to better understand what is on offer.

Care within the Art Field

The Skills Exchange project is working at a time when art and creativity is a resource being used in a variety of social and cultural settings. As seen above, and in research which socially engaging practice should be an integral part of current social policy, the Aging Artfully report highlights some of the potential of art in improving residential care environments by reinforcing older people’s sense of themselves, improving the mental health of people with dementia, improving the care environment with visual arts and improving the job satisfaction of carers. The Aging Artfully report makes a strong case for the role of culture in enhancing care settings, suggesting that the provision of an arts based cultural activity could be a factor that inspectors include when approving care provision. Certainly it would be helpful for regulators and care providers to meet arts organisations with expertise in this area to better understand what is on offer.

Less central, and often totally invisible within debates regarding the impact of the arts, are questions about the kind of work art should do, which are questions circulated in debates in the art field i.e. How can art serve to address and engage with public issues that are defined by those directly impacted by them? What does art do that other forms of socially engaged practice, such as community work or social work, do not? Debate in the art field has focussed on the extent to which socially engaged practice should or should not be used to reach aims that are defined socially, that is increasing the well-being of participants through increasing their skills and impacting on...
community cohesion’, social welfare, citizenship and health. Some of these debates suggest the incorporation of social processes into definitions of art, claiming new forms of aesthetics informed by the ‘relational’ or the ‘dialogic’. Others suggest that engaging in social fixing or filling gaps in the depletion of social service funding decreases the possibility for freedom, expression and creative autonomy. Other, more conservative tendencies suggest that socially engaged and participatory art is problematic because it does not make ‘good’ art. Others, still, argue that art could offer processes and practices of political autonomy in relation to social problems — that is that art can address social problems — but not in ways that enact behavioural changes defined by the State, the corporation or other social bodies not directly involved in the day to day lives of those most impacted. This latter tendency — one adopted by the curators and many of the practitioners of Skills Exchange — suggests that socially based art has the ability to address issues as they are defined by participants in a collective process, making use of artistic skills in order to change perceptions and relations. This latter perspective draws from histories of social realism in television and film and of community arts in the UK in the 1970s, as well as from traditions of popular education deriving from care work, radical care (Jean Oury, Felix Guattari, D.W. Winnicott, R.D. Laing), participatory social and artistic research (Fals Borda, B.S. Johnson) and the use of art by social movements. It re-locates the question of whether art is ‘good’ to whether it makes use of aesthetic, relationship-building and communicative capacities to provoke political impacts that groups have defined as relevant and important.

This latter proposal, that art be effective socially but in ways defined by all participants — artists and other social groups in collaboration — alters the way in which participatory practice should be evaluated: that is in terms of its aesthetic or cultural use, its social impact on participants, and its wider socio-political significance. These issues are central to the ways in which socially-engaged arts practices, or perhaps activities better described as social processes that include the use of art, are conceived, delivered and evaluated.

In the artist-facilitated participatory practice, exemplified through Skills Exchange, artists assume a variety of roles: as educators, activists, researchers, and collaborators. Participants also move from the role of recipient to that of active agent shaping and re-shaping processes. The ethics of dialogue and negotiation are integral to this process, and, as Grant Kester would argue, part of how we should understand the aesthetic of the art itself. Such practices offer a spectrum of opportunities for engagement and participation. Central to these is a spirit in which the non-artist becomes a co-researcher, and co-creator, defining the issues at stake and the importance of the negotiation of its broader social significance. While the Skills Exchange project aimed to respond to and address the social relations surrounding older people and influence the bodies who work with older people, the project was also formed around the belief that there are aesthetic dimensions to all social and political production. The project was therefore not merely concerned with the production of artworks but with the desires of participants, what can be made apparent, what can be heard, what can be scrutinised and questioned in the process of unlikely collaborations. At its best it produced a space where all participants (artists, older people, and those working with them) could also step into the world of the imagination and the symbolic to re-imagine themselves and the range of actions available to them. The difficulties and moments of discomfort that sometimes occurred during the Skills Exchange project are instructive. These encounters were integral to the project’s intention: to question the preconceptions held by all participants in this process: artists, institutions, carers and older people themselves.

Findings: From Service Delivery to Embedded Exchange

Kately: What do you feel that role of art is here, and for the residents?

Phyllis Etukudo: It is something to keep them occupied with, a lot of them are interested in art and music, because it has always been part of their lives. It has always been part of someone’s life somehow.

Interview with Phyllis Etukudo, Activity Co-ordinator, Westmead Care Home

As we have read, in many cases Skills Exchange participants challenged the aims of institutional partners, charting potential uses of art and creativity as a way of broadening out the concept of care by taking into account different elements of older peoples’ well being than those that are often monitored. Projects challenged many of the original expectations, taking as their canvas the representations of the elderly, re-considering the perceptions and spatialisations of the elderly as well as the policies and economies that are built around notions of the elderly and their care. Dominant formulations of ‘care’ often place the elderly in the role of the ‘serviced’ or ‘cared for’, or ‘untouched’, or ‘after’ the peak moments of their lives. Simultaneously the artists and those working with older people are placed in a role of the ‘creative’ ‘skilled’ or the ‘carer’. Skills Exchange projects pushed at the notion that artists, older people, care-workers and others might exchange their skills, and, in this process, alter reified roles and well-rehearsed relations through processes of creative exchange. The project made efforts to increase participation in ways that attended to the micro-political dynamics between people participating in projects, the power relationships of group settings, and the performance of static roles. It is important to note that this kind of work repositions older people (and their carers) as participants in a process, as co-producers, rather than recipients of art that is being delivered or provided.

It is our assessment that the moves and demands that artists and their co-researchers have made is a move from a paradigm service to one of embedded exchange.

Their move from service delivery was not a movement away from thinking of the usefulness or social function of art, nor from the importance of issues such as reducing isolation and discrimination against older people, but rather against paradigms in which outcomes were pre-determined by the institutional bodies prior to participation and group involvement.

The Serpentine Gallery and the institutional partners responded to this shift, adapting schedules, expectations and temporalities, and noting outcomes such as better relationships between older people and staff and between spaces of care and the broader community. Care workers — some of whom were sceptical at the onset of projects — expressed moments of surprise at the degree to which the modes of exchange developed could lead into longer term processes at the home and cultural workers also noted their own shift in perceptions about aging.
3 See the-uk report Unequal Aging (2009 for further statistical information on the aging population) http://www.ageuk.org.uk
15 1974-75

STUDY 1: A Palace for Us

Location: Woodberry Down Estate Artist: Tom Hunter Research Assistant: Laura Cuch Co-Researchers: Participants and Staff at AGE UK–Hackney Tea Group Care Workers: Louise Owen, Janice Hunter

Question: How can the stories of an estate bring about positive representation of social housing residents?

The research on this project began when Tom Hunter, a photographer who has a strong track record of working with communities in Hackney, North London and beyond joined elderly residents on the Woodberry Down Estate, and care workers from AGE UK Hackney (then Age Concern).

While the circumstances under which the project developed reflected an institutional belief that art and creativity are of benefit to the health and social wellbeing of older people, Tom and participants of the Woodberry Down project re-positioned these ambitions, towards their own desires to portray the rich social life of the last 50 years of the estate through the testimonies of residents who have lived there. Tom and residents converged in their belief in the importance of social housing and felt that at a time when the estate was undergoing re-development and social housing was regularly being socially vilified, it was an important moment to present another image of the social housing estate’s history. Both Tom and the residents were aware of the way in which art is made available to older people in social and care settings, as a sometimes aimless means of filling time, and his work was an attempt to move away from this:

Here we are producing something. So it’s not just all academic, we are going to do a piece of artwork and we will have part of the production. Produce something real rather than practise something that feels like filling the time.

Tom Hunter, Artist

The importance of the making of the art work was derived from both the political and aesthetic ambitions of the group: to re-present social housing and working class people’s lives with dignity and respect. Woodberry Down is a very large housing estate situated just east of Manor House underground station. During the early twentieth century this area had become the well to do end of Stoke Newington, home to

74

75
several wealthy Jewish families and to Albert Chevalier, the music hall artiste. In 1934, despite powerful opposition, the London County Council compulsorily purchased all of Woodberry Down and the construction of an estate of the future began after the war. 57 blocks of flats were erected on 64 acres of land. Woodberry Down School, now closed, became one of Britain’s first purpose-built comprehensives in 1955. Members of the group suggested that at the time the estate was described as ‘a palace for us’. Many of the members of the group from the Woodberry Down Estate moved to nearby Manor House, Hackney. Today the estate’s population reflects waves of immigration to this area of London. The estate has many Jewish, West Indian and West African residents. Like many other utopian urban development schemes, through years of de-funding Woodberry Down became known as a flawed place in which to live, with an array of characteristically inner city social issues, flats with structural problems and few local amenities. Today the estate is one of the biggest regeneration projects in Western Europe. The regeneration of the estate is anticipated to take up to twenty years to complete, at a cost of over £150 million. Hackney Council has led the delivery of Woodberry Down’s estate development. The developer was Berkeley Homes, Manor House Development Trust and Genesis Housing Group. The scheme comprises the demolition of approximately 2,000 residential units and some commercial floor space.

These are to be replaced by approximately 4,500 social rented, private and shared ownership homes, and a range of new facilities including a community centre, health centre, new Academy, and extended primary school, as well as retail and commercial spaces. For the last 5 years residents have been living through the beginnings of a 20 year long regeneration program and the associated process of consultation and planning demolition and construction. The Skills Exchange project was organised around a weekly drop in tea and coffee session provided in partnership with Age Concern in Hackney (the arm’s length management organisation (ALMO) managing Hackney Council’s homes) and Hanover Housing (a Registered Social Landlord (RSL)). These sessions, had been running for two and a half years. In the first sessions, which were held in the regeneration agency offices, the group recollected their memories of the estate in relation to different periods in the estate’s social history: from the golden days of the estate to the progressive loss of leisure amenities, such as parks and swimming pools, that were important to their quality of life. They expressed their opinions about negative perceptions of the estate which were imposed externally from professionals and residents, whilst in their experience the flats were actually in good condition and very nice from inside. They also expressed a sense that the Estate had declined as Hackney Council had removed the care and the social facilities they valued, resulting in feelings of being overlooked and dismissed in the regeneration process.

In the initial period of the project this was exacerbated by a degree of over-determination of the process by the fragmented institutional arrangements between Hackney Homes, Hanover Housing, the developer and Age Concern. Here three workers from three different agencies had responsibility for different aspects of the tea/coffee group. In reality this meant that a small fraction of each of the three workers’ time was funded to work with this group. Despite this there was an active and solid constituency involved. Many of the older people were already living with a sense of disappointment and lowered expectations due to the slow pace of the process. Many in the group asked in regard for the impact of the process on older people and the slow moving decanting process. This impacted on their expectations of Tom Hunter’s project:

It was better than I expected. It was a long time in the making I know it is better for Tom, going round, getting photos and everything. I am happy with it. [in relation to the changes to the estate] I was sceptical at first. They were going to do this, and going to that that, there were lots of rumours around the estate, about what was going to happen, but this was one thing that actually came through. It panned out.

Post screening interview with Erica Dobbs, Participant.

The tea sessions at the older people’s centre had, in part, been created to offer a space for older people to come together. This was a kind of safety valve where bad feelings could be released (with a potential effect of de-politicising the situation and the older people’s critical voices). The situation was symbolically exemplified by the layout of the room during early sessions in Woodberry Down. After the interview in the afternoon you wouldn’t see an old person at all because of all that was going on: the drugs and prostitution.

Janice Wynter, Age UK Hackney

Regardless, discussions ensued about the role the film could play in changing perceptions of social housing and the urban poor that had taken over the experiences of pride people had felt. It was understood that representation - by the media and other agencies - had coincided with de-funding and neglect of the estates to paint a dark picture of the poor, the working class and the distance between the young and the elderly on estates. Knowledge and re-presentation of the era of the palace was cited as critical to changing these perceptions and promoting different perceptions of social housing, a picture in which generations were more integrated and estates were seen as better places.

The group imagined something of significant scale, with high production values and considered this integral to ensuring a dignified representation of social housing. A delay occurred while the Gallery raised additional funds to realise the film at the level of quality that Tom and the group had proposed. The funds were not enough to realise the film at its total ambition. Tom and the group had to make difficult decisions on which stories to include and decided to highlight the early days of the estate development. The film that was produced, titled A Palace for Us includes re-enactments of some parts of the stories that were shared in the engagement process, by both actors and participant’s family members. This created an opportunity for interaction and skills/knowledge exchange between generations. The group were keen that the film be seen by as many people as possible but were most concerned that it be viewed in Hackney and proposed a screening at the Rio Cinema, which took place in February 2011 to a full house. This screening took place after the film was shown at the Serpentine Gallery. The film’s presence at the Gallery expanded the audience to over 15,000 visitors and secured important media attention, including an article and excerpt on the Guardian’s website and an interview with Robert Elms.
on BBC London. The Guardian’s Jonathon Jones said the following, picking up on its fulfillment of aims related to changing the discrimination against working class, older people living in social housing:

“It evokes all our stories. Britain in 1945, out of the ruins of war, built the welfare state that clever rich kids are now so casually pulling apart. Estates like Woodberry Down embody an ideal of decent housing for all that was born out of the miseries of the 1930s and terror of the 1940s. A Palace for Us gently and acutely bears witness to this history that is now being dismantled. Hunter’s film is not a rant, but a moving homage to lives and memories that today are obliterated by harsh and violent caricatures of the white working class. Everyone should go to the Serpentine to learn to see through his subjects’ eyes. The government should go. The testament by the Guardian’s Jonathon Jones is a clear indication of the group’s ability to meet their aims in changing representations. It is interesting that media reviewers consistently refer to A Palace for Us as ‘Tom’s’ film, when those on the estate and Tom himself refer to it as their or our film. This demonstrates that there is work to be done in addressing the role of arts and social criticism in acknowledging the collaborative and participatory nature of such initiatives. In addition to media attention, in March, 2011 Tom and Serpentine Curator Janna Graham made a presentation to media journalists from Bloomberg - sponsors of the project - describing the importance of changing perceptions of social housing and its residents and the importance of older people being involved in doing so. Some members of this group of over 50 people came to speak about the way they have felt they contributed to and would like to change such perceptions. Beyond this foray into the public domain, Tom continued his visitation of the tea/coffee groups even in the months after the film was released and was invited to present awards to Age Concern staff and local donors at the tea group during recent celebrations.

STUDY 2:
Barter with The Future Self

Location: Westmead Care Home, Westminster
Architects/Designers: Markus Miessen and Åbäke with Kees de Klein, Photographer Sophie Bellmer and Writer Yanki Lee
Researchers: Alison Rooke and Katey Tabner
Co-Researchers: Staff and residents at Westmead Care Home, Westminster led by Phyllis Etukudo, Staff at Serpentine Gallery
AGE UK – Hackney Tea Group
Care Workers: Louise Owen, Janice Hunter

Question: How could exchanges between culture and care workers and residents result in tangible change?

Working with a very different constituency and approach, a second project took place at Westmead Elderly Resource Centre and Care Home owned and run by Westminster City Council. Westmead provides residential care for 42 older people, many of whom have dementia and experience few or no visits from outsiders. Two design teams collaborated with care home workers over a four year period. The first was developed by Markus Miessen in relation to architectural change. The second, related to social, programmatic and spatial design, emerged from the collective Åbäke. CUCR research assistant Katey Tabner and researcher Alison Rooke worked on the research component of the project and Activities Coordinator Phyllis Etukudo also played an important role. Westmead was a particularly interesting site as it is a relatively small care home that retains a domestic and human scale. In his first site visits and discussions with site manager Julia Patton, Miessen described the space as follows:

‘Westmead is, from my point of view, a typology that seems to work very well for many reasons. There is an intriguing quality of this place. It is difficult to put it in words for those who haven’t been there… there is a shocking divide, which is between the public areas and the private areas of this place.’ He asked ‘How can one adapt existing places and propose policy issues at the same time? Simple adaptations can change the use of those spaces.

Markus Miessen, Architect

Markus’ proposition was to include a space powered by Skype as case study/ pilot project to showcase how existing institutions can be changed by altering only a small number of strategic settings/parameters: what he described as ‘acupuncture rather than complete makeover.’ Designers Åbäke took up this idea in their approach, testing the Skype Room and a number of other proposals. Their initial idea was to enact a Skill Exchange chart with residents and care
workers to swap skills. They reasoned that creativity in such a context. With Westmead staff, residents and gallery workers, they undertook a process that took the title of the project Skills Exchange quite literally. While instigated by Åbäke from their conversations with participants, a series of exchanges were enacted by this loose group of cultural workers, residents and care workers.

As a visual representation of this, an art swap was the first exchange to take place. Furniture and artwork went from Westmead to the Serpentine’s Process Room while limited edition prints from the Serpentine Gallery were hung in the corridors of the Westmead home. Staff from the Serpentine engaged in discussions with Westmead staff and residents. Where many had expressed fear in this change — on both sides, in the care home in particular — staff were afraid that the introduction of cultural workers, residents and gallery workers, they undertook a process that took the title of the project Skills Exchange quite literally. While instigated by Åbäke from their conversations with participants, a series of exchanges were enacted by this loose group of cultural workers, residents and care workers.

As a visual representation of this, an art swap was the first exchange to take place. Furniture and artwork went from Westmead to the Serpentine’s Process Room while limited edition prints from the Serpentine Gallery were hung in the corridors of the Westmead home. Staff from the Serpentine engaged in discussions with Westmead staff and residents. Where many had expressed fear in this change — on both sides, in the care home in particular — staff were afraid that the introduction of contemporary art works would ‘dis-orient’ themselves and residents. One resident when asked suggested it ‘might be fun’.

In the conversations about the work a series of memories came out. In response to one work, by Rirkrit Tiravanija, resident Denis suggested, “I see a radio and this reminds me of the one we had in our kitchen in Ireland. I listened to it every day as a child. The stories seemed very far away.”

Another resident, Edna, responded to a work by the Kabakovs: “I see a place like this one, many doors and rooms, but this one is more open, more airy. Maybe we could change this place to look like that?”

Others in the home came forward to share information about the work when gallery workers were present. Shera suggested in passing I dressed up for today. We don’t get many visitors.

The cultural workers also expressed their surprise at what had come out of the conversations and how the works changed in meaning from thinking about authorship to what they catalysed for people. As stated by Curator Kathryn Rattee in an interview: We pass these images on our own walls every day and hardly notice them. Here they have opened up in different directions. Equally, Westmead’s speech therapist suggested:

There were changes to the patterns of speech after the art works arrived and those discussions were had. Dennis, in particular, spoke more and about different concepts than usual, pronouncing words at a higher level.

Cultural workers and care workers also went through a process of attempting to understand better what it means to age and not simply ‘help’ the aged. Through photoshop, a number of the workers, and in some cases their families, were aged 40 years by Kees de Klein & Åbäke to create closer mental proximity between those in the home and those working with them. This was an attempt to get away from the tendency to imagine care as ‘for them’ and adopting an othering or more patronising stance between older people.

For me, this was a profound shift said Curator Janna Graham.

In cultural work it is common to hear people suggest that art is ‘helping’ those that it encounters in the social realm and [is] not itself profoundly shaped and helped by these encounters. I make it a habit to work against the inequality of this idea, but seeing myself ‘aged’ altered this commitment to exchange. I had to incorporate the otherness of this image into my own life. This also changed the way I related to people like Dennis, Joan, Shera and others living in the home.

Janna Graham, Serpentine

Opportunities for carers and gallery staff to work together also occurred in preparing for a birthday party at the Gallery for Westmead’s oldest resident Ellen, including attending cake decorating classes and creating a space for the party in the gallery. Whereas care staff were anxious about how the residents would respond to the trip to the gallery, and gallery workers were equally anxious, particularly when residents expressed anxiety about leaving the door. Once on the bus, however, there was an outburst of Irish rebel songs and stories stimulated by seeing architectural structures of the city. At the gallery, Serpentine staff, Westmead staff and residents celebrated the birthday together. Gallery staff described the feeling of being moved by the opportunity to ‘care’ within their workday and the rarity of being implicated in those social projects that so often take place or are outsourced beyond the walls of the gallery.

Phyllis Etukudo described the importance for her of the visit for those who attended, suggesting that many remembered the event for much longer than their usual memory spans. She also later used this in her own work discussing older people and dignity with fellow professionals.

[AT] That party, the staff were fantastic. It was just like a street party from the old days, with the balloons and the banners and everything, and eat! I have never seen them eat so much. Ahh they just had such a lovely time, and the way the staff treated them was just so wonderful. They weren’t condescending or you know… They treated them as equals. So the dignity and respect was there, the way they got them up to dance and sing. You know it was all stuff from their past. So much they talked about it for days afterwards. Some of them [the residents] actually remembered.

Phyllis Etukudo, Older People’s Activity Co-ordinator, Westmead Care Home

At the Gallery a series of exchanges took place in the room housing Westmead’s furniture and art to enable participation by younger people from schools and on a Family Day. Carers and their families and passers by of all ages were invited to visualise and imagine their future selves and the objects which may be useful in...
STUDY 3: The Trip
Location: St. John’s Hospice, St. John’s Wood
Artist: Marcus Coates
Co—Researchers: Alex H, outpatients and workers at St. John’s Hospice, including Andrew Gallini and Sheena Boyd
Research Assistant: Ananda Ferlauto

Question: What can an artist provide for those nearing the end of life?

In Camden, North London, Marcus Coates, accompanied by research assistant Ananda Ferlauto, explored the role of the artist as a vicarious agent for imagination and experience. Marcus Coates worked with outpatients on issues around the emotional and imaginative in the context of St John’s Hospice, an independent hospice that provides palliative and end of life care. Here people are at the end of their lives, as their physical and spatial world shrinks. Through considered dialogue, Marcus worked closely with several of the Hospice’s residents and finally selected one collaborator with whom to work. Beginning by asking What can I do for you?, he asked participants if there was something which they would like to enact vicariously through Marcus, to explore their wishes, interests and dreams. Marcus did not imagine this as a simple act of service but an exchange in which he might learn something of what it is to be at the end of one’s life, a secret and under-discussed knowledge in broader society.

Directed by Alex H, Marcus went on a trip to the Ecuadorian Amazon. Under Alex’s instruction it was documented by sound and in writing. Marcus then returned to share the story of his experience with his collaborator. Their conversations, in which Alex’s desires and use for the project, and his interests in challenging Marcus’ own assumptions about what it is to die, were recorded as the soundtrack for a film installation shown at the gallery, and produced as a book. Experienced by an audience of 21,000 the work was sadly not seen by Alex, who passed away before the installation date.

For staff at St John’s Hospice the project pushed at some of the Hospice’s boundaries. In an early interview Andrew Gallini, Director of Clinical Services, St John’s Hospice discussed the Hospice’s hope for the projects usefulness to the Hospice’s approach to art and creativity.

I think it will be really good to have a sense of what has come out of it, and how that developed a piece of work, and then how...
Andrew Gallini, Director of Clinical Services, St John’s Hospice

It was in the nature of the relationship, made visible and audible in the film, that was at stake in this process, which lay on the ethically negotiated terrain. The exposure of the negotiations of power between Marcus and Alex, became the subject of research. As we see here the order of interrogation and therapeutic intervention is reversed from the artist doing for the dying, into a more complex negotiation of relationship.

A: Did you find doing this on my behalf, that sometimes you wanted to dominate and take over? I don’t think one could have resisted it, but I can’t imagine that you are that self-controlled. I could be wrong.

MC: Yes, I kept thinking, is this something that Alex would be interested in, should I focus on this, or this over here? I’m getting really interested in this, but would Alex get interested in this? In the end I had to just go with what I’d do, in a way, and just imagine that whatever sparked my imagination, those would have to be the bits that I brought back to you in the end, because those are the bits that are most lived through, and the things that are the most vibrant for me, so I just really assumed that I’d be able to talk to you in a way that transmitted that vibrancy and that life, really. I thought because I couldn’t help living it for myself. I thought that would be the best way to line it for you and hopefully that would inform your own imagination, and you going up this river into the unknown.

A: The unknown for some people is way in the distance and for some people it’s a little nearer. One is always going into the unknown. You don’t have to have an illness to know that. With your interpretation, one has been able to experience, not completely as if one was doing it oneself – you can’t expect that – but it’s got very near it.

The honesty of the exchange was also evident to those who came to see the final work at the Gallery. Visitor comments there suggested that listening to Alex and Marcus, helped me re-imagine my mother as someone who is not simply a person with an illness, or shared knowledge about the deep philosophical exchanges that take place with those at the end of life, conversations that ‘are very hard to discuss with others’ and ‘rarely ever make it into the press.’ What was clear in the exchange was also that Marcus’ original offer of a ‘service’ was met with Alex’s honest account of the impossibility of assessing impact in its entirety. The act both offered something as an act of exchange and generosity but also complicated the nature of this occurrence in the months before his death.

MC: Can you imagine that this journey, if I did this for you, would be helpful or beneficial? Worthwhile for you?

A: That’s a hard one. Yes I think it would, but in a very selfish way. That someone had put themselves out to do it on my behalf, that would be important. That I can re-live for seconds or half an hour, whatever it is, something I’ve wanted to do. But then I don’t know if it matters one iota if I’m going anyway, to have that extra experience or second-hand experience. It’s not going to alter the whole finality of my life.

MC: Just another experience.

A: I don’t know and I don’t think anyone can tell you what experience you carry on with you, providing you carry on in some aspect or another.

Following on from the Skills Exchange encounter, there has also been an opening up in the imagination of the role of art and creativity in the Hospice as Andrew Gallini describes here:

Andrew Gallini, Director of Clinical Services, St John’s Hospice

One of the impacts of this process has been an interest in continuing to work with longer term, embedded arts practice at the hospice. Doctor Chris Farnham discussed how the Skills Exchange project ‘opened a door’ giving him, as Director of the Hospice, the courage to bring in art projects that involve the residents and the staff to a greater extent than the model of workshops or one off commissions. Crucially the St John’s team have begun to think about the ways that the skills of creative professionals could interrelate to those of medical professionals, and the possibilities of such collective endeavours when trying to improve communication skills and the possibilities of this moment of life. For the Gallery and Marcus, the reaction of people in the Gallery to the work indicated the degree to which death is not discussed in public culture and could be the basis for future work.
STUDY 4: Trading Spaces: An Investigation into the Future of London Street Markets

Location: InSpire History Group, Southwark
Artist: Barby Asante
Research Assistant: Cristina Garrido Sánchez
Co-Researchers: Jayne Lloyd, InSpire Southwalk, Barbara Akers, Rose Campbell, Pat Davies, Eleanor Greggory, Teresa Mcgee, Mary Meehan, Emina Mustafa, Elkins Perch, Maureen Perch Architecture Crew, Jennifer Aseidu and Eduardo De Costa, Rev’d Saunders and participants in the Sarsaparilla Summits

Question: How can sharing memories of the past support those working to save affordable London Street Markets?

The Inspire community project at St Peter’s Church, in Walworth, South London sits between the Heygate and Aylesbury housing estates and is home to a reminiscences group. Artist Barby Asante approached the group in 2016 as part of her project to investigate East Street Market. Barby, accompanied by CUCR research assistant Cristina Garrido Sánchez, and the women discussed the changes to the estates nearby, undergoing large-scale and long-term change as part of the Elephant and Castle regeneration masterplan. They discussed their concerns for the future of the East Street Market, one of London’s oldest and busiest markets. Street trading has taken place in Walworth since the 16th century. Their project Trading Spaces, was concerned with the ways older people experience urban change and the significance of the social space of the market for older people. The project brought together older people, market workers and traders at the InSpire Centre to find new ways of archiving the past and recovering memories of the everyday social worlds which are so often lost and quickly forgotten in future oriented regeneration processes. This intervention was intended to create a response to the changes to the local area which included the proposed demolition of the Heygate Estate and the associated threats to the social fabric of East Street market. Here participants met weekly, organised meetings, local walks, a stall on the market and discussed some of the more traditional fare that has disappeared from the market in recent years (such as the soft drink Sarsaparilla), for market stories and memories with the intention of producing a book which recorded this process. This collaboration also led to two ‘Sarsaparilla Summits’, which brought together elders, artists, activists and academics concerned with the past, present and future of London street markets in the context of regeneration and gentrification.

The group’s work at East Street market was oriented toward the future of the market but engaged through the collection of memories of a city neighbourhood undergoing dramatic change due to large-scale regeneration. Barby facilitated the participants’ embedded knowledge of the area and the changes it has gone through, evidenced in the shrinking of the diversity and quality of goods on offer, the closure of favourite shops and stalls owned and run by local characters. The group worked together collecting local memories and histories, taking a walk with a local man John, aged 72, a volunteer at InSpire who had grown up in the area. These stories were shared in the context of a critical orientation to local regeneration plans. In this process the participants met with market managers, local traders and activists concerned with street markets from parts of London undergoing similar changes. To make their research public, Barby worked with participants to create a market stall, which was run by the InSpire group for the day. It was decked out with bright red, white and blue bunting. Behind the counter participants displayed cakes, rabbit dumplings and drinks of Sarsaparilla ready to give away. The idea behind this artistic intervention into the space of the market was deceptively simple. The participants all made food to share, and trays of sarsaparilla, a drink that used to be sold in the market by the herbalist Baldwins located around the corner on the Walworth Road. In exchange for free food and drink the participants were asked to exchange memories and stories about the market. Passers-by were asked to fill out a very short questionnaire, which asked them: How long they had been coming to the market? What was the most unusual thing they ever bought? What their favourite memory of the market was? How the market had changed? And what they would like to see in the market. In taking over a market stall for the day the women moved out of their role as customers in front of the stall, to become traders themselves. The stall also temporarily upset the dynamics of exchange typical of the market. The stall created a temporary social sphere where taken for granted roles were undone for a day. These exchanges captured the value of the market for older people. The street market is a place filled with social exchange. It is not just money and goods that change hands here; the market is filled with banter and conversation. These are intensely sociable places, prices are negotiated, clothes are tried on, and stallholders invite passers-by to comment on their wares, jokes are made. The exchanges that took place in this project captured the ways that the market was a place of shopping but also entertainment.

Tommy Cooper’s brother had a record stall here, outside Foxy’s. We used to shout to him, what have you got? Then we used to stand there and sing all the old songs.

They were all characters. If you came down here and you had the hump, they’d put the music on, Irish jigs, Caribbean music. You would end up having a knees up. It was a lot of fun. Some of them had a sense of humour. What about Old Mutton Eye, remember him? He’d give you a shilling to measure out elastic in yards.

Memory Exchange at the Market Stall

John: And Annie’s, the Jewish lady. If you so much as passed her shop, you only had to stop to look in the window and she would fly out, drag you in her shop. ‘Come in dear, come in. Now how much are you thinking of paying for this dear?’

Margaret: Lovely coats in there.

John: She was a super saleslady. George used to sell bankrupt stock. He used to say, come on ladies and gentleman. I want to send my mother-in-law on holiday. The more you buy the further I can send her. He used to put scent on his cheek, ask you to smell it, then as you went to sell it he used to kiss you on the cheek.
Market walk with John
The InSpire group investigations into East Street market captured the vibrancy of the everyday multicultural working class life in London where exchanges of culture and identity take place. Today, many of the older people coming to the market return each week from far and wide, having travelled by bus from more leafy parts of south London to return to the neighbourhood of their childhood. Interviews that were conducted with local stallholders during a walk through the market identified some of the factors that are impacting on the area. Stallholders, who had inherited stalls from their parents, were the last of their line as their children did not want to be market traders. Market traders recognised the value of this social space for older people compared with the impersonal supermarket shopping experience. The impact of Sunday trading and car boot sales was also discussed. This project also pointed towards the economic significance of these un-gentrified markets. Those involved appreciated the opportunity to buy very small amounts of fruit and veg (one pepper, three eggs), to handle goods before they bought them and the opportunity to enter into a verbal exchange to get the best price.

I like that stall because you can pick and choose. You couldn't do that with the English people. They tell you to leave well alone. She was selling two punnets of strawberries for £1.50. I said how much for one, and she said £1. With the foreign stallholders they will half it for you. I am on my own now. I don't want large amounts. I can buy what I want, pick it myself.

Memory Exchanges at the Market
The scope of this project extended beyond East Street to explore threats to street markets due to regeneration and gentrification across a number of sites. Two Sarsaparilla Summits held at the Serpentine Gallery and the InSpire Centre in Walworth, brought together market users, academics, artists, traders and campaigners working on markets to exchange food and drink from London’s street markets, to present projects and enter into dialogue regarding the significance and future of these spaces. The exchange of food and recipes in the summit reflected an understanding of the ways that connections are generated. It is worth noting that the arts are a central to contemporary urban creative strategies that seek to transform spaces such as street markets. Transforming the untidy and sometimes unruly street markets into picturesque ‘feel good’ city spaces such as farmers markets, through streetscaping, public art, façade improvements and heritage developments are part of wider development strategies which seek to make use of art and culture to produce a sense of place which appeals to the more affluent and that are attractive to young urban professionals and the middle classes (sometimes described as the ‘creative class’). In the recognition of this dynamic the Sarsaparilla Summit exchanges were also valuable opportunities to think critically about the role of the arts and the artist in urban change, as Barby Asante discusses here:

There are connections and collaborations to explore here. And to think about the role of the artist in these processes, in facilitating these processes and conversations, dialogues and the potential of creativity which is something I have been looking at with the group.

Barby Asante, Artist

These summits placed the threats to East Street market within a wider context of the privatisation and gentrification of London’s street markets. Conversations focused on the ways in which markets are increasingly governed through a planning paradigm which aims to attract an affluent upwardly-mobile young urban clientele, rather than the local working class populace in search of bargains and everyday necessities. These processes were already evident in East Street Market in plans to change the design of the market stalls (impacting on opening times of the market), the development of an ‘arts and crafts’ market in nearby Burgess Park and plans for a large shopping centre nearby. In the second Sarsaparilla Summit, that campaigners held at InSpire, local traders dropped in to meet campaigners from other markets and shared their sense of the value of local markets, and their difficulties with local authorities and private developers. Here a valuable exchange took place sharing the strategies employed to try to sustain these spaces and fight the threats to local markets and histories, such as the traders union, now defunct, of which contemporary market campaigners knew very little. This inter-generational dialogue went beyond the sharing of histories but towards the sharing of histories to impact upon the future of an area, moving reminiscence into action. The project manifested in a map and manifesto to be given to market traders to sell, the profits of which would be given by traders to their local market campaign.
This project developed out of a desire to engage the Serpentine in the process of planning for new older people’s care homes in the city of Camden. Several artists were brought to Camden by Serpentine staff, out of which Beatrice Gibson’s work was selected. Beatrice had a proposal to meet with care home residents to develop a script and to adopt a process similar to those used in realist TV dramas such as Play for Today and B.S. Johnson’s 1971 experimental novel House Mother Normal to develop conversations with those in the homes about their feelings about life and the future. At the onset, institutional aims and aspirations were different than those of the processual practice suggested by Beatrice. Beatrice Gibson’s work in Camden developed in the context of a period significant reorganisation of older people’s care provision. Here four residential homes (Wellesley, Ingestre Road, St Margaret’s and Branch Hill) run by the London Borough of Camden were to close. Residents were to be rehoused in a new purpose built facility run by a private sector care provider. Camden’s Older People’s Care team certainly recognised the opportunity the Skills Exchange project offered and the potential value of a participative artistic process in bringing older people together. At first the project was commissioned in order to help residents through a time of transition from one home to another. Beatrice’s project, says Sally Mercer, was:

...we wanted to create something with the residents that could then go into the first care home, so to give them a sense of ownership, as well as bringing residents together. Because residents will be coming together from the different homes [] So, I think it began with a specific idea which was, these new care homes were being built, and for the people who were being moved who wanted a piece of artwork that could then go into the new care home and be a testimony of residents working together.

Beatrice’s idea, however, was to create an open platform for conversations about the future in which uncertainties and conflicts could register. How it would manifest was not known entirely at the outset. She was concerned that the older people involved and in particular the language that they used had agency in a reflective process. Beyond helping the participants cope with the transition to a new home — assuaging their criticisms and fears — participants expressed their various relationships to the future, mapping out thematics that are not often associated with older people. The first part of this investigation with participants was organised through fortnightly sessions with residents from a range of Camden Council care homes who will be re-homed together in a newly built care home. A worker from Camden’s Homes for Older People Project also attended these sessions together with several carers from the care homes to be amalgamated in the future.

Here, most of the elderly residents have different degrees of memory loss and often drifted in and out of concentration. This was effectively avoided by avoiding the familiar ‘reminiscing’ format of many art projects involving elderly people. Beatrice and scriptwriter George Clark presented images of the future by screening films to trigger a dialogue about present, past and images of the future by screening films to trigger a dialogue about present, past and future, mapping out thematics that are not often associated with older people. The first part of this investigation with participants was organised through fortnightly sessions with residents from a range of Camden Council care homes who will be re-homed together in a newly built care home. A worker from Camden’s Homes for Older People Project also attended these sessions together with several carers from the care homes to be amalgamated in the future.

Beatrice recognised the importance of changing routines and making something that shared their actual opinions about care and the future were important:

They told me they thought that would be really interesting for lots of reasons. Either because they were involved in films when they were younger, or they were interested in films or actually they were just interested in having their say. I think the idea that they were actually producing something or that is was all going towards something, I think they really liked that idea and it kind of gave a purpose to what they were doing as well as just giving them time to chat. I think sometimes that if just the group is just a general discussion group after a while it can seem a bit aimless to people.

Beatrice Gibson, Artist

The second part of the project centred the making of a film from the verbatim script of the workshops. The words of the script
were played by actors, from the original era of *Play for Today* television. The resulting film, whose title was derived from their conversations, *The Future’s Getting Old Like The Rest Of Us*, is their interpretation of those who were from an earlier generation themselves. Some of those interpreting the script in fact knew those who spoke in the script.

While those in the workshops did not necessarily imagine the film as a common project ‘it must be interesting to work on a film’ says one of the residents in the script, there was an incredible fidelity to the words and language that emerged in the workshops. Reflecting on many issues simultaneously the film brought to light their language, for audiences who very rarely have access to such a space.

It demonstrated the multiple and complex voices amongst older people, and broke the stereotypes of older people that are frequently adopted:

One idea that I don’t really like is that older people are somehow far less tolerant than younger people to a wide variety of things and then... On one hand some people think that they are more tolerant and don’t mind what you do to them ‘cause they are happy and grateful for whatever they get’, then on the other hand people always seem to see older people as always xenophobic...’

Sally Mercer, Homes for Older People Project Worker, London Borough of Camden.

These seemingly disconnected conversations, when attended to on their own terms, point to the active cultural and political pasts and presents of those who participated in the workshops who created other kinds of meaning in the spaces in between language. In the following page of the script, for example, there is a conversation in which language poetically re-constructs political relations:

Tony Blair...He take over from Margaret Thatcher. He was much better and a 100 times too, but what he did when he go and fight that war...it’s that what take out the goodness ... he had no right to go and kill those people ... He make a fool of himself, he spend millions to go and fight that war.

Thomas

It was an education for me, my time in the communist party, I learnt more being there than I would have in any university. We’ve learnt something from it. We’ve learnt ... I used to fight for the Soviet Union because ... I felt that America was far too advanced and was just out for capitalism

Elvira

Do you know the... well the best place, to buy jellied eels, I was out with my wife shopping, which is a very unusual thing, I hated shopping, so err we’re in Selfridges and there was this little girl and her mother was at the counter, so she said mummy, mummy, mummy they got some jellied eels, so ... she gets up, so I said they must be expensive, she said no 99 pence, so I said I’ll have 4 of them,

Joyce

Rather than reading these moments strictly as pathological, or as signs of a disease, the film attempts to make something of the poetic social analysis of a language born in group dialogue. Issued also as a musical score, the script is edited into a vertical structure, featuring eight simultaneous monologues. These scripts and the film were shown to an audience of 16,000 people at Serpentine Gallery in an installation, in addition to a screening attended by 400 people. At this screening, actors and participants met and discussed the film. In a pre-screening at the Serpentine Gallery, some participants responded directly to their conversations in the film, recognising them.

As previously discussed, visits to the Gallery are part of the continuum of Skills Exchange. The experiences of these exchanges for participants were a very positive outcome of the project. Participants took great pleasure in attending a screening of *The Future’s Getting Old Like the Rest Of Us* at the Gallery, and being treated ‘like VIPS’, with due importance, dignity and respect. Many commented on their ‘change of perception’ in relation to people with memory loss. The project worker registered her own change in perceptions as the project unfolded:

Where care workers came to that group, they thanked me at the end saying ‘I really didn’t know that about so and so’ and so actually... I think it must be quite hard for residents some times because they know that people are trying to assess them and looking for certain things so I think that it depends how free people can feel sometimes, to just kind of wonder off and see their own thoughts and to express those to people and whether there is time for that and actually I think the group provided that opportunity’.

Sally Mercer, Homes for Older People Project Worker, London Borough of Camden.

Though remnants of the work will appear in the home as a reminder of this process, understanding how to work with people in their language and on their terms moved the work from the model of a commission of an art piece for a new care home, to a processual piece that broadened the scope of possibilities and ‘difficult knowledge’ in the representation of aging.
Findings: From Service Delivery to Embedded Exchange

Katey: What do you feel that role of art is here, and for the residents?

Phyllis Etukudo: It is something to keep them occupied, a lot of them are interested in art and music, because it has been part of their life. It has always been part of someone’s life somehow.

Interview with Phyllis Etukudo, Activity Co-ordinator, Westmead Care Home

As we have read, in many cases Skills Exchange participants challenged the aims of institutional partners, charting potential uses of art and creativity as a way of broadening out the concept of care by taking into account different elements of older peoples’ well being. Projects challenged many of the original expectations, taking as their canvas the representations that work to secure the perceptions and spatialisations of the elderly as well as the policies and economies that are built around notions of the elderly and their care. Dominant formulations of ‘care’ often place the elderly in the role of the ‘serviced’ or ‘cared for’, as those ‘without’, or ‘after’ the peak moments of their lives. Simultaneously the artists and those working with older people are placed in a role of the ‘creative’ ‘skilled’ or the ‘carer’. Skills Exchange projects pushed at the notion that artists, older people, care-workers and others might exchange their skills, and, in this process, alter reified roles and well-rehearsed relations through processes of creative exchange.

The project made efforts to increase participation in ways that attended to the micro-political dynamics between people participating in projects, the power relationships of group settings, and the performance of static roles. It is important to note that this kind of work repositions older people (and their carers) as participants in a process, as co-producers, rather than recipients of art that is being delivered or provided.

It is our assessment that the moves and demands that artists and their co-researchers have made is a move from a paradigm service to one of embedded exchange.

Their move from service delivery was not a movement away from thinking of the usefulness or social function of art, nor from the importance of issues such as reducing isolation and discrimination against older people, but rather against paradigms in which outcomes were pre-determined by the institutional bodies prior to participation and group involvement.

The Serpentine Gallery and the institutional partners responded to this shift, adapting schedules, expectations and temporalities, and noting outcomes such as better relationships between older people and staff and between spaces of care and the broader community. Care workers — some of whom were sceptical at the onset of projects — expressed moments of surprise at the degree to which the modes of exchange developed could lead into longer term processes at the home and cultural workers also noted their own shift in perceptions about aging.

This chart maps the to/from trajectory of many of the Skills Exchange projects. While in many cases the ‘Exchange Model’ was not fully reached, the aims and ambitions were articulated on a number of occasions by its participants.

**SERVICE MODEL**

Focus on numeric indicators i.e. number of workshops, number of people, amount of time spent and financial spend per person

Creation of a known artistic outcome

Fulfilment of identified needs of participants is determined by an outside source (care or art institution, funders etc)

The idea that the process was exclusively for the improvement of the lives of the elderly people and NOT others involved i.e. the artists, care workers and community members who became active.

**EXCHANGE MODEL**

Focus on quality of encounters and the practice of groups articulating their own understanding and methods for determining success. (including qualitative and quantitative measures)

Emphasis on a phase of listening to all participants in the collaboration, determining useful project outcomes.

Desires of project are developed by artists and participants in collaboration and with disagreements allowed, and are then communicated back to host institutions for response. Monitoring of these were a regular feature of the group

Artists, care workers and older people all had opportunities to communicate social and aesthetic aims of the project. Frictions between the participants were openly discussed and negotiated. Where people could not communicate in this kind of language, groups adapted to this.

The art work(s) were one part of a collaborative project; participants were credited for their contribution and acknowledged by external sources.

Individual interests and group formation were balanced with room for conflict.

**Focus on individual expression of the participants and not on the formation of a group**

The idea that the final work was the creation of the artist for those in care and not a collaboration, that the community ‘services’ or becomes material for an art work

The project made efforts to increase participation in ways that attended to the micro-political dynamics between people participating in projects, the power relationships of group settings, and the performance of static roles. It is important to note that this kind of work repositions older people (and their carers) as participants in a process, as co-producers, rather than recipients of art that is being delivered or provided.
Modalities of Exchange and Participation

The findings in this report are organised through the concept of modality: a concept which is concerned with expressions of how the world might be and should be. The following section of this report presents eight categories of exchange developed across the Skills Exchange Project and possibilities that others could be of use to others undertaking this kind of work.

✔ Exchanges of Power and Agency
✔ Exchanges of Time
✔ Exchanges of Space
✔ Exchanges of Visibility and Invisibility
✔ Exchanges of Trust
✔ Exchanges in Strategy
✔ Exchanges of Past and Future
✔ Exchanges of Empathy

EXCHANGES OF POWER AND AGENCY

We don’t all have to play bingo

Margaret, Participant in the InSpire Group

One of the central concerns of the Skills Exchange project has been the relationship between the ways that older people are represented and the impact of these representations on older people themselves. The project sought to address the ways in which older people are interpolated into a variety of settings. Furthermore, Skills Exchange recognised participants’ active pasts conceived in a conviction that the elderly still have a lot to give and exchange.

It is worth noting here that discrimination against people on the basis of age, and the stereotyping of older people as passive, dependent and intellectually disengaged, is damaging to older people’s sense of themselves. A social process of infantilisation is often the result of the misconception that older people are needy and less intelligent than other adults. At times this attitude is expressed in well-meaning behaviour. (Research amongst older people found that 54% of older people believe people in late old age are treated like children). Negative attitudes to older people are also expressed in a preconception that older people are more conservative about social attitudes than the younger generation. However, it is worth remembering that today’s 55-65 year olds would have been in their 20s in the early 1970s. This cohort includes those who witnessed and took part in tremendous social and cultural change and urban transformations. Today’s 65–75 year olds would have been in their 30s at the end of the 1960s. As young adults they would have been at the forefront of the first post-war consumer boom in the 1950s. Clearly, this is not the older generation whose adult life was dominated by first-hand experiences of World War Two (which is often one of the primary ways in which older people’s memory becomes framed through reminiscence). Research shows that the older people of tomorrow, (the ‘baby boom’ generation of today’s 45-55 year olds) will have cultural values which have been defined by individualism and liberalism, being: less deferential; more anti-establishment; less tolerant of illegal drugs, and sex outside marriage; more gender neutral; more pro-European; and more concerned about the environment. It is argued that,

One of the defining features of the baby boomers is that they are arguably the most diverse and divided generation to have reached this point in life.

Skills Exchange sought to interrogate some of these attitudes to older people and recognise their intelligence, experience and agency. One of the risks of a service delivery model of art as a ‘time filling’ activity is that it risks positioning older people as ‘clients’ or ‘customers’ or ‘service users’ who need to be entertained rather than respected for the way they would like to change the world.

In the recognition that participants are social agents and not merely recipients of ‘art services’ Skills Exchange attempted to make apparent, and at times disrupt, the pre-existing hierarchies of groups, organisations and practices. These aims brought tensions to some of the institutional framings of the research sites. In a session run by Laura Cuch with Woodberry Down Elders, Laura invited people to share their perspectives on Tom Hunter’s film and its potential impact on perceptions of the area. Laura’s questions framed the participants as agents in a way that was problematic for some of the stakeholders, as her research diary makes clear:

The Housing Officer approached me to tell me I should be very careful in saying this film could make any differences to these people’s lives because they would take my word and hold it for ever. I thanked her for her comment and told her I did not want to say that this would make any difference to their lives, but only that I wanted to ask them if they thought a project like this could make any difference at all. I wanted to find out about their expectations…I think some discomfort was felt at this point. I thought a project like this could make any difference to their lives, for example… I wanted to find out about the way they would like to change the area. Laura’s questions framed the participants as agents in a way that was problematic for some of the stakeholders, as her research diary makes clear:

Laura Cuch, Research Assistant, Research Diary notes

The East Street Market research group also found the work with Barby Asante to be the basis for critical perspectives. Moving away from memory as nostalgia the project thought critically about the contemporary present and the future by focusing on the changes to the fabric of East Street market. This project was built up over time with participants shaping the project together, collectively deciding on weekly activities based on their priorities and interests, conducting their own research about the area, and inviting local people who had interesting local knowledge to contribute to the project. In group discussions participants reflected on their experience of past urban development and their awareness of the politics of ‘decanting’ and private housing development.

Rose: Where will all these people go?

I lived in a tiny street of 156 dwellings. We all had to move because they had to knock it down. We didn’t mind because it was falling down. Back then I insisted that we got three options for a new place. Not one, not two, but three. They said ‘no, you can’t have three’. I said ‘Yes we can, cause at the end of the day you are going to profit by us moving away’. That’s what you want, but this is our lives. We have lived here for years. Now you only get one [choice]. This was our lives. We lived there. We needed those options. Now, when you look at the Heygate. When you think of all the lives inside those little boxes, right. They are all people, They’ve all had kids, or they have lived there a long time. And they are just…But who cares about them.

Laura Cuch, Research Assistant, Research Diary notes
**Recommendations:**

- Assumptions regarding the concerns of older people should be challenged through a spirit of openness to the ideas of the participants themselves i.e. privatisation of street markets, the negative stigma attached to social housing residents etc.

- All participants should have the right to intervene directly in methods, re-shaping activities to ensure that all voices are heard.

- Consider involvement in community action on issues that shape everyone’s lives in an area, change perceptions about older people from those who receive care to those who care for their community.

---

Activities which were seen as imposed upon the group were rejected by some of the group. For example, during one research session participants refused to co-operate in a mapping exercise led by research assistant Cristina Garrido Sánchez, which sought to explore the relationships that made the project possible.

Before I finished explaining the project one of the participants said it was horrible, like being back at school and refused to do it. I apologized and I said nobody was obligated to do the exercise. But that lead to a conversation about how, when they went to school, they were never encouraged to be creative, or to express themselves, that is why, when an exercise like the one I was explaining was not nice for them, since they felt like being back at school.

Cristina Garrido Sánchez, Research Assistant, Research Diary Notes

This was a rejection of activities they understood as more traditionally pedagogical (like being back at school) in contrast to the group’s articulation of themselves and their political and social aims. This became the basis for understanding better how and on what the group would like to work. Åbäke’s work with people at Westmead equally aimed to encourage a rethinking of the idea of what constitutes “care” by pushing care beyond a straightforward idea of carers as being low-skilled service workers who take care of older resident’s immediate physical and emotional needs. Åbäke sought to disrupt the conventional arrangements of power in the care home, by intervening in its architectural arrangements and placing residents and carers into a different relationship.
EXCHANGES OF TIME

One of the central difficulties across all Skills Exchange projects was in the prediction of the timing they required. Given the nature of the projects and the movement from relations between institutions such as the Serpentine and its funders, the Serpentine and its collaborating institutions, and then to the working groups who developed the project, timing was in all cases underestimated. In addition to this, attempts to be responsive to those involved required additional time.

One of the challenges that arose for the Gallery team and artists working in care homes was the necessity of understanding, responding to and fitting in with the temporality and practicalities of care homes.

[This is a bit of a tension sometimes between how arts organisations or arts projects can function and how care homes function. It’s very well to send an email the night before. But actually that email may not be seen until the afternoon because the person that you are emailing may be out, or because there could have been an emergency. You have to have a longer term, so two or three days in advance you need to send an email, then you can ring, there’s just a process.]

Sally Mercer, Homes for Older People Project Worker, London Borough of Camden.

Care homes are not static, slow places with fixed routines but are rather very active places scheduled with many activities. The Gallery team and Skills Exchange artists had to adapt to these conditions. This included learning that care homes have complex staff schedules. Care workers are sometimes temporary, working irregular shifts and unable to sustain engagement in a project. This impacted on the full participation of some of care workers. Furthermore, the temporality of a project in this context has to take account of frequent health incidents. These daily emergencies would understandably be prioritised by care workers over a long-term engagement such as an artist’s sessions. Some of the most difficult and pedagogical aspects of the project for the care homes teams have been the intersectoral exchanges between the Gallery team’s more flexible ways of working and the Care home’s tight schedules and need for structure. This was a factor at the start of the project at the Westmead home.

**Katey:** What were some of the more difficult things about the project for you?

**Phyllis Etukudo:** Once we got going and I had the timetable, I didn’t have any problems. …I like structure as with older people you have got to be able to plan, as from day-to-day you never know how they are going to be, whether they will be ill, their moods change.

This also impacts on the ability to engage in group work that involves the carers as important participants in processes of changing the perceptions of older people. As Mara Ferreri’s research notes illustrate:

*In practice, the highly complex rotating pattern of the staff and the frequent health incidents with the residents resulted in a high variation of interlocutors and participants.*

Mara Ferreri, Research Assistant, Research Diary Notes

Equally, while cultural workers were interested in responding and engaging ethically, cultural labour is equally fragmented, with many required to work on multiple projects simultaneously (and often in different countries) in order to make ends meet. Artists on the project were paid a flat fee of £4000 for their work and, in responding ethically or in building relationships over time, often did extensive work at their own cost, in many cases putting what they were paid back into the project’s production. Where additional funding was required it took many months to secure, making projects delayed. Gallery staff and research teams equally worked on multiple projects. In addition to the five projects of Skills Exchange the Serpentine Curator assigned to the task was working on another ten projects simultaneously. In the cases in which participants played less of an active role in setting the terms and outcomes for the project, or in which group reflection did or could not take place, this was almost always attributed to time: to the time of access with groups, the timing of the exhibition that was to come, and the costs related to peoples’ time.

While time and the resources that secure it cannot expand infinitely, our findings indicate that the highest benefit can only be met through the durations required to develop ethical relationships truly interrogative of power, isolation and discrimination. Key to the future of an ethical relation between art and care is the adequate resourcing of time for all those involved. There must therefore be adequate time for groups to decide upon the frameworks, their processes collectively. There must be time for conflict and for co-learning to occur within these activities.

Time was also an important factor in terms of how projects proceeded, in almost all cases enabling participants to move between the past, present and the future and not being locked into a frame of memory, or their thoughts on the future. What Skills Exchange participants spoke in volumes was the degree to which issues of the past can make an impact on the present and future of their communities. This movement between registers of time also removes some of the barriers of social segmentation. That is that old people are ‘of’ the past and young people are ‘of’ the future.

**Recommendations**

- Art and Care Projects must be thought of as consistent and long-term processes with aims at the outset but with outcomes decided by participants.
- Projects should be planned on a one – two year trajectory to enable them to move from participant desires to possible actions.
- During this time, weekly or bi-monthly visits should be assumed with a regular hourly rate factored in for the staffing of artists and cultural workers to ensure that they are compensated fairly.
- Taking on board the words of care staff, it is important that schedules are agreed upon and that projects begin with initial phases of development.
- Participants, in addition to their institutional hosts, must agree to time frames.
- Participants should also determine the movement between time periods that they hope to enact in relation to the themes and issues in which they have decided to intervene.
- Time should be scheduled for analysis and reflection on processes in the group to manifest in specific actions. Projects should not end with exhibitions but with reflections of all those involved.
EXCHANGES OF SPACE

In many cases, Skills Exchange projects provocatively interrupted the stability of the various settings to which older people and other social segments were assigned. This occurred in the very smallest scale changes such as changing the spatial layout of a room. As one researcher noted:

_The spatial arrangement of the tables was a little bit like a barrier to communication. I could not follow what the people were saying. The fact that the group were sitting in a semicircle and the artist was standing in front of them perpetuates the idea of the artist leader. The rest of us were sitting outside the semicircle. This implied we were not supposed to be active in the conversation._

Laura Cuch, Research Assistant
Research Diary Notes

After reflection on this, the tables were arranged in a U shape by the group, to attempt to overcome these assumptions. Although these may seem like small mundane matters, they give shape to social spaces and the encounters which take place in them.

Other spatial alterations were seen in the movement of things from one site to another, as was the case between Westmead Care Home and the Serpentine Gallery, instigated by design collective Åbäke. Where it was originally thought that this movement would be disorienting, it in fact provoked a change in the relationships between the staff and residents of the two spaces, but also had implications on issues such as language patterns and memory triggers. It was important, however, that all were supported during these shifts as they were at times difficult for all involved.

Equally, the use of walking and touring were themes that ran across the projects. The East Street Market group recorded walks through the area as a way of collecting the histories that they could use to draw attention to the importance of preserving East Street as a working class market. In the case of the Westmead project, a bus trip resulted in altered language patterns and increased memory capacity for the group. In the case of the exchange between Marcus and Alex H, the movement between places, because they were inaccessible to Alex, were grounds for a close and nonetheless experiential relationship to occur.

Equally, the re-location of the research of the East Street Market Group to a market stall was a significant gesture, which brought visibility to the work of a group that usually met behind closed doors at a nearby community space and brought the group into public dialogue. Conversations at the market stall happened less formally and involved an incredible cross section of people. This kind of exchange—convivial, informal and diverse—was also applied to the subsequent meetings of traders and market campaign associations.

Recommendations

- Attend to the power relationships as they are created in space i.e. changing the arrangement of chairs to change repeated patterns of authority.
- Change aspects of spaces, go on trips, exchange objects and use this as the basis for discussions. Care workers suggested that changes to the environment and spatial routines, had a positive impact on health, such as residents' capacity or those with dementia to increase memory and patterns of speech, when followed by facilitated discussions;
- Walk and tour spaces together to generate common knowledge on a topic (this touring can also be in the imaginary) as people with different kinds of memory and speech can respond;
- Put research and artistic outcomes into informal 'public' spaces instead of journals so that people get used to seeing older people as active agents.
Woodberry Down Project, visiting the Gallery secured an image of what could be possible in their own project:

It must be noted that this feeling of exchange and dignity resulted from months of work between carers and the staff at Serpentine, and a general familiarity with one another would not be an automatic occurrence.

At times there have been instances when participants have engaged with the Skills Exchange project with considerable confidence and savvy, displaying knowledge regarding the cultural significance of the Gallery. At St John’s Hospice, for example, a participant who was approached to take part was very keen to use the project as a platform for exhibiting her own work. This involved her asking whether her paintings could be exhibited in the Gallery, displaying considerable knowledge of the art world, her position within it and the ways in which she might possibly capitalise on this opportunity, but it is clear that some people have a sense of purchase and use of galleries and some do not. In many cases, however, once they had been to the space, participants had a much broader scope in terms of their own imagined impact. The question of visibility was central to the issues of changing public perceptions across all projects, whether these perceptions were related to the capacities of older people, social housing estates, working class markets or dying. While in most cases the project favoured quality over quantity of participation, the large attendance figures and press profile provided by their presence in the Gallery guaranteed a significant viewership. However, discussions around strategies for making the projects visible, for how and when the work would be presented, and its interpretation as solely the work of the artist, were under-addressed issues in the projects overall. Once projects entered the frame of art, or the art institution, it was often the case that their collaborators in care were not as recognised, interviewed or referred to by those who came to see or review the shows. While this was not the intention of anyone involved, careful attention must be paid to these issues so that the elitism of the arts institution is not just borrowed but altered by such projects. Many people discussed the significance of seeing their experiences represented on screen, and how important they felt when seeing their work at the Gallery. Here Erica Dobbs discusses her impressions of Tom Hunter’s film A Palace for Us, which features her family history and personal memories:

The film gives a good view of people on the estate, what they are about. I hope people can see that it was a big estate and there have been a lot of problems, with violence and crime. But there are decent people living on the estate. I think it reflects us quite well. I hope people enjoy watching it as much as we enjoyed doing it.

Post screening interview with Erica Dobbs, Participant

However, this did not always instigate moments of reflection on feelings of marginalisation within them. The question of how galleries might become more porous in relation to communities was posed by Åbäke’s subtle institutional ‘acupuncture’, but further developments of the question of who has the right to be involved in the running and programming of perceived cultural institutions would be a clear next step in the discussion, particularly within the current trend towards increasing private interests.

It is also interesting to note that ‘making visible’ art interventions in the Gallery did not take place at the end of all projects. In two out of five Skills Exchange Projects, the moments of gallery visibility took place in the process of the project’s development. At Westmead, this was the basis for exchanges between institutions rather than its result, which was a series of propositions for future collaboration. For the East Street Market Project, the Gallery was an important stop in think-
EXCHANGES OF TRUST

Whatever the journey is, just be open to it. Because that is the nature of what happens here. That’s the only advice I gave [Marcus].

Sheena Boyd, Manager of Day Services, St John’s Hospice

One of the necessary conditions for the Skills Exchange project has been relationships of trust which developed over the lifetime of the projects’ long-term artist residencies. This has been important on both an interpersonal and inter-institutional level. Without these affective relations, these exchanges could have been at best superficial or at their worst detrimental to the individuals and institutions involved. The modalities of exchange discussed are dependent on this development of trust. In turn it is one of the most difficult aspects of the project to describe.

In the Woodberry Down Project the centrality of trust in the creative process was clear. The exchange of trust in this project had two elements. The first was the importance related to collaboration. The second element was derived from the success of something compelling and communicative. In an interview, Tom discussed the practical aspects of creating this respectful aesthetic and gaining trust — for example using a large format camera, which carries a certain gravitas, or showing the residents Polaroids before capturing the final image, so that they could have some say over how they were represented.

Central to this process was negotiation and consent, for example sometimes Tom Hunter might have thought a participant’s story was powerful but he would not use it if the person telling it did not feel comfortable with that.

These pictures are pretty much a collaboration … the stories have become more and more important for me … That is why I didn’t want to do this as ‘I am the great artist, I know what I am doing’; I’d love to create what they see, not what I see. That is the exchange for me … I am not going to let them be embarrassed or look stupid. Sometimes they don’t know when they look silly and sometimes I don’t know when they feel silly’.

Tom Hunter, Artist

Building relations of trust was central to Marcus Coates’ work with a hospice team caring for the terminally ill. This project required that Marcus, together with the Serpentine staff, conducted careful negotiations with hospice staff. After much consideration Marcus decided to work with Alex H (as he asked to be referred to), a resident close to the end of his life. As these research dairy notes demonstrate:

Marcus had been to the Day Centre four times before he could start recording the residents’ or potential collaborators’ ideas. The reason for it, he considered, was that he had to take his time listening to the residents’ stories in order to establish relationships of trust… …The conversation [with Alex] moved on to the first few encounters he had with Marcus. Alex was very complimentary about Marcus. Every time he mentioned Marcus’ methods and attitudes he used words like easy, diverse and pleasant.

When asked about the final work, Alex said:

“There is an unpredictability of the final work’s character. I trust Marcus — to make something interesting and sensible.’

Ananda Ferlauto, Research Assistant, Research Diary Notes

Throughout this process Marcus and Alex engaged in ongoing conversations

Recommendations

Visibility in the Gallery changes perceptions about issues such as social housing, aging and death amongst the press and visitors;

Discussions with those at cultural institutions about the mechanisms of making projects visible and how to ensure collaborators are also represented and credited when projects enter the art context are important.

It is important to decide in the group when visibility should occur and when it is or is not important to do so at a gallery or in a local context.

Groups should be able to communicate the ways in which the space of the gallery is ‘elite’ and engaged in true dialogue about the purchase marginalised communities have on galleries.

It is important that when groups come to galleries they meet many of the staff and that there is a more continuous and direct relationship between the gallery and the social institutions with whom it partners rather than outsourcing.

Recommendations

Visibility in the Gallery changes perceptions about issues such as social housing, aging and death amongst the press and visitors;

Discussions with those at cultural institutions about the mechanisms of making projects visible and how to ensure collaborators are also represented and credited when projects enter the art context are important.

It is important to decide in the group when visibility should occur and when it is or is not important to do so at a gallery or in a local context.

Groups should be able to communicate the ways in which the space of the gallery is ‘elite’ and engaged in true dialogue about the purchase marginalised communities have on galleries.

It is important that when groups come to galleries they meet many of the staff and that there is a more continuous and direct relationship between the gallery and the social institutions with whom it partners rather than outsourcing.

Recommendations

Visibility in the Gallery changes perceptions about issues such as social housing, aging and death amongst the press and visitors;

Discussions with those at cultural institutions about the mechanisms of making projects visible and how to ensure collaborators are also represented and credited when projects enter the art context are important.

It is important to decide in the group when visibility should occur and when it is or is not important to do so at a gallery or in a local context.

Groups should be able to communicate the ways in which the space of the gallery is ‘elite’ and engaged in true dialogue about the purchase marginalised communities have on galleries.

It is important that when groups come to galleries they meet many of the staff and that there is a more continuous and direct relationship between the gallery and the social institutions with whom it partners rather than outsourcing.
regarding the nature of the exchange. It became apparent that Alex was very clear about his ideas, about the focus of the trip Marcus was to embark on.

Visual ethics were also paramount here. Marcus realised early on that Alex might not want to be filmed. Furthermore, it gradually became apparent that it would not be appropriate for Marcus to be seen in the film either. Nor did Alex, Marcus or the curators want the final work to seem sensational, like a ‘final wish’ television programme. Significantly, aesthetic decisions were based on what was important to Marcus and Alex’s relationship and the bonds of trust that it was built on, rather than more abstract artistic considerations. The final film, The Trip, is a reflection of and a realisation of this exchange.

Central to the relationship of trust was the ability of each party to alter their own ideas and initiatives. Åbäke’s work at Westmead both challenged and conformed to the ideas and demands of the space, moving from the idea of a ‘Skills Bank’ to a much more disparate set of responses based on what they heard. Their ultimate propositions, that included elements of both change and consistency, reflected the responses of the participants in the Hackney group: of the care workers and residents of the home.

**Recommendations**

- Take time to listen to each other’s desires before imagining the work.
- Trust comes from consistency and an embedded relationship between artists, carers and older people.
- Stick to a schedule but also be able to respond to local and political issues as they emerge.
- Push for what is important and let conflicts emerge and be addressed.
- Allow for a place for discussions of ethics in the work.

**EXCHANGES IN STRATEGY**

One of the themes central to the work with older people has been their exchange of strategies concerning urban change. During the project on Woodberry Down Estate, Hackney, it became apparent during sessions that the older people who had been living on the estate had a long history of activism. They are part of the history of the urban, as Tom put it. However, in earlier stages of the regeneration project, the regeneration partners had not taken into account the impact of the demolition and construction on older people. Furthermore older residents of the estate did not feel that they had been consulted regarding the estate’s future. Many, for example, were not computer users and many aspects of the consultation process had been facilitated through computer technologies that were not generally accessed by older people. This ‘digital divide’ amongst older people impacted negatively on their participation in the process.

The meetings with Tom catalysed the development of a strategy for how to engage with the issues and to continue the struggle in relation to the regeneration. As Janice Wynter, Age UK worker for the estate, describes here:

*Being involved in art has really gelled the group together, given them a sense of purpose, and they have been consulted at every stage in the art project, so it has really gelled the group together. [1] Now the elders have got things in place, they have been very active. [1] They are now peer mentors on the estate, going out to bring other older people in. And being involved in this project has really gelled the group together, given them a sense of purpose.*

Janice Wynter, Age UK Hackney

This sense of social connectedness and friendship was also discussed by Kit, one of the participants in the Hackney group:

*When you are young, and you have got children, you get to know the people around you. There’s not that when you are older. My son doesn’t want me to stay here anymore. My son wants me to move, he has built an extension on to his house for me. But I said to him ‘As long as I can walk about, and have friends here that I can see. I don’t want to go yet’. I am happy here with what I have got. I’ve got friends, lots of friends because of the meetings we have here every week. I go and stay overnight, but I want my independence.*

Kit Heathley, Post screening interview

As in the Southwark and the Camden projects, an important aspect of the group’s work has been actively listening to the residents; this practice took on a greater prominence in the Skills Exchange piece than it had in Tom’s previous work. As Tom describes here,

*I realized people loved telling stories and they couldn’t believe that they had a chance that someone would listen to their story and would be happy to hear it and that someone thought that their life was that important… ordinary lives of ordinary people are incredibly important, incredibly interesting and worthy of being recorded… In each meeting I learn to see things in a different way. That’s why the research has been so important and then I didn’t know what I was doing until I heard the stories and that shows me the next step, and then the next step, so they are pointing me all the way through.*

Tom Hunter, Artist

*A Palace for Us is strategic in re-narrating the meaning of the Woodberry Down estate:*
is a good thing as it will be impossible to recreate that when it is lost. It says more about the history than the future.

The future is unknown. Things are going to change quite rapidly and the changes are going to be brutal and unknown. It will be a brutal upheaval in many ways and I think it is important to recognise that people have not just years behind them but a history. In changing that, it is important to do that in the right way.

Sadia Hussein, Age Concern Hackney

Strategy was also at play in widening out projects beyond their constituencies. The Woodberry Down Project, for example, strategically involved younger people on the estate to ensure that they knew its history and about a time when social housing was not vilified. Equally, the East Street Market Group engaged a wider community in the issues surrounding the market and, most poignantly, engaged market traders whose knowledge of the history of market activism had not been transferred.

This sense of strategy is often not attributed to older people and is important in understanding that participation should move beyond entertainment or ‘fixing’ the older people’s problems.

**Recommendations:**

- As opposed to ‘fixing’ older people’s problems, develop an open conversation about strategy to achieve the group’s desires in relation their environment as a way to get out of the stigmas of helplessness;
- Engage in conversations about the strategies used to work on this issue historically in the area;
- Let the strategy for making social change be the basis for engagement with other groups and generations, rather than simply older people meeting younger ones. A common purpose also changes pre-conceptions;
- The group should develop tools for understanding if the strategy has worked rather than these being imposed on them by external agents.

**EXCHANGES OF THE PAST AND THE FUTURE**

As discussed, much of the creative work that older people are invited to participate in is structured around ideas of memory and reminiscence and situate older people in the social and historical context of the past. While this oral history approach is important, creating a social history with everyday accounts of the past and historically significant moments, it arguably orients older people to the past, and away from the present or the future.

By using a market stall and the exchanges that surround it, the work of the East Street Market group moved out of the familiar reminiscence scripts and allowed the participants to enact their memories of the past — through sharing food and drink and making their presence felt in the present and possible futures of the market. The group avoided some of the pitfalls of framing activities for older people around reminiscence whereby working with memory interpellates older people as located in the past, saturated in nostalgia for a time which has gone, and, crucially, resistant to or unable to adjust to the global multicultural postmodern city.

In reminiscence work older people can quickly be framed as subjects who are ‘living history’ rather than people living in the present who have lived through history and have a stake in the future. Although the framing of older people through reminiscence can offer some older people a comfortable position from which they can narrate their pasts, this can quickly become formulaic as national history merges with personal narrative. One of the participants in Barby Asante’s workshops expressed her resistance to familiar nostalgic versions of the Second World War. When other members of the group began to become nostalgic she stated, I don’t want to talk about the war years. It was really depressing and hard. Things are so much better now.

Memory and memory loss was central to the two projects that worked with older people in care homes: Westmead in Westminster and Wellesley Road, Camden. Here, the effects of memory loss and dementia presented a challenging, and generative, situation with regard to purpose.

Beatrice Gibson’s work in Camden responded and sensitively communicated to this experience of memory loss and time. Rather than see memory loss and confusion as an obstacle to active participation, at group sessions discussions revolved around short films and clips that were shown by Beatrice and George and discussed by the group. These sessions prompted a consideration of ideas of possible futures that were held by older people in the past, seen from the vantage point of the present. The choice of screenings—such as the moon landing and an episode of the Twilight Zone—were themselves future orientated. At the time when they were produced they asked questions of what the future might look like.

It takes … courage. The man who was walking on the moon. 1969. The best thing to come out of that was the frying pan. The non-sticky frying pan. You put your eggs in. You put your, your, er lard whatever it may be and it never stuck to the pan. It never stuck to the pan. They invented that from the moon. They, got it from the stones of the moon’.

James

Unrealistic it seemed. It was almost like a vision in a dream, I felt, that I couldn’t quite make it reality, it took me some time to grasp, when it was talked on the radio and on television, when they enlarged on it, then I was able to grasp, step by step what went on because the landing itself and … people like myself didn’t know what to make of it and how they got there’.

Anne
The script, made up of nine simultaneous and sometimes overlapping monologues. Between long pauses and brief lucid moments which fade away, memories of trips to the cinema, family arguments and political activism are recalled. Significantly this emphasis on the future created spaces where connections developed between the participants and the terms that were discussed. This was particularly significant when, in care home settings, where many older people are suffering memory loss, older people can become isolated in the past (in spite of the ostensibly social situations they find themselves in). In the process of taking part in Beatrice Gibson’s project connections developed between residents who would be re-housed together in a purpose built estate. As discussed by Sally Mercer, the Homes for Older People Project Worker, Camden Council:

…by the end people were talking to each other and making connections with each other and I think that that was a really fundamental part of the project that I had always thought and hoped would happen. But I was very pleased it happened, and people remembered each other’s names, they greeted each other and although the move is still a long way off, I mean I guess it’s related to other questions as well, while the move had been directly mentioned and I think the themes of the group indirectly were talking about the future and change, I hope that we can continue to do work across the care homes so that people can continue with the links they have made through the project because I think they are really important.

Sally Mercer,
Homes for Older People Project Worker,
London Borough of Camden.

Recommendations

❑ The orientation of the past towards the future is the basis for strong-intergenerational connections.
❑ Don’t work on memory for the sake of it or to render ‘in the past’ issues — like gentrification — that are still very much alive in the present. Rather, put them to work to discuss possible forms of intervention for the future.
❑ The orientation of the past to learn lessons about how we’d like to live now and in the future is a good meeting point for different generations.
❑ Allow for the movement between the future and the past to take the form that is comfortable for all involved in a conversation, even if this is harder to understand for more linear thinkers.

EXCHANGES OF EMPATHY

All of the Skills Exchange projects relied on the capacity for empathy and imagination and the ability for participants to narrate and account for their experiences. Empathy also meant being challenged, as in this case, in which the assumptions of Marcus Coates, in regard to the souvenirs he might bring back from his trip, were countered by the practical considerations of Alex as he prepared to die:

Marcus: Is there anything that you’d want me to bring back, apart from my experiences? Do you collect anything?

Alex: If you’re talking to people with a terminal illness, why say ‘collect’? What do material things do for you? What’s the point of it? Are you going to look down or upon it later on?

Marcus: The idea of a souvenir is totally redundant?

Alex: In my opinion. My policy now is to get rid of clutter!

Conversation between Marcus and Alex prior to the trip

In the case of the collaboration between Marcus and Alex, empathy was developed by a willingness to put oneself in the shoes of the other:

Alex: Sometimes in that type of environment, did you ever feel totally insignificant?

Marcus: Yes, I felt totally insignificant!

Alex: Well that’s good, because I definitely would have.

Conversation between Marcus and Alex after to the trip

In conversation Alex told Marcus that he felt that he had a new memory, a new place in his mind where he can go. Rather than draw on older people’s memories, this work created empathetic memories. This empathy was the basis for collaboration. Alex asked How was your trip? Or should I say our trip? and Marcus immediately met with Alex to describe his experience in detail. It was important that this empathy not be confused with sympathy or a tendency to help.

Empathy was also seen as the basis for new learning for practitioners at the Hospice:

Alison: Have you learnt anything in this process, has it led you to reflect on what you do?

Andrew: I am interested in the ‘relational’ in terms of national dignity in the care campaign, people get really disassociated from what the experience of dignity is for the patient, and one of the main ways of reconnecting is the relational: of actually spending time with people, understanding, getting a grasp of what their real situation is, what it means for them individually. So what has been interesting has been the relationship that developed in the creative process. Marcus’s distinct identity, developing the relationship, with an idea and a creative process and coming out of that with something quite unique. And his skilfulness in negotiation and being able to make work that is really creative but beneficial and nourishing, nurturing.

Andrew Gallini,
Director of Clinical Services,
St John’s Hospice

The ability for gallery workers to empathise, through an experience beyond watching, or tending to the care home residents was addressed through coming to terms with their own fears about aging in the project at Westmead. This
was a means to alter patronising or utilitarian attitudes towards residents that often occur when schedules are busy. Creative workers — often considered to be on the side of the young — were able to empathise with their older collaborators through processes of imagining the aging process. Equally, the script developed in Camden was a true reflection of this empathetic gesture, in which the acceptance of the language of participants on its own terms was valorised and presented rather than scripted or narrated over, as is often the case with older people’s words. It was important for many of the projects that this empathy be extended to the presentations of work. The film The Trip attempted to give the viewer the same visual experience as that experienced by Marcus and Alex, and to give them the same opportunity to imagine the encounter in the Amazon based on their conversation. This was also the case in the enactment of the script by actors in Gibson’s The Future’s Getting Old Like the Rest of Us in which the actors that spoke the words of older people also considered their own relationship to the time to come. This was extended into the experience of viewing the film.

**Recommendations**

- Where many of those working in care suggested that in their training they had been told ‘not to get attached’, there is an incredible importance of empathy on both sides of relationships of care. Empathy should be a priority;

- Devise modes of exchange that allow for identities to shift and people to imagine their place in society otherwise. This can help younger people to deal with the fears of aging that often keep them away from older people;

- Move away from a sympathy or ‘helping’ mindset to an empathetic one in which exchange on both sides are taken seriously makes a move from a symbolic approach to combating discrimination to one that concretely changes the people and spaces involved.

**In Summary**

Skills Exchange has brought together highly relevant and aesthetically sophisticated projects, in which artists and participating organisations have explored the themes of collaboration, social action, care and aging through participative and socially engaged practice. As discussed throughout this report, there is a significant emerging body of research which systematically captures the impact of participatory art on older people. The impacts that are discussed and identified in this body of evaluative research are clearly in evidence in the Skills Exchange project. Through an embedded approach to research, which had synergy with the ethos of the project itself, this report demonstrates an approach to research and evaluation which is generative and integral to the creative process itself.

This report has set out the significance and value of the project and the complex series of exchanges and encounters that have taken place. These have been simultaneously inter-sectoral, interdisciplinary and inter-generational. People from different backgrounds, specialisations and generations have worked together, taking risks, building trust and generating stimulating exchanges that have intervened in unique ways into dominant definitions of people, services and the nature of social inter-connection itself.

Artists have worked in participation and collaboration with older people from a wide variety of ethnic and class backgrounds and who are at different stages in the aging process. Participants have brought their skills and expertise, their opinions, experiences and critical perspectives, memories and hopes. Some of the older participants have been very active and mobile, while others have been struggling with physical and mental capabilities. In each of the five Skills Exchange projects the artists have worked with dedication and humility to create a space which responds to the situations older people have found themselves in.

The findings in this report are organised through the concept of modality: a concept which is concerned with expressions of how the world might be and should be. This includes expressions of necessity, permissibility and probability, and negations of these. The modalities of exchange set out in this report have challenged stereotypes of older people, and their capacity for interaction, the kinds of art they like, and the audiences for this kind of work. The resultant powerful evocations and artistic responses often exceeded the expectations of the institutions involved. Moreover, the framing of older people and the reified roles and well-rehearsed relations that get ossified in the service delivery model were challenged. Here, more experimental processes of creative exchange generated a multitude of encounters, debates, discussions, journeys, parties and conversations.

Skills Exchange therefore speaks to a range of issues around the conduct and commissioning of artistic practice. It demonstrates the potential of socially engaged and participatory practice with older people. The project went beyond a service delivery model of providing arts participation for older people to develop a model of embedded exchange. Our findings indicate that the greatest benefit of these exchanges can only be realised through the durations required to develop ethical relationships truly interrogative of power, isolation and discrimination. Key to the future of an ethical relation between art and care is the adequate resourcing of time for all those involved. There must therefore be adequate time for groups to decide upon the frameworks, goals and outcomes, and to reflect upon their processes collectively. There must be time for conflict and for co—learning to occur from within these activities.
35 See the Woodberry Down Memories Group, Woodberry Down Memories: The History of an LCC Housing Estate. ILEA Education Resource Unit for Older People, 1989 – a model of participative local history

36 Interview with Phyllis Etukudo

37 Florida, R. Cities and the Creative Class (2003).

38 For further discussion see Never Too Late for Living. Inquiry into Services for Older People. The All Party Parliamentary Governmental Group (2008) See the discussion in https://member.lgiu.org.uk/whatwedo/Publications/Documents/APPG_Never too Late for Living.pdf

39 Jeunism is the discrimination against older people in favour of younger ones. This includes political candidacies, jobs, and cultural settings where the supposed greater vitality and/or physical beauty of youth is more appreciated than the supposed greater moral and/or intellectual rigor of adulthood. Age UK-funded research shows that people aged over 70 are persistently seen as incapable and pitiable when compared to other groups. The assumption that they do not have the same aspirations as younger people too often translates into the rationing of opportunities to participate in processes of urban change, economic and community life. Age UK’s research found that 34% of people over 65 in the UK believe that age discrimination exists in older people’s everyday lives.

40 Agenda for Later Life, Our five-year ambition for public policy. Age UK 2010.


44 This may be due to the use of online consultation tools in these early stages, technologies which often exclude older people and reproduce the ‘digital divide’ however inadvertently (see Online Participation: The Woodberry Down Experiment by Andy Hudson-Smith et al (2002) Working paper 60. 2002. Centre for Advanced Spatial Analysis, University College London).

45 ONS research shows that older households are significantly less likely to have an Internet connection. In fact they are only half as likely. Among one-person households below the state pension age, 79 per cent have Internet access. Among one-person households above the state pension, only 37 per cent do so. (See Randall, C. (2011) Social Trends 41. Office for National Statistics. See also Berry, R. (2011) Older people and the Internet. Towards a Map of Digital Exclusion. The International Longevity Centre - UK (ILC-UK)
In 2009, Marcus Coates began working with outpatients at St. John’s hospice asking the question, ‘what can an artist do for you?’ Those who responded suggested ways that vicarious action could enrich their experiences. Suggestions ranged from the creation of an exhibition of photography, to a parachute free-fall, to a trip to the Amazon. The last of these requests, made by the late Alex H., was realised by the artist in 2010. Coates was given precise instructions for the trip. He was asked to travel to an isolated village in the Amazon jungle and to people there a set of prearranged questions. A dialogue between the two preceded and followed Coates’ journey detailing the kinds of exchange that are possible at this moment in life. Recordings of these conversations were screened at the Serpentine Gallery in 2010.
The Proposition

m. Have you had any thoughts about that?

A. Quite a few, as most people in my condition would have. And I ended up thinking, first and foremost, that I had no regrets, because I think that if you do, it can be a stumbling block for taking things a stage further. I obviously offended a number of people over time, but I usually did so unintentionally, so I can forgive myself for that. Although, I do perhaps have one regret — that my travelling has been curtailed, because travelling was an essential part of my life. The great thing is, I have had the experience of being to various places, done various things, maybe they were slightly off the beaten track occasionally, but at least, sitting back, I’ve got my memories. What I haven’t got are the

memories of the places that I wanted to go to, but never made it to.

m. So those are unfulfilled memories?

A. Yes.

m. Do you think that you could turn up why travel has been important to you, in your relationship to the world?

A. It has been a bit of a quest for knowledge. I don’t feel that you can judge people or a country to any extent or any degree, unless you have been there. It helps you develop a more sympathetic understanding of other people’s plight.

m. And have you thoughts about a place that you would like to go to on this last journey?

A. Yes, a trip along the Amazon River, which is something that I’ve always wanted to do. When I was younger, I couldn’t afford it and didn’t have the time. Then you get older, and you find the time, but you are restricted, not only by health, but occasionally by age as well. And that is something that, if you like, bugs me: something that I should never be able to do, regardless of any miraculous cure or anything like that.

m. What is it about the Amazon that intrigues you?

A. The unknown.

m. OK, so it would be an experience of travelling by water, upstream, rather than in the air?

A. Yes, and not in a very modern boat.

m. If I were to do this, I need to know what to bring back to you.

A. The challenge. It’s very important.

m. I think this is something very important. Not just the physical trip, but the attempt in bringing that journey back to you — that’s really my challenge.

A. I couldn’t do it now, because of my health.

m. But even if you were healthy, do you think it would have challenged you?
A: Oh yes. It isn’t so much about overcoming fears, it’s trying to prove to yourself whether you could cope or not. It’s about trying to find out something about yourself or your personality; how far you can push yourself. If you did this trip — you would have to overcome some of your own basic fears.

M: I don’t think I have any particular fears. Rather, I have more basic, human fears about getting ill, and the unknown.

A: Don’t we all — where do you think I’m going? I think we all need a bit of a challenge in life, and when you know it’s not going to be that long, maybe even more of a challenge.

M: Yes, I do think I want to be challenged by it. For me, it’s just as much about giving you the opportunity as it is, for me, about having the opportunity to go and do this. That’s quite important: the privilege to be able to explore your imagination, and enrich it.

A: To do it with someone else’s eyes and mind.

M: That’s the slight fear for me: to go and do all this, and see what that tells you might be inadequate for your imagination.

A: I can’t think it will be disappointing, because it’s something that I want to know about.

M: As the moment. It’s planning to walk in the Pluvial atmosphere — are there cultural things that you’d like me to experience?

A: Yes, with the indigenous people you meet, as long as you have a guide who can speak the language. Not to go in hustle-bustle with the municipality, rather to stand at a distance and absorb it, making yourself as inconspicuous as possible. That to me is exactly what I like to do anyway.

M: Is there any form of contact at all that you would like to engage in?

A: Yes, I want to find out what makes certain people tick, and whether they are satisfied or dissatisfied with their lot, or their mental situation. Whether they have a quest to know things or acquire things outside of their immediate area or circle.

M: Are those the questions that you’d ask?

A: Yes. Only if I know the people I was speaking with, to a degree.

M: Is there anything that you’d want me to bring back, apart from my experiences? Do you collect anything?

A: If you’re talking to people with a terminal illness, why say collect? What do material things do for you? What’s the point of it? Are you going to look down on or upon it later on?

M: The idea of a souvenir is totally redundant.

A: In my opinion it is. My policy now is to get rid of clutter.

M: If this journey goes ahead, it will have to be planned relatively soon. I think we need to be honest with each other about the time scale for this.

A: I have no idea of my time span.

M: Hopefully I’ll be able to do the journey and get back to you relatively quickly.

A: I’m not planning anything, but I’m not in complete control.

M: Can you imagine that this journey, if I did this for you, would be helpful or beneficial or somehow worthwhile for you?

A: That’s a hard question. I think it would, but in a selfish way, it would be important that someone had put themselves out to do it on my behalf. That I could re-live for a few seconds or half an hour, whatever it is, something I’ve wanted to do. But then I don’t know if it matters one iota if I’m going anyway, to have that extra experience or a second-hand experience. It’s not going to alter the whole finitude of my life.

M: It’s just another experience?

A: I don’t know, and I don’t think anyone can tell you what experience you carry on with you, providing you carry on in some aspect or another.

M: Thank you, that was very interesting.

A: I bet you will edit this conversation down and think “What a load of crap!” [Laughter]. Anyway, one can only try to be as honest as possible, it’ll be a challenge to you as well, which I quite like the idea of!” [Laughter].
The Trip

February 2016

A How was your trip, or should I say, our trip?
M I don’t really know how to start explaining, it was –
A Different?
M Well, it was wonderful.
A I can believe it!
M I think that we should probably start with the trip itself. Our conversations were all about traveling into the Amazon rainforest, and meeting the indigenous people.
A Yes, exactly. But what was the bi-plane that you took like? I have never been on anything so small!
M Yes, it was like a top! Maybe I should start from Quito, in Ecuador. I had a seven-hour bus ‘ride through the jungle of the Volcanoes, and then arrived at a village called Shell, which was obviously founded by the oil company, Shell. There is lots of oil exploitation there.
A Still?
M Still, yes, it is a big issue, which I’ll talk to you about later. When I first sat in the plane, with the luggage, it felt like being inside a Morris Minor convertible! The windows were flapping open!
A What about your close proximity to land or water? They fly quite low. What must have felt very trippy?
M Yes, everything was shaking.
A Except you of course!
M Yes, and it felt very funny. It was very exciting. When we went up in the cloud, all the moisture penetrated the plane, so we got quite wet.
A Yes, I’ve heard that. They’re not terribly robust planes.
M But it was incredible, seeing all that green, seeing that canopy reach up as far as you could see. The rainforest is so immense.
A I should think that it’s quite awe-inspiring.

A Just makes you feel very, very small. Then you start picking up points when you look down, you see rivers, small tributaries, and occasionally you see a huge, white tree.

A White?
M Almost like it is decals, huge, white tree. I learned later in the week, was a very, very important tree for the site I was going to see. We landed after about half an hour. We started descending, nearly in the canopy – it felt like we were touching the trees – and then the plane just dropped onto this crazy landing strip, and the wheels were still rolling, and we were going all over the place, until it finally stopped. That was all quite dramatic. When I got out of the plane it was off again immediately. I looked around and could just see green – just green everywhere! Everything around me was snow to me, and so exciting. I thought to myself, I could spend a day talking to Alex just about this. You don’t know where to look, you don’t know what to focus on – it’s just a green mass, and then suddenly a huge dragonfly that’s about ten inches long would fly up and that would take all of your focus, and then you’d move on to another thing. To start with, I couldn’t really see any details because the atmosphere was just so pervasive. What really hit me was this green – the intensity of it, and the sounds – of the insects, even in the middle of the day, and of birds all around us. They were really, really present. The insects were very loud, buzzing and chirping around us. If you imagine the sound of different types of circles all around, but intensified, that’s what it felt like.

A Did they attack you?
M No. I imagined that I’d be bitten as soon as I got off the plane, but as it happens, no. It felt like a friendly place – quite foreign.
A Sometimes in that type of environment, did you ever feel totally insignificant?
M Absolutely. I felt totally insignificant.
A That’s good, because I definitely would have.
M Then the guide turned up, and introduced us formally to a man from the Huaorani tribe called Pehemi – that was his Spanish name, he has a Huaorani name as well. Then we walked about one hundred metres down to the very muddy bank around his canoe. The river was small, really.

A Side of the bank, the trees just stretched up – a mixture of reeds, overarching shrubs. Would get small palms and palms at the bottom, then really tall this palm, palms, and Kapok trees and Balsa trees – all sorts. The guide then started talking about all the different types of wood and the variety was just enormous. There were times hanging down from the tree – thick vines and thin, arms like vines. All the little animals showed around birds flying around. Kingfishers were flying alongside us, and Irealis. All the time you could hear birds singing on both sides.
A And in the meantime you’ve got the movement of the canoe of course?
M Well, the canoe was quite stable, but you do have its constant movement from one side of the bank to the other. And the river did really bend around, showing 8-bayways. So much so that quite often they form Osbourne lakes, so you find lagoons on either side of the river. These are often inhabited by small Caiman crocodiles, and amazing peacock-like birds called Huaorani, which are quite deadly! [Laugh] There is a really interesting mixture of habitats, but I think I just really wanted to get across this landscape, and the making of the river which flows back on itself with lentic

A What was the altitude at that point?
M We were only about three hundred metres above sea level, so not very high at all. But the landscape is nonetheless it’s not flat. Then we got into the canoe, which was quite long – maybe about six metres or more, cut out of a single trunk – a beautiful object, with very basic wooden seats cut out for us. Pehemi sat at the back and his son was at the front, they had poles, so they were pushing the canoe. I asked the guide, ‘Why don’t they use paddles?’ and he replied that they don’t use paddles, they’ve never used paddles – they only use poles. So both of them were pushing, pushing all their force onto the poles and just pushing along.
A So the river is not that deep?
M It’s not deep at all. We pushed forward for about an hour along this river, and the river is just strewed with debris of trees and branches. Pehemi and his son navigated all of this so skillfully with this very long canoe; it was quite impressive. I’d imagined that the river would be very wide and open, but it was quite exciting. On either
community in the area. He travels the world— he's got pictures of himself with Bush and Blair. The place I was staying in was basic too, with a mesh side—a wooden platform on stilts, with a palm-leaf pitched roof, and an insect net. I had a bag that I hung up with water for drinking. My hut didn't have electricity, the water pump was down so I just had candles, which I quite liked.

A: Did you feel like an intruder?
M: No, I felt like a very small presence, very small. Quite insignificant, really. I felt like the jungle was just going about its business, and I was just—

A: An observer?
M: Yes, an observer. I talked to some of the Huasorani about how they spend the nights, and they often sleep with a machete next to them, because they are aware of snakes and jaguars. The jaguar is the animal that they're most aware of, as it is the most dangerous. The jaguar is also a very important animal to them; they believe that their ancestors become jaguars after death. It's the only animal that they don't ever hunt.

A: Is that still part of the tradition?
M: Yes, they still firmly believe that. The nights were quite interesting, and the mornings were even more interesting, because you had a dawn chorus of birdsong, which was very intense and other-worldly. Maybe I should describe walking from there, through the jungle to the Huasorani village. Huasorani was constantly pointing out different plants that she uses for medicinal purposes.

A: Did you taste it?
M: Yes, I did have some—it was quite pleasant! Quite pungent, a bit like a neem porridge.

When we arrived at the village we went to see Misi Zunzanga. He was sitting in his hammock, and his wife was laying in her hammock, breast-feeding their little child. We were in a large, dark room—probably ten by ten meters. In the corner they had an area for a fire, which was lit. It's important for the Huasorani to keep the fire going all the time, as it's constantly sunked. I'm not sure why that is, it may be of a spiritual or social significance. Misi and his wife had a fish, smoking on the fire. Above the fire there was a collection of maine-blacken remains from animals: a toucan's beak, some feathers, a large shell, which looked like it might have belonged to a dog perhaps. It had huge canines—maybe a large cat, or a puma. The village had a few pigs. All these things were hanging over the fire, blackening. And their kids were walking around, incredibly friendly. Everyone seemed quite joyful, singing a lot.

A: Were they very outgoing?
M: I think so. I only had four days with them, but my experience was that they like to sit and talk and have a joke. The humour seems quite slapstick, but maybe that was the only level that I could access.

A: Did you feel that they have a daily routine?
M: The guide said they did things when they needed to, and that there was no structured time in the day.

A: It all seems very relaxed.

they use leaves from the palms, rooting and combing them to make a thread that they can use to make baskets, rope and cloths. There are different medicinal plants for fever, for upset stomach: gibly plans for poisoning children with all sorts of plans for different purposes, as well as hallucino- genic— they use this one plant called Ayahuasca to make a liquid-based drug that the shaman uses in their ceremonies.

A: Do they use Ayahuasca for initiation ceremonies as well?
M: It seems that only the shamans really use the Ayahuasca, and at this time, this particular village does not have a shaman. They don't seem too concerned by this, I think their shaman dies, and they can go to another village if they need one. There's no one at present or no children who seem like they're ready to be the next shaman. They said that the shaman really needs to be very old, at some stage in their life, usually as a child, and then cured by their traditions—from that experience they can be trained and become a shaman. They really need to have a near-death experience.

A: So they kind of bring back outside influence with them, something like that!

M: They eat a lot of meat, what they hunt, monkeys, birds—mainly toucans and fish, but also chicken, and lots of rice, which they started importing. And yuca, maize, bananas and sweet potatoes.

A: Were chicken introduced recently into their diet, or is there a local type of chicken?
M: They do raise domestic chickens, the type that are familiar to us; but there is also a specific breed of reinforest chickens, which looks quite odd. The Huasorani also grow a lot of yuca—a plant with a nutritious, starchy root. They do eat this, but they also grow it and grind it into a com- mercial food, shared by a number of people to make a fermented beverage called chicha, which is like a thick white beer.

M: It's incredibly delicious! I think it may have something to do with the abundance of fish. There's fruit everywhere—all sorts of different fruits I've never heard of. The forest is like a con- stant garden.

A: You said earlier that the Huasorani had nematic lifestyles. If there's an abundance of food, what's the reason for moving around?
M: I think it is partly because of social conventions and for the purposes of trade. In recent history warfare has also kept them moving around. Often they travel for days and across large distances to hunt, especially to capture bigger animals like monkeys and porcupines. The hunting techniques used are amazing.

A: What do they use?
M: Mostly blowpipes. In Misi's house, he had a collection of pipes and spears. He picked up one of those pipes to show it to me. It was about 10 feet long, perhaps longer than that. I picked it up, it was really heavy hard wood, and was bound all around with a leaf and vine wrapping. Misi demonstrated its use, by holding it horizontally up to his mouth, and blowing air into one end. When he

128

M: I think it only reacts with you when it's in your bloodstream. If you lick it, it's not harmful, but if it goes into a monkey's bloodstream, it takes only a few seconds to kill it. I read somewhere that one of the most toxic poisons known to man. They carry a stinging jack, with razor-sharp teeth, which they use to wrap a groove around the tip of a dart so that when it goes into the monkey, and the monkey tries to pull it out, the tip wraps off staying inside the monkey, and the poison takes effect. To give the dart a powerful force they roll Kapok fibre around the back of the dart to form an airslight, so that when you blow in the pipe your breath has maximum power. They carry spears as well—a long piece of hard palm wood which they utilize to a point at both ends.

A: At that mainly for fish?
A Well, they’ve developed their sense of what to do, and what to avoid, and how to snack!

M Yes, this play was very functional: the boy was just developing his skills, and copying his elders.

A That must have been fascinating to watch.

M It was amazing. And I realised that all these ambush games, like hide and seek, that we played when we were young, are based on this. One time I was walking along — and it was like the ground was up in front of me. This boy had partially buried himself under mud and leaves and covered himself in real. It was only when I saw his eye coming out of the ground, that I knew it was him. He scared me to death. So this is all part of their education — such an important education, because it’s about their survival. There is a real bondos about the boy was always showing off his skills. Once I was really worried about him because he climbed up a very tall tree, further than his father had climbed up before. He was so high up that I had to strain my neck to see him. Then suddenly, he just dropped out of the tree. And he fell in a cramped heap on the floor by my feet. My heart just sank, you know, I thought the worst had happened. And then he looked up, and started giggling — he was laughing his head off! Then he went to another tree and climbed up that. But he didn’t fall out of that one, he slid down. It gave him hours of fun all day long, but he just pointed at them and laughed. It was just this performance from a six-year-old.

A Well, it must be an instinct.

M Well, I think it’s how any kid shows off. He was just very, very proud of what he could do. Then he was doing cartwheels on the road, which was a high ridge — on either side of this volcanic ridge the ground just dropped down virtually, and he was doing cartwheels along it. While I was very gingerly walking along, trying not to slip.

A Did you get a sense of I can do this, and you can’t?

M Yes.

A So he wasn’t necessarily egging you on to do it, but was saying, ‘I’m superior to you!’

M Yes, he was definitely doing that. At one point, I asked him through the interpreter: Would you take me hunting with you? He answered, ‘No, because you’ll cry.’ The guide told me he had

[...]

M Mostly I felt very safe, in the forest, but occasionally the guide would say: Don’t lean in a tree when you sleep. When we’re walking along, don’t hold a branch in your hand. Because there might be a spider under it, ants or snakes, and lots of plants have serious spines. So you have to be quite quiet and kind when you’re wandering around. Yet I felt really clumsy, and ungainly. I couldn’t really see where I was going, because I was avoiding obstruction like tree roots, climbing over rocks, and avoiding giant armadillo holes that were all over the place. It helped that Herati was constantly pointing these things out, so I never fell. He was also pointing me in the direction of the trail. ‘Oh, this is a bee we see for in so and so...’

A So you were absorbing this information as well?

M I was trying to. I really noticed his familiarity with the jungle. Once, when we were walking along at night, I was walking in front with a torch, and he was behind me and couldn’t really see anything. Suddenly he told me to stop. He grabbed my torch, and we took to the side and we saw this amazing snake. It was probably about ten feet away from the path, in total darkness. He grabbed it, and passed it to me to hold. It was a very thin, string-like snake, about 5-foot long. It wasn’t poisonous, it didn’t make any sound at all, but he had heard just its movement on a leaf. It was that awareness that just amazed me. He would pick up the smallest thing. Suddenly he’d just halt, turn around and listen. He’d make a (whistle), you know, keep very quiet. Herati was instantly doing mutations of birds and other animals, to move them to point, or cell to locate them — especially tinamous. Another time I was walking along with his son, and another child. The child was probably about six years old, and it just struck me that this child was incredibly confident in this environment. He was bouncing, running along — he keeps having to stop and wait for me. I’d follow the path as best I could, worried that he’d left me and then he’d jump out at me in playful ambush.

A So it was hide and seek?

M It was hide and seek, but also an ambush. I realised that, all the time, while the children are playing, they’re practising hunting skills.

A himself asked that question once, and got the same answer. There was always a feeling of nostalgia, because I think you find that with all kids — that coping game. At one point he made a really strange sound — like (makes generous sound), I said: ‘What was that?’ And he said: ‘It’s a frog.’ Everyone makes this sound quite a lot, as well as a bleating sound — like a hair whistle — which is the sound of a tapir. They are an amazing variety and array of variations. It’s like another language. I was fascinated by that.

A Is there any kind of formal education?

M It’s interesting, there are schools. Some of these are run by missionaries. But recently there has been huge pressure from all companies like Texaco to set more up.

A As an incentive to what?

M Well, as an incentive to use their land maybe... But the Huastecos are quite savvy about this now.

A And are they represented by any outside authorities, or do they stand up to these pressures?

M There are NGOs which work in the area, but in some ways, what impressed me about this group

of people is the way in which they very strongly represent themselves, especially through Musi.

A He sounds like a very exceptional person.

M He is an amazing man, deeply embedded in his own culture, and someone who represents the values that culture to the outside world. He realized quite quickly that the preservation of culture is the Huastecos people’s pride, rather than the short-term wealth acquired from selling land to logger, or to oil prospectors. They are very wary, because they have seen the horrendous consequences of the mining. Arriag has seen what’s happened to other people who’ve sold their land in logging. Once the missionsaries come in, that’s a done deal that’s open — logging arrives and says: ‘Can we buy this bit of land, that bit of land,’ and then they strip it back; then oil companies say: ‘Can we prospect here?’ and the govern- ment says, ‘No, you can’t, because it’s pristine forest’ to which they reply: ‘Well, the logger has cut it all down — there’s nothing there any more, so the government doesn’t stop the oil companies, who go in and start drilling, and poisoning the rivers and so on. Once that fire more happens, it’s just an endless stampede of horrible exploitation.
A. Yes, it certainly isn't progress to the local people...

M. No, it's an absolute disaster for them.

A. It would seem such a shame that their way of life, which seems to be absolutely self-sufficient, should be so plateau and wretched.

M. After I met the leader and his family, we went into a communal house which had a ground level, with a mud floor and a roof. The roof went all the way to the floor; it was a bit like a community hall.

A. So that means that they didn't sleep there, if it was ground level?

M. Exactly. Yes. We slept at both sides. There were lots of families there just sitting and chatting, with a fire going in the center. Then I was introduced to Mii's mother, she's in her eighties, and the only person who speaks the Haureani language. So she asked you about your questions. This was translated for me into Spanish by my Ecuadorian guide, who then asked a Haureani man in Spanish, and he translated into Wao for the women. So there were four of us in this chain of questions.

A. I hope it wasn't like that purly game, where one ends up asking the wrong question?

M. That was my worry, really, that my questions would end up as a bit diluted and changed—but I don't think that was the problem. Not that there was a problem—but I think that there was just a different sense of things, so some of the questions were quite difficult to get across. The first question that you had asked me to ask them was about what makes them tick. I really wanted to ask her, and was someone like Mii who had travelled, someone who could remember what it was like in the early-20th century.

A. Yes, quite.

M. I wanted to ask her what made her tick, but though that might be a problem—translating tick? So I asked her what made her happy, and that was translated into Spanish, and then into Wao. And she said—I've written notes here just so I remember—that what makes her happy is when everybody is alive and together, and that when everyone dies, many, many people feel very sad. But when they are alive and in good health, she is happy. And also, when people come and visit her, and visit the Haureani, she makes her happy.

A. Outstanding and a threat, maybe?

M. Yes, because something has happened she associates it with an unpleasant or a cue. She also talked about how she was making a big effort to pass down her knowledge and her experience to the children; her culture. She talked about how she was teaching them the songs, and how to dance, and it was really important to her that the Haureani traditions—the food and the handicrafts—were all kept alive. She would obviously use them disappearing, so this was a really important endeavor for her, to keep all that going. Then she started to sing, a song with a very specific rhythm, of four bars, repeated constantly, with different words and phrases. Almost no melody [sing], like this, over and over again. Apparently this is the same structure for all the Haureani songs—obviously to sing about different things, but this is the only one they say, and the only rhythm. Previously, when we were walking through the village and the forest, the guide had stopped at a Kapok tree, and talked about the Haureani eagle living in that tree, about the story of how life began. All life comes originally from the relationship between the Haureani eagle and the Kapok tree. He told us this very long story about how they stopped and killed the Eagle, and the true fell down and formed other trees, and the branch formed the river...

A. This is the origin of life.

M. Yes, it is a fascinating story. And he said, "When I talk about the Kapok tree, I have to sing the song of the Kapok tree." He sang this beautiful song, in exactly the same rhythm, and the same tune. And it was pretty much about the same length. And at the end of the song, he made a notice that always marks the end of a song, like [sing]. It was really amazing that there is so much music, you know, the music of the insects, the trees likewise, and that the Haureani music was limited to one simple melody that they use for everything.

A. It sounds slightly monotonous.

M. It is very monotonous, but almost like a drumbeat, like a chant, perhaps. She then demonstrated the dance that they do, which is basically a series of steps: forwards and back—a very simple movement. I then asked her the other questions which you gave me: how had she been affected by disease from the outside. She replied that since the fire, with the arrival of the missionaries, she has had her health issues period. The Haureani have had a health issue with their health, and her health, and her health, and her health...

A. Ah, yes, neighbours, as it were.

M. And all her grandchildren. And I said, "No, I mean the outside world." And she started talking about the same thing again. And I said to the guide, "Does she understand what I mean by the "outside," the rest of the world?" The guide explained to me that she had no sense of this.

A. It sounds like life is full enough without being interested in, or needing, the outside world anyway.

M. Well, the guide interpreted her answer and idea of the outside as things like planes or cars.

A. How would she have seen cars?

M. She would have seen them, she would have seen them when she meets the road.

A. So there is a road going there?

M. Yes, there is a road going there. It's about two days coming to get to the road, or two days to return, so it's the nearest town. So that's what represents the "outside" to her. And when she thinks of those things, she has formed an association between two things, and two things.

A. As demanded by necessity?

M. Yes, I think so. So she talked for a while and this was translated to me as her speaking about people from the surrounding villages.

A. Then I asked her how she felt about the rest of the world—he asked for probably about half an hour, without a break.

A. Really?

M. Yes, maybe a story can go on for an hour or so, and the translator will keep saying to me: there's nothing to say yet, nothing's happened yet in the story—and they talk about their lives, sometimes with no obvious point to the story.

A. Presumably this is because they have all their requirements to hand, they can go out to hunt, but don't have problems in that respect, therefore they've got time to string things out, rather than feel that they've got to condense it into thirty seconds?

M. Yes, it's very interesting that you say that, because the Haureani notion of time and punctuality are very different from ours.

A. As demanded by necessity?

M. Yes, I think so. So she talked for a while and this was translated to me as her speaking about people from the surrounding villages.

A. Of distance is measured in time: how far is how many days walk?

M. Or bends in the river.

A. Yes.

M. And what happens at night? Is it suddenly dark without any twilight or warning, rather like the area: we, where darkness falls suddenly like a bluster coming down?

A. I think it is even more so there, because of the canopy of trees. Once it's dark, it's dark. It's but was a quite a long way from the other huge and I had to walk through the forest. I couldn't see your house, but it was a bluster coming down, you could see that there was big flying in front of you—a cool breeze through your hair, you could hear all sorts of things going on. If you were a paranoid person, it would be really frightening, but I kind of enjoyed it.

A. Could you put your head down and sleep?

M. I did have some strange dreams about people from a long time ago. I think that happened because everything was so unfamiliar.
A Isolated as well. I suppose?

M Exactly, as your mind probably gaunts at something that is very familiar to you, or your circumstances.

A Like chewing on a teddy bear?

M Yes, something like this. So, this old lady I met was just amazing, I thought that these were the three main questions I should ask. I did ask other people what made them happy. Most of the sense that I got from people was doing what they traditionally do makes them happy, a lot of the men and boys talked about hunting. For the women, lots of them showed me things that they had made. But maybe the idea of happiness didn't really translate. I couldn't be sure.

A Did you find out at all if they have any written language?

M There are teachers coming in sometimes for the schools, but that’s pretty sporadic.

A So was the Huorni language ever written down?

M No, so they don’t have anything passed on to them in written form. Everything is passed down in terms of stories. However, there are elements of their language being written, but through Spanish. So, the Huorni name, for example, is spelled in different ways because there isn’t an official way of spelling anything. The kids now are being taught Spanish in school. Their main education seems to come through how they lived. The amount of information and knowledge they have about their environment is absolutely enormous. I keep thinking about this, thinking about all the useless things that I know, and all the life-saving, important things that they know.

A Well, because their life depends on it, out of necessity, and from tradition.

M Yes, and from the wonderful stories told by their elders.

A And from the experience of being self-sufficient.

M Although, there is a real sense of the outside world coming in... I talked to the guide a little bit about this, and he said that he has to be really careful about what he introduces in them, and what he says. He brought his laptop computer in from Quito once, and was watching a Disney cartoon, ‘The Little Mermaid’. Some of the

[...]

A Do you think that when they are on their own, they have time to contemplate things?

M It is so hard to know, isn’t it? It’s so hard to ask about these things. I don’t even know how you could translate that. But just spending a little time with them in those non-functional periods, like sitting around after eating, I could tell that storytelling is really important. At the end of a week, or even in the middle of a week, they would just stop and say, ‘Oh this was where...’, and they would start telling a story about someone who had ruled up here in the middle of the night, or how the waves had brought them here, and why the waves brought them here, and then the other came and took them in his house. They have quite fantastical stories about the animals that surround them. They would tell it in history, not as a fictional story, rather as the truth. Rather like the story of the mermaid.

A Yes, I was going to ask how they could absorb the story of the mermaid, and take it as fact.

M Totally at face. That was fascinating.

A It also illustrates how much harm you can easily do without any intention.

M One of the villages that we went to along the river, closer to the road, had a satellite dish. It’s inevitable that they will get the Internet soon.

A And then I presume there’s every possibility that, as it happens everywhere, they will want to move out of their immediate circle, maybe they will lose most of their younger people!

M I think it’s inevitable. I felt a desperate pang to want to protect them, almost in a paternal way. I didn’t want them to see the Internet. I didn’t want them to see porn on the Internet.

A But that feeling for them or for yourself?

M Definitely for me. Somehow I want them to be innocent. I want them to keep this romantic idea that I have of them. But as the guide pointed out, it’s their human right to have access to this information, although, once we talk about an element of environmental protection from influences such as oil companies and loggers, but that, too, is mostly self-driven by the community.

A You’re saying you almost want to see them frozen in time.

M Yes. And I think they are slightly aware that the world wants to see them like that as well. That’s why the tourists come. So that was my worry about my influence on them. Their culture relies lying in its function, and becoming a form of entertainment.

A It loses its identity.

M I think that the song they were singing had a femininity. When my guide talked about that tree he just had to sing that song. The equipment that they make, that’s all for hunting. So it’s all still in the realm of necessity and relevance.

A It must have been fascinating.

M It was just so different from anything that I’ve experienced before.

[...]
just seemed totally impossible. Yet the Huastec people have only recently cut these trails.

A For what reason?
M Well, the only possible thing that the missionaries turned to hate brought with them was the idea that they don’t have to be at war. I was told that before the missionaries, half of all deaths in the Huastec were borne, from warfare and family vendettas, even within the villages.

A Go on.
M It sounded like a very stressful society. So once they stopped resorting to war, they started to lose the thing that was used to turn them into a warrior-like society, which is obviously used in hunting.

A It’s obviously the survival of the fittest.
M In terms of survival, it seems that warfare was a really important part of their culture. There are very few elderly people there now, maybe a couple of men in their eighties. The guide had to know one of them quite well, and he said that he was very romantically about how they used to walk a very long way with six spears each. And this was very exciting for them, to walk beyond the furthest vine, to go and see these other people. And they would kill one person with each spear. So they killed six people each, and then they would come back.

A Good lord.
M Not too long ago, there was a group of Huastec who split off from the main community, and this group was later named the Tagori group, led by the warrior Tagoi. They left the village in 1966, after a series of inter-clan wars. Some of the Huastec heard me the path they took: a whole group of them left and never came back. And we’ve heard news since then. They moved into what is now part of the Valley National Park. There are three groups in that area, and they are called ‘uncontacted tribes.’ They refuse contact. If they meet anyone of a different culture, they kill them.

A So you didn’t go chasing after them?
M Not! (laughing) We did quite some distance to where they had been. Although I don’t think they have been seen – I think there have been bodies left. So I think that’s how they know that they are still living there. One Huastec man told me that they know it’s the Tagori because of how deep the short daggers-like spears were in the bodies of their victims, he demonstrated the counting of matches or hours on the end of his spear to show this.

A Go on.
M So that fits quite well, to know that they were relatively close to where we were.

A Particularly at night time, I would have thought.
M But I thought that as a group that is trying to survive and to keep its own culture intact, and keep away from diseases, the killing of outsiders might be the only possible recourse to having that safety. Apparently on first contact with non-indigenous people, a tribe can suffer fifty-per-cent mortality through disease.

A It wouldn’t be the only part of the world where there has been this kind of self-protection.
M Well, I came away feeling really, truly privileged to have been able to see most of it.

A Exhilarated or not?
M Totally exhilarated. I was sad that I had to leave. Actually, very sad to leave. Even though I had been on the road for some time, I felt like I was being attacked. But I never went back and I don’t think I’ll go back. I knew that I was in a very remote area.

A It does sound absolutely fascinating.
M It was wonderful. I don’t think it’s everyone’s taste. Some people might find it quite difficult. Especially the rains. When they came down, it really did come down, torrential rain, it was amazing. And this wasn’t even the worst. But there’s also the humidity. When I stepped out of the plane, I felt wet. I thought I was sweating, but I wasn’t, it was just this dense moisture in the air. That’s something I had to get used to, so I hadn’t experienced before.

A Did you sleep with coverings at night?
M I just had a thin sheet, it wasn’t cold at night. I had in more to keep creatures off you. I imagine the dampness would get you after a while. My clothes got wet every day and they never dried out. I had to bring them back in the plane, in a big wet bag. The sun came out briefly, on a couple of days, but the sun didn’t come out, nothing dried.

A You didn’t have any problems with illness?
M I was fine. I thought I might struggle with asthma, because of the dampness, but it was fine. Normally I have very dry eczema, but my skin felt great there.

A Was there a tremendous density in the forest?
M I was in what they call ‘tema firma,’ so an area of the forest that never gets flooded – higher up from the river. But yes, it was incredibly dense. The idea of walking through the forest without a trail was just seemed totally impossible. Yet the Huastec people have only recently cut these trails.

A What was it like coming out of there?
M We came down the river for six hours and then we waded the next day we got a motorised canoe beyond their territory. We went down the river for quite a few hours, the equivalent of putting in for a day at least. Then we arrived in a place where the company has established itself, and has built a small hotel with alcohol. There are lots of indigenous people there, buying beer. The village that I was staying in is a self-sufficient dry village, they don’t allow alcohol. It was the missionaries who introduced addictive things that they could use for bargaining and acquiring power over the indigenous people.

A Do they smoke in any form?
M They aren’t smoking. So, I don’t know if they smoke anything. All I know in terms of stimulants was the chocolate, in the village. But once we got to the village of the oil company, everyone was spending their money on beer. From there onwards, the road was a two-hour drive to the main town. The oil company solds and pipes lined the road and you could always see the leakages and pollution. All the tributaries around there are polluted and therefore poisonous. I saw a horrific amount of damage.
A. That will kill a lot of the fish.

M. It's pretty much already killed everything that's around it. It's already contaminated the people—there are high instances of cancer because of these contaminations. The social implications for all the people along this road, working for the oil companies, is that they have very low pay, and the oil companies just set things up for them so long as they are needed to work, and when they move on to drill somewhere else, these people are left with no money at all. So the instance of crime and prostitution are rising, it's pretty grim. When we got into the town, I wouldn't believe how many people there were. Seeing so many people again was a shock! And seeing all these cars and farms, just stuff everywhere, and a different sort of noise, coming out of that small rainforest town.

A. Did you have any kind of personal reaction, seeing what the oil companies were doing, and how it's going to ensnare upon the whole of life for the people living here?

M. Yes, I felt incredibly angry about the logging and oil exploitation. I talked to the guide, and I said that if I was part of the Huastenii people, I'd be angry enough to kill.

A. Yes, but you can't judge it through their eyes—you've got an entirely different background; entirely different kind of Eurocentric observation. Maybe you could do more on behalf of me, than you could on behalf of a local indigenous tribe member. But I'll have been angry too. I've been furious. It seems like such, such a shame.

M. Apart from the anger, one of the strongest reactions I had immediately after I left was an instant longing to be back there. I think it was an instant nostalgia. Things seemed very simple there, very clear. Even very serious things like life and death—they seemed very clear and obvious. I felt like I'd re-entered a very confused reality.

A. Did you get any sense of the absence of our mundane attitudes, daily sophistication, and all that kind of thing?

M. I think there is still probably some boredom, probably mundane moments: It's hard to tell, but what was different was the purpose of everything seemed obvious in the business of the Huastenii.

A. I'm sure to them, anything else would be a waste of time.

A. The unknown for some people is way out in the distance, and for other people it's a little nearer. One is always going into the unknown. You don't have to have an illness to know that. With your interpretation, I've been able to experience something, not completely as if I was doing it myself—you can't expect that—but it's very near it.

M. That's great. Shall I play you some sounds now?

A. Yes, please.

M. I don't know if you remember, I told you about the Kapok tree. Well, the Harpy Eagle nests in it. Their story of the origin of life comes from the relationship between this huge tree and this impressive bird. When Huamini showed me a Kapok tree he told me this story, and when the Huastenii spoke of this tree they have to sing this song. So this is him, selling his tale, and then singing the song.

[Plays recording of song]

A. Thank you.

M. Thank you, Alex.
In 2009 and 2010 artist Beatrice Gibson worked with writer and critic George Clarke and residents of Camden Homes for Older People to instigate and document a series of group conversations. While many projects with older people start from the past, these conversations surrounded possible futures. A script produced from transcripts these conversations and underwrote The Future’s Getting Old Like The Rest Of Us, a 16mm film conceived in the format of a television play and set in a care home. Taking the 1971 experimental novel House Mother Normal by B.S. Johnson as its starting point and employing the structural logic of a musical score, the script takes a vertical structure, in which eight voices occur simultaneously. The film was shown at the Serpentine Gallery in 2010. Excerpts of the script appear in the following pages.
The Future's Getting Old Like The Rest Of Us
2010 (65 mins)
Skills Exchange
24 July – 19 September 2010
Sackler Centre for Arts Education
Park Nights Premieres
23 July 2010 8.30pm
with Paradigm, 1949 (8 mins)
directed by B.S. Johnson
Serpentine Gallery Pavilion 2010
designed by Jean Nouvel

In 1960, the Serpentine Gallery and Camden Homes for Older People commissioned a major new work by London-based artist Beatrice Gibson. The film is one of the commissions that have taken place as part of the Serpentine Gallery’s Skills Exchange project in which artists, designers and architects work in collaboration with older people to develop ideas for social and architectural change. The Future’s Getting Old Like The Rest Of Us is a fifteen film conceived in the format of a TV play and set in an older people’s care home. Part documentary, part fiction, the script for the film is the result of a collaboration between writer and critic George Clark, and was constructed from verbatim transcripts of a discussion group held with the residents of four of Camden’s care homes. Taking B.S. Johnson’s 1971 experimental novel Homes Mother Normal as its formal departure point and employing the structural logic of a score, the script is acted into a vertical structure, in which eight voices or eight monologues occur simultaneously.

The script for The Future’s Getting Old Like The Rest Of Us—excerpts of which are included in these programme notes—was developed from a series of conversations, held over a five-month period. The conversations were highly structured, covering topics such as time, memory, film and the future. Participants were shown images of the moon landing, alongside fragments of experimental and avant-garde films. Prompted by discussions about the future of care, a political and at times absurd film evolved. A cast of acclaimed actors, with credits ranging from Denmark to the Scratch Orchestra and the Royal Shakespeare Company, play the voice of care home residents.

This work concerns a number of histories, the marriage of social context and aesthetic concerns references experimental film-making practices of the 1960s and 1970s, which suggested that new forms were necessary to reassess the complexities and difficulties of life for those (care home residents, supply teachers and so forth) largely invisible represented by the mainstream media. Within this, B.S. Johnson was a pivotal and often pioneering figure whose literary work engaged in social commentary on the status of the poor, the elderly and the overlooked. At the same time, Johnson also pushed at representational forms, making books assembled by the reader, creating complex narrative structures and exuding provocative visual language. With this film, Beatrice Gibson also references the social realist drama of the 1960s Play For Today series on the BBC and the politics of the graphic score, as they were developed by artists and composers Cornelius Cardew and Brian Eno contemporaries.

Like Cardew, Gibson borrows the eight-part score that forms the basis for the film as a model of action challenging hierarchies between the writer, director, actors, residents and care workers involved in its production. The film also challenges the marginal spaces in which these eight voices are often relegated in the broader social and political realm.

Gibson’s reflection on issues of participation, hierarchy and the place of collaboration occurs at a moment in which the participation of various social groups is much discussed, but often without reference to historical projects that married social criticism with experimental forms of art-making and collective agency. As in much of her work, in the film Gibson produces her own model of action, bringing these histories to bear on the present.

This project was co-commissioned by the Serpentine Gallery and Camden Homes for Older People. In addition to the film, titles and scripts will be installed in the new care home, due to be completed in 2012 at Maida Vale Park.
Biography

Annie Flanagan (b. 1955) is a Shakespearean actor and writer, known for her contributions to the Royal Shakespeare Company and the Royal Shakespeare Theatre. She has performed in numerous productions, including the Royal Shakespeare Company’s production of "As You Like It," directed by John R. Kennedy, and has earned recognition for her work in television, film, and theatre. Flanagan has also contributed to the educational sector, working with schools and organizations to promote Shakespearean education.

George Clarke is a writer and artist based in London and Los Angeles. He is currently a visiting scholar at the University of California, Los Angeles, and has a PhD in the field of Visual Culture from the University of London. In 2009, he was chosen by the Turner Prize jury as the recipient of the Turner Prize for his work on the theme of globalisation.

Rum John Hold a (b. 1954) began his performing career as a black singer in New York, coming to London in 1963. His work has been seen in London, New York, and around the world, and he has worked with a variety of artists and groups, including the Royal Shakespeare Company and the National Theatre. He has also been involved in the development of new forms of performance, with a focus on exploring the relationship between poetry and theatre.

William Horlens was a close friend and collaborator of the late B.S. Johnson. Johnson's work has been celebrated both within and outside of the United Kingdom, and his influence can be seen in the work of many contemporary artists. Horlens's work has been exhibited in London, New York, and other major cities, and he has also been involved in the promotion of new forms of performance and the development of new media.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Voice A</th>
<th>Voice B</th>
<th>Voice C</th>
<th>Voice D</th>
<th>Voice E</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Voice Characteristics:</strong>&lt;br&gt;Low, shifting volumes, from loud to mumbling. Fast but rambling. Bureaucratic, mechanical, distracted, fragmented. Fluttering coherence while articulating a point. Thick delivery obliterates intelligibility. Switches among registers. Inflexible, yet...</td>
<td><strong>Voice Characteristics:</strong>&lt;br&gt;Shifting voices, from shrill to base. Consistent pace and tone in monotonous sections. Hearing impaired. At times isolated, articulated as if a sole, independent, at times oblivious to other voices. Anxiety expressed matter of fact.</td>
<td><strong>Voice Characteristics:</strong>&lt;br&gt;Fast paced, as if compensating for gaps in memory. Stuttering, stammering, magnified in relation to inability to recollect detail. Struggles with articulation, and volume. Speech caught at the intersection of throat and mouth. Erratic when words are not forthcoming. Actively addresses the other voice.</td>
<td><strong>Voice Characteristics:</strong>&lt;br&gt;Slow, spaced, light, schizoid, quiet, comfortable. Distracted, adrift, quiet. This voice repeats and redresses fragments and words belonging to the other voices. These repetitions are to be decided by the actor.</td>
<td><strong>Voice Characteristics:</strong>&lt;br&gt;Muscular, dull, irritating. Conscious of its own feminity. Suspicious. Unshaken positivity. Uncanny repetition, Impatience with other voice's incomprehensibility. (Their accent and delivery). Superficial.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Attachment to voice E**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Voice F</th>
<th>Voice G</th>
<th>Voice H</th>
<th>Voice I</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Name: Neville</td>
<td>Name: Husband = Ron / Ronald</td>
<td>Name:</td>
<td>Name:</td>
<td>Name:</td>
<td>Name:</td>
<td>Name:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Son 1</td>
<td>Son 2 = Norman</td>
<td>Grandson = Michael</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Actor:</th>
<th>Actor:</th>
<th>Actor:</th>
<th>Actor:</th>
<th>Actor:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Visio Lewis</td>
<td>Gordon Howard Carter</td>
<td>William Howard</td>
<td>Jane Howard</td>
<td>John Tilbury</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Janet Hentley</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Roger Bock</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Scene Five, Old Age

Oh, it's a long long while
from May to December,
and the days grow short
when you reach September.
When the autumn weather
turns the leaves to flame,
and you haven't got time
for the waiting game.
And the days turn to gold
as they grow few.
September, November.
And these few golden days,
I'll spend with you.
These golden days I'll spend with you.

I don't sleep at night.
I have too many thoughts
during the day, so that anytime I
need to be awake I have to be.
I need to be alive in the
situation, otherwise I need
not to sleep at night.

It was a man... called...
Walter Hurston. He sang
that, believe me, the
American, you know the
great... the great Hurston
family. You were talking
about John Hurston, etc...
no... John Ford... but
actually it became. In the
German... Kettler, Rottel,
Burtz, Buchtz, one of
Burtz, Buchtz Bruch's am
German um thing. And I
thought it was beautiful...

You wonder
what it's all for, you know
what I mean... what was
I going to say...

You see you get films
that agree with that and then
further down the line, you
get, ah, you're too old now,
and sort of kick your ass.
You're too old, leave you
with a blanket bit of grace
and leave ya. You know

Scene Five, Old Age

Oh, it's a long long while
from May to December,
and the days grow short
when you reach September.
When the autumn weather
turns the leaves to flame,
and you haven't got time
for the waiting game.
And the days turn to gold
as they grow few.
September, November.
And these few golden days,
I'll spend with you.
These golden days I'll spend with you.

And I can agree
that because I used to cycle
everyday to work and when I
finished, retired from work,
I put my bicycle in the
garage and thought we've got 20
and back and I was and I still
like to cycle.

You'll never change
people mean as I said,
your father, he had 21 in
his family. You can't imagine.
35 kids, and when that
time came for him to retire,
he wouldn't retire because
he told my mother... I
'm not retiring because if I
retire I become a vegetable.

You're just left...
You take it this way with
me, my dad, I know there's
hundreds like it, but my
wife suffers from dementia
and she was taken and put
into St. Margaret, and I was
put into Wallasey Road and
I said, why the... I've got
day now to look after her. The
left time we get
our... change her dress, or get
somebody in to look after
her, she's nervous, they say.
no, no, no you want a
break...

Scene Five, Old Age

Oh, it's a long long while
from May to December,
and the days grow short
when you reach September.
When the autumn weather
turns the leaves to flame,
and you haven't got time
for the waiting game.
And the days turn to gold
as they grow few.
September, November.
And these few golden days,
I'll spend with you.
These golden days I'll spend with you.

It was absolutely won-
derful here... but the only thing
I don't like is the feeling
that they don't treat you to
go out and come back. At
home I always do what
I wanted to do, go shopping,
take back home...

Without being dis-
spectacular to old people, I prefer
to be with young people,
myself... I think older people
have got a lot to offer, but
in the main to younger people
and I'm happy where I'm
in the company of people half
my age.

Scene Five, Old Age

Oh, it's a long long while
from May to December,
and the days grow short
when you reach September.
When the autumn weather
turns the leaves to flame,
and you haven't got time
for the waiting game.
And the days turn to gold
as they grow few.
September, November.
And these few golden days,
I'll spend with you.
These golden days I'll spend with you.

She's she... I'm 93, I
was born on the 6th of July.
Yankel doodle dandy... I
think that were a lot of
American films... came
from. I'm 93. In July.
Last July and um... I used to
go to the er... I tried to
come down to the Heath,
there was the old cinema
there, the Everyman, they
would show second run in
the interval... ladies, a tea
and a chat.

And I go to...
well low and behold, am
um, I'm finished now,
finished I'll make another
contribution later on.

LOUD SNORING

Scene Five, Old Age

Oh, it's a long long while
from May to December,
and the days grow short
when you reach September.
When the autumn weather
turns the leaves to flame,
and you haven't got time
for the waiting game.
And the days turn to gold
as they grow few.
September, November.
And these few golden days,
I'll spend with you.
These golden days I'll spend with you.

You see a girl who
agree with that and then
further down the line, you
get, ah you're too old now,
and sort of kick your ass.
You're too old, leave you
with a blanket bit of grace
and leave ya. You know
I had a cousin she used to work here, her light skin, tail and scent... She come and see me when I was in the hospital... is she here? I'm not going to nod off on this one, I've got my eyes awake.

I can hear...

A Frenchman wasn't there, actually he was an attitude... well I would term an extremist... in the period you're talking about... Guernsey Square... was... what did... did Fletcher get... oh yes, 60, Paris... in Paris.

Yes it started with the Paris group. Later on the were also people like Bertie Russell... I mean he was, he was an old timer then wasn't he, and this chap whose... Ben, there's something about it even again tonight, the older people... Fred Rich, pillars of the establishment... and in those days even Dennis with his pipe, Tony Bruns, thank you now... I think... something... I think something... something must have given... corks... must be given there, when she was a demo, match, there was that young...

I know this much I was very pleased to have met somebody like Charlie here, because when I came here I felt very frightened... what have I... what is it going to be like that sort of thing.

When you're in a place like this you don't talk very much. I'm not saying, it not... I think they're wonderful, they're wonderful to us old people.

We're not interested in politics at our age, why?

I don't think old people are interested in politics.

It wasn't an easy world at that time, you can't change people... only God can do that, and so you know what I mean, people when they can't stand each other it will be a better world to live in...

When you become an older person yourself and you want all the attention that you don't get then you sort of think. Why aren't I getting it done better than this?

For my wife, it's a joke, because she gets out and their away looking for her and she says I want a taxi this time, not a police car and they treat her like the copper are very good with her very good, come off by come on, they're not open yet, come one you know, they're really real...

Oh yes they are.

I can remember the strikes, the worst one was the last paper strike because it affected me, my friendship with a friend, I'm transporting general workers, he was national union of this or something, and he said you're not needed at all when we were out on strike and I said no, because Margaret Thatcher was clever she changed all the laws regarding picketing before she even started on the miners.

It's a bit dull isn't it. It's dark, it's not very bright. You go out looking for the bright bit.
Young people, they going to school with knife and they kill this, they kill that, they kill this, they kill this, and they have to pay people to feed them in the prison, pay people to cook food for them... say that when you kill somebody they kill you... when you go in prison, you walk into people see directly... you do something for what you done, they would not have... Wrote thing it, here in England... even though... I don't go in America... I have children 9, 10, 9, 8, years, they have... they sending them to school and they are beating the teacher, they are beating the teacher, wait let me finish, late at night and a girl come to school and the teacher tell her about something and he pick up something and the pick up teacher the teacher is throw in the head and blow... ambulance have to come... why this kind of thing have to happen.

My father was in this play and get malaria, he dies in it. Where that young actor, what's that young one? I can't get his name, you need to remind me...

Where is my frame... I need my frame, if I had my frame I could go to the toilet...

...I've got a pad-on, I can hold it I suppose...

Eugene, Eugene, it would have to come back in again... Eugene, it would have to, it's Spanish... it wants to come back again. It would take or back, it's well, stabilized. There is an old saying where there's life there's hope...

That was my father

Whatever happened to her, she... it's... an... external leader... um... she's the... she's the... she's from... her... thank you darling, yes, Jean Paul Sartre. Let's face it before I... before I... he seeing...

I can't understand a word he's saying.

I could be wrong, you can correct me if I'm wrong.

These politicians, people who haul a bit of power, they were so fed up after that long drag, we all know what I'm talking about, 1939-45... that they wanted... and they did, they created the NHS and who run it we did ourselves, the working class, you can get 6 pair of glasses down the road for nothing, teeth for nothing, they were down the deserts growing up, I cut my finger, I just suck it, you know, it was all too fast, it all come in too quick.

Well, I tell you one thing. I'm now in my, nearly 85, and it's the first time that I've found that I've enjoyed reading the paper. I've got time now to read the paper, and I've quite enjoyed doing it. But I am not political. I'm looking for... err... everything.
Not a bit like us is it? Well, actually, what should happen really is, you should film us, when we're not even really aware that you're doing it, so take us from life and then put us on the screen and say this is what you were doing and then we can look at it and... and say we God I never did that did I, you know. There you are... you are? I should be a film director? You see if we didn't know it was happening, you're taking it all the time aren't you? It would be more natural wouldn't it? Or you think that we should know we are being filmed and therefore put on our best behavior?

So actors you'd have actresses and actors doing it instead of real people? Well that's not much help is it? Because if you know that they are actors and actresses we're not going to take them seriously are we? We would take them seriously if we thought they were real people like us. You could take any little bit at any time.

And what have you. And nowadays, there's something... no matter how much. You can be too scholarly. They mastered the skills that have been shown later... or rather the surprise. It's the usual practice isn't it... The Verdi and yes, and um... the Goldsmith business, bahaha !

I've got that sound recorder on the table, so you can put that up and we can say I never did that rarely.

You know: I like kitchen sink dramas, they're the films I used to like seeing.

Oh yes, drama yes I, Golded and the other British actor, I was very prejudiced and said that both of them were homosexual, and um... I don't know that Sir John... elastic role and all that sort of thing... And Bogarde, very... Scarlet Pimpernel and things like that... Could I just I'll try and make it... a final word... the title of the film was A Man For All Seasons... and it was in colour of course. The cast was Robert Shaw and um... Moore himself was played by um, um err...  

Last night, a programme came on. Doctor. And there were subtitles, there were subtitles... They were gifted people... A British film I had to... there was um... I was... 

I'm trying to, or pick up on these long medical terms... you see... by the time... people passing by in the corridor... that's um... a girl, a woman, etc... doesn't matter. But she was in... she was um... in some sort of exorcism. I don't know what it was actually but I had to keep reminding myself, these people... actors... no matter how gifted, is it not really, because I only had to look around... like to... and see this girl... some sort of, some sort of, Dorsise? She was in it... and again, although I couldn't hear. Their voices were, so. So contrasting. They made you think it was real life, and there it is, something you... there is real life going on around you all the time... I think... it made me think... I used to try and grasp at you know. And the French Impressionists.

I know what I want to get you... I take me out shopping...

That's that's... that's right, yeah...

It's not that simple, it's not that simple, if you go you get to come back.

Drama, yes. I prefer drama.

Well as I can see, I watched good actors. I watched good actors... nobody playing himself or playing a role that they have made their own, he's that he's that, it's a good film... Everybody knows what he is, what difference does it make, he's doing... what we want to do make a film that we can watch. Yo, you know Dick Bogarde made the theatre films which were brilliant he also made that one where he's... enraged etc. etc. in France, the revolution.
It must be very interesting to make a film. What is the film actually about?

The words, the words, it’s a good idea....

It’s good... yeah....

It’s good because.... it’s this time, you’re doing time. You’re doing it now.

It’s a good idea...

... it could be informative.

Dancing, dancing from different parts and places.

You want to get your film on television, so people can turn it on when they want to.

I was thinking about...

Andrey Hepburn, Dame Bogart, well, it varied. Wallace Beery, famous... he played the piano.

Peter Cushing... What about a horror. I could be a... Boris Karloff. Count Dracula... Count Dracula

err...

hahahahahahahaha

hahahahahahahaha

I don’t know why, I don’t know why. I met him and when I stand up and I stand up, he is saying, I say...

I don’t know what you remember, but you know, no clothes on him... you know, little white underpants, no shoes, no vest nothing. Did you ever see him? Did you see him?

Ahh... (Fall of chair)

A revolutionary on the guillotine, was it Lesly Howard?

I’m deaf. I’m deaf...

I don’t know where my frames gone.

The Scarlet Pimpernel

... a film...

One last shot across the hovel. Today it’s a cellar. There’s all secular types. And it is sort of warts and things down... I’m committed. I’m a roman, cath, catholic... that’s good enough... and I think that... we’re being distracted by the humanities and so on.
Roger Booth (b. 1938) has appeared in the English Shakespeare Company production of William Shakespeare’s play, The Cymbeline, at the Old Vic Theatre in London, directed by Michael Bogdanov. Film credits include Regidogged and Barry Lyndon. He has also appeared extensively on television, his credits including, Z cars, Play for Today, Armchair Theatre, BBC2 Theatre, Inspector Morse, The Bill, Eastenders, Miss Marple and The Bachelor Chronicle.

Corinne Skinner Carter (b. 1931) has been a feature of black British film and television for over forty years. In 1979 she starred in Brain’s first black feature, Horror One’s Pioneer. She also starred in Burning on Illusion (d. Monique Huhana, 1988) and Epiphylle (d. Tunde Ikoli, 1987) in the 1980s; Gold Digger, (d. Sally Potter) Hatfield Anyhow (d. Matthew Jacobs, 1990) and Bahambelela (d. Julien Henriques, 1990) in the 1990s. She has also worked extensively in theatre, working with theatre companies including Carth Theatre, Talawa, and the Black Theatre Cooperative. Her television credits include Love Thy Neighbour, Empire Road and more recently The Bill, Casualty and A Touch of Frost.

Annie Firbank (b. 1935) is a Shakespearean actor of long standing with theatre companies including the Royal Shakespeare Company and the Royal National Theatre. She has also appeared on television in programmes such as Thirty Minute Theatre, ITV Playhouse, Armchair Theatre, Out of the Unknown and more recently Eastenders, Katwag QC, Purely, Hard at Work and in films including A Passage to India, Sunset Bloody Sunset and Alice and the King

Janet Henfrey (b. 1934) is a Shakespearean actor of long standing with theatre companies including the Royal Shakespeare Company and the Royal National Theatre. She has also performed adaptations of the radio plays of April de Angelis at the Royal National Theatre, the Royal William Theatre, The House of Eelot, Silent Witness and most recently The Take.

William Heyland was a close friend and collaborator of the late R.S. Johnson, starring in two of his films from the 1960’s, You’re Human Like the Rest of Us and Paradigm. He has also appeared in numerous television programmes, including Play for Today, ITV Sunday Night Theatre, and more recently Casualty, Holby City, Our Friends in the North and Edward & Alf. Simpson. Heyland’s films include Zapr Wares Episode IV – Return of the Jedi and Gandhi.

John Tilbury (b. 1936) is a British pianist. He is considered one of the foremost interpreters of Alton Feldman’s music, and since 1980 has been a member of the free improvisation group AMM. During the 1960s, Tilbury was closely associated with the composer Cornelius Cardew, whose music he interpreted and recorded. He was also a member of the Scratch Orchestra. His biography of Cardew, Cornelius Cardew – A Life Unfinished was published in 2004. Tilbury has also recorded the works of Howard Skempton and John White, among many others, and has also performed adaptations of the radio plays of Samuel Beckett.
In 2006, the Serpentine Gallery invited Architect Markus Miessen to advise on the project Skills Exchange. He led discussions at Westmead Care Home in Westminster with staff and residents to think about the ways to improve their lives and work against the risk of isolation. He made a number of propositions, including signage systems and other means of communication, in a short text entitled Sound of Home: A Manual for Action. The following is an email exchange regarding his initial perceptions of Westmead.

Skills Exchange
Skype Space

Design Proposal
Markus Miessen & Kaf Pflugfelder

A space in which SmartLab technology is being used to produce an entire wall that can be used as a 1:1-scale Skype-interface in which the elderly can talk to their families without having to deal with any interfaces (such as screen, mouse, keyboard etc.).
Hey Sally and Louise,

Sorry for the delay. I have been travelling to Mexico, US, and Switzerland for a couple of projects recently and have therefore been off the radar for a bit. I have had another meeting last week with the people at Westmead and did some research on the actual spaces there (beyond public/communal spaces).

We have reached a certain point now with the project. Workload wise I am really happy that you are offering support. Things are getting rather complex now to be simply handled by myself, especially in regard to the overall ambitions of the project that you have set up, which I think is amazing. It is time to invite some more people to this, both in terms of the overall team of architects/artists/researchers, but also in terms of people that can assist me and do research, as Louise suggested in our last meeting at Westmead.

What are the ambitions? In order to be clear about the approach and aims of the project, we should now decide as to what are we working towards? As the blurry setting up phase of the project seems to be done now, the interest and ambition (my one) has shifted quite a lot from the start. This is partly due to being able to get a closer understanding of the spaces and institutions that I am dealing with than the partly naïve reading I had in the beginning. The urban has become less and less important in this context. This is due to the realisation that within these archipelagos of sadness the physical 1:1 scale is actually much more important and evident than the repercussions of their urban equivalents, i.e. institutional networks, roaming in the city, small scale movement between them etc. I think that I can probably say now (for all of us) that physically it is very different from what we all expected.

What can be more interesting than looking at it in urban terms is to actually assess the qualities of certain projects (actual models such as Westmead and others). As I already laid out earlier, Westmead is, from my point of view, a typology that seems to work very well for many reasons. There is an intriguing quality of this place. It is difficult to put it in words for those who haven’t been there. This is also why visual documentation of the physical realities has become so important.
There is a shocking divide, which is between the public areas and the private areas of this place. Something, that especially after my last visit, became clear to me. I would like to investigate Westmead as an example of how architecture is actually still really important (something that I dismissed in the beginning of the project). It seems to be important to find ways to juxtapose this with the hospital-like sterile structures that exist as well (some of which we have visited).

Funnily, there seems to be a lot of dependency on seemingly banal issues such as Interior Design. Even the doggiest development can seriously raise its profile and quality through a set of clever decisions as to use the space in terms of its interior. This also holds true to small-scale interventions I believe (these can be physical or non-physical) in nature, such as the event that we just visited at Westmead, where most of the residents participated in a music workshop that showed amazing results in terms of the place's social structure as well as medical/health related issues as Julia confirmed.

How can one adapt existing places and propose policy issues at the same time? Simple adaptations can change the use of those spaces. There will be so many projects built over the next decades. The important aspect is that one should come up with two strategies simultaneously: one the one hand a strategy of adaptation, one the other hand models for new building projects that take on some of the issues discovered and learn from the case studies that will be delivered. Skills Exchange in this context can be understood as an idea to joining people back in as knowledge partner, to pose questions, investigating the same questions in different settings.

One of the issues that seems to have become key by now (for me) is the question of communication, both internally in terms of the institution, but also in terms of the patients and their communication with the outside world, either through people visiting them, calling people on the telephone, or being invited for the sporadic ‘day out’ experience for those who are usually (physically) not able to do this by themselves. In the light of the ‘technology revolution’, this is a really interesting issue. In this context I would like to explore the following:

(1) My idea for a virtual but physicalised communication space at Westmead (as case study), the site which has already been identified together with Julia Patton (the small space next to the entrance). In this context I would like to explore the idea of a space that is powered by Skype (maybe also a potential sponsor), but essentially a physical, ‘everyday’ space, as experienced by the Elderly. Westmead as case study/pilot project to showcase how existing institutions can be changed by altering only a small number of strategic settings/parameters (acupuncture rather than complete makeover). What are the boundaries of communication? (This would be done in collaboration with Ralf Pflugfelder)

(2) Identity Space (physical and non-physical): To develop a set of criteria such as entrance situation, signage (institutional and personal), that allow patients to customise their environment. (This would be done in collaboration with Abáke)

(3) A study as to the technology possibilities that there are today (MIT media lab, but also the different possibilities that are already laid out in the showroom in the West End).

(4) Study of existing typologies: different forms of services from independent living, clubs, extra care centres to residential care.

(5) Study as to how spatial realities seem to deteriorate from the public to the private (in those institutions). It would therefore be good if the ‘researchers’ (that help me out) could set up a framework to investigate those issues in other contexts as well.

(6) Non-physical components that need to be designed (manual of communication, for other places)

(7) What are the potentials of new typologies, which are based on the idea of growing old rather than being moved when one cannot live by oneself any longer (i.e. new typologies for homes where one moves in at the age of say 50 rather than 75 and therefore building up a totally different set of social relationships).

(8) Atlas of Choice: for those living in London (central and more peripheric) what are the actual choices of Elderly Residences (different typologies). This should be researched as a set of templates that can be filled easily, with same or recurring criteria that will be investigated for each of those places (i.e. volume to patient ratio, staff to patient ratio, services to patient ratio, overall condition of the place, number and quality of communal spaces, quality of communication, possibilities for communication (physical and non physical), general physical condition of the place, basic facts etc).

(9) A series of conversations/documentations: An archive of recorded conversations, conversations about the issue/feeling of ‘home’; conversations about the notion of identity and space; ‘village voices’: is there such thing as community when you grow old? Throwing away cameras to be given to selection of Elderly to document their ‘home’ (to photograph for one week what they think constitutes their ‘home’, things that make them feel ‘at home’). The chosen individuals at Westmead have been selected according to variables of maximum diversity, such as place of birth, age, time spent in institution (or care), existing family contact, and gender.

It would be great if the Serpentine could start to organise a research team to work alongside myself in order to help deliver my personal aspect of the overall project. The research brief will then be used by my team to work with some of those individuals and places as well as a more general research as to the places in London that are available. I really believe that the hard facts are good to have. Especially with politicians this is something that we must have in order to be able to make a convincing case.

**General Research Questions**

(01) What makes the chosen places special?
(02) What defines their spatial quality?
(03) How can those particular components/attributes be abstracted?
(04) What would they like to see organised/offer, what would they like to self-organise?
(05) What about the connection to their old/real home?
(06) How do they communicate with their relatives?
(07) As older people are quite territorial, how does that effect the way in which they use transport infrastructure? What are the alternatives?
(08) What, if what old people in those institutions do not need architects to create the building they live in, but a curator who arranges the things that they, individually, bring in to create a particular, customized environment?
(09) How can one develop a spatial framework for people in the institution to communicate with those who live far away?
(10) How can one produce a rupture in the homogeneity of the environment they are experiencing every day? i.e. Time-management, sequences to produce heterogeneity of the environment they are experiencing every day? i.e. Time-management, sequences to produce heterogeneity of the environment they are experiencing every day?
(11) How can they be taught to use technology such as the Internet without it becoming a typical failure like computer-classes in new elderly residence developments?
(12) How can a potential piece of ‘architecture’ generate a new community/public? (cross-generational stage?)

**Technology/Material Research**

- Frequencies for cancelling sound
- Producing sound-scape
- Skype technology
- Video projectors
- Projective surfaces
- Signage systems
Barter with your future self

Åbäke with Westmead Elderly Resource Centre

In 2009, design collective Åbäke worked to interpret and develop Miessen’s proposal with Westmead staff and residents. Taking the title of Skills Exchange quite literally, Åbäke spent time with Westmead staff and residents discussing their interests and vocational skills. With the combined age of the residents totaling 3,500 years, they reasoned staff and residents offered a tremendous learning resource to each other and to the outside world. Åbake instigated a series of exchanges between the Serpentine Gallery and Westmead, swapping furniture and artwork as well as interests and expertise. This process of exchange was a starting point for discussion of future possibilities at Westmead.
In 2006, the Serpentine Gallery’s Skills Exchange brought together an architect and a design collective to work with the residents of a care home.

Architect Markus Miessen led the discussions at Westmead Care Home in Westminster with staff and residents, thinking of ways to improve their lives and to guard against the risk of isolation.

He made a number of propositions, including signage systems and other means of communication, in a short text entitled Sound of Home: A Manual for Action. He handed these ideas over to design collective Åbäke to interpret and develop with Westmead participants. The Serpentine Gallery and Westmead Care Home embarked on a more ambitious exchange via an installation at the Gallery’s Serpentine Sackler Centre for Arts Education (21 January–7 February 2010), swapping furniture and artwork as well as interests and vocational skills. With the combined age of the residents totalling 3,500 years, they reasoned staff and residents offered a tremendous learning resource to each other and to the outside world.

The Serpentine Gallery and Westmead Care Home embarked on a more ambitious exchange via an installation at the Gallery’s Serpentine Sackler Centre for Arts Education (21 January–7 February 2010), swapping furniture and artwork as well as interests and expertise. The Gallery’s staff toured Westmead’s limited editions print collection while residents and staff shared their experiences of the past century and of living and working in residential care.

To help illuminate the realities of old age and to help the younger participants imagine their futures, portraits of the project organisers were taken and aged 40 years by photographer Kea da Klein and Åbäke. This process of exchange was a starting point for discussion of future possibilities at Westmead.

Other events have taken place as part of this exchange: a bus trip and birthday celebrations in honour of a 93-year-old resident of Westmead; cake and decoration workshops with staff, school students and community members; and a series of Skype exchanges between residents and visitors to Serpentine Gallery. The aged portraits provided context for a Serpentine Gallery Family Day in which people of all ages visualised and imagined their futures in discussion with Yanki Lee, Research Fellow with the Helen Hamlyn Centre at the Royal College of Art.

Journey from Westmead Care Home (A) to (E) Serpentine Gallery via the longest route possible in the time allowed.

Westmead prints; contemporary art from early 21st century (House of Dreams, 2005 Ilya and Emilia Kabakov)

In 2006, the Serpentine Gallery’s Skills Exchange brought together an architect and a design collective to work with the residents of a care home.

Architect Markus Miessen led the discussions at Westmead Care Home in Westminster with staff and residents, thinking of ways to improve their lives and to guard against the risk of isolation.

He made a number of propositions, including signage systems and other means of communication, in a short text entitled Sound of Home: A Manual for Action. He handed these ideas over to design collective Åbäke to interpret and develop with Westmead participants.

Taking the title of Skills Exchange literally, Åbäke spent time with Westmead staff and residents discussing their interests and vocational skills. With the combined age of the residents totalling 3,500 years, they reasoned staff and residents offered a tremendous learning resource to each other and to the outside world.

The Serpentine Gallery and Westmead Care Home embarked on a more ambitious exchange via an installation at the Gallery’s Serpentine Sackler Centre for Arts Education (21 January–7 February 2010), swapping furniture and artwork as well as interests and expertise. The Gallery’s staff toured Westmead’s limited editions print collection while residents and staff shared their experiences of the past century and of living and working in residential care.

To help illuminate the realities of old age and to help the younger participants imagine their futures, portraits of the project organisers were taken and aged 40 years by photographer Kea da Klein and Åbäke. This process of exchange was a starting point for discussion of future possibilities at Westmead.

Other events have taken place as part of this exchange: a bus trip and birthday celebrations in honour of a 93-year-old resident of Westmead; cake and decoration workshops with staff, school students and community members; and a series of Skype exchanges between residents and visitors to Serpentine Gallery. The aged portraits provided context for a Serpentine Gallery Family Day in which people of all ages visualised and imagined their futures in discussion with Yanki Lee, Research Fellow with the Helen Hamlyn Centre at the Royal College of Art.

Journey from Westmead Care Home (A) to (E) Serpentine Gallery via the longest route possible in the time allowed.

Westmead prints; contemporary art from early 21st century (House of Dreams, 2005 Ilya and Emilia Kabakov)
Over three years, artist Tom Hunter worked with residents of the Woodberry Down Estate. Participants at a weekly tea and coffee group on the Estate discussed the transition of Woodberry Down from its inception in 1949, when it was referred to as ‘a palace’, to the present, in which de-funding and the stigmatisation of social housing have ushered in a large scale redevelopment project. Working against negative perceptions of social housing, Hunter and residents produced narratives that traced the history of the Estate. These were developed into the film A Palace for Us in which actors, including young people from the area, played the roles of older residents. Screened in Hackney and at the Serpentine Gallery, the film was widely reviewed and has circulated in a number of social housing spaces in London. Original texts appear in the pages that follow.
Woodberry Down Estate

Kit Heatley and Erica Dobbs from the Testimony from James Campbell,
for Us

A Palace

My name is Jim Campbell. I’ve been living in Cheltenham House for 25 years. I was born in Stoke Newington.

I was living there when the war started and my mother decided to get us evacuated. We went to a lovely little village and when we came back the blitz had stopped. And so mum was happy about it, coming back. And then, I think it was about a fortnight later, they had a mini-blitz. And unfortunately, I think we were one of the first houses to be bombed.

The actual bombing itself was strange because I heard two or three bombs coming down. I heard them screaming. I didn’t hear any explosions. It was just scream after scream, I think there were four in a row. But everything lit up, and everything came down in absolute, slow motion. I could see it coming down and it actually seemed to take hours. I couldn’t move much. I managed to get out part of the way. And then I tried to get my brother out and he was shouting at me to stop it because I was making all this stuff come down on him.

My younger brother who I jumped on top of so that I could to save him, the only brave thing I ever did in my life… but I remember now that made me panic.

And that was because the German planes had dropped flares. And all I could see was flickering through the ruins. And I thought the house was on fire. I really thought we were going to burn to death.

I really tucked that away. And it’s come back now, talking about it.

The next thing I remember is shouting at dad and this disembodied voice coming from nowhere saying: ‘I’m alright’ Eric shouted out, my sister was away at the time.

Then I can remember them getting us all out, and taking us out to a van which was driven by a girl who couldn’t have been more than seventeen and she said: ‘do you usually come out with your girlfriends dressed like that?’ She took off with her overcoat to give to me and that’s the first time I realized I hadn’t got a stitch on….my pyjamas…everything had gone.

We were taken to a school in Church Street, it was used as a home centre for people who’d been bombed. We slept in double bunks, iron bunks. This was our home for some weeks, a couple of months even. I fell asleep there and I woke up and there was this old lady looking at me. I suddenly realized it was just my mum. And she had aged years. And that was the first time, probably the only time I cried.

But she had received this message while she was on duty but she couldn’t leave the Marlborough Place because she was in charge. And she just got the message 70 to 74 Abbey Road which meant there had to be a direct hit on 72 which was us, and she had to wait and wait and wait. It must have been hell.

We had a rabbit in a hut, and it was a pure white, with a black moustache. We called it Adolph for obvious reasons. And the next day, we were sorting things out and they brought Adolph out. He was fine. There was not a mark on him. Two, three hours afterwards, he suddenly pricked up his ears, fell backwards and he was dead of shock. So Adolph was in way, responsible for the demise of Adolph. (laughing)

After the war, people were not able to have a house easily because there was so much bombing. And there had to be a lot of rebuilding done. Initially, when we first got married we went to live with my husband’s mum. They had a spare bedroom and she said: ‘You can share the bedroom and you can live in with us as a family’, which I did.

But then when I had two children, she said to me, ‘if you put your name down, for the county council, if you’ve got more than one child, they will re-house you and you won’t have such a long time to wait’.

When we came up here to Woodberry Down, we realized how lucky we were because we had central heating, we got a lovely bath with hot and cold water, and it was like a palace to us.

Friends used to come up to me and say ‘can we come and visit tonight?’ and while we were up here they’d say ‘can we use your bathroom?’ because in those days, people didn’t have a bath, they used to go to the public baths.

When I left school, I went with a friend of mine to a youth club. We used to play records, and we would have a dance. So you’d see people that you knew and you’d have a dance with them. Then one evening when I went there, there were a couple of fellas that came in and I said to Margaret: ‘Oh look at that one over there. He looks rather nice doesn’t he? I’ve not seen him before...’ And we danced with our friends and suddenly I said to her: ‘Oh he can dance! Look. I hope he’s gonna come up and ask me to dance.’

And he did.

While we were dancing -we weren’t just dancing, we were singing, talking… it was getting closer, cheek to cheek, which was one of the songs of the moment :when am out together, dancing cheek to cheek’, he sang it as we were dancing, not loudly. Just in my ear… and I was in seventh heaven!

So he said to me, ‘could I see you home this evening?’ and I said ‘yes, that’d be nice.’
We did actually go home dancing in the streets. Not loudly. Just sort of going over the songs that we'd heard. He saw me home and then he was saying: 'I hope we see you next week,' and in my mind I was thinking: 'yeah, I hope I do'.

When I went to bed that night again, I kept trying to think about him, and his eyes... I just kept thinking about his eyes all the time. I've never really seen eyes that were as good as that.

And when I told him about it he said: 'I've only got eyes like this when I'm looking at you. I'm not like this normally."

... One day he said to me: 'Shall we go down to Southend for the day? It's really nice weather in the summer.' So I said yes, 'let's do that.' So we went all the way to south end and then we got up to walk along the promenade, and we could hear music, and there was a little crowd went up to walk along the promenade, and we could hear him singing. And everybody joining in." He could really sing! And I was saying ‘Oh yes! I'm with him!’ He really did sing very well.

... We took it (the record) home and his mum was absolutely delighted with it. we had a gramophone there in the house. And she played it, and they used to go to a club in the evenings, on Sunday evening. So she took this record up there and played it for all her friends to hear. And obviously they all thought it was really good.

He asked me, should we get engaged? (Which we did)
And his friend, who he had come to the youth club with originally said to me: 'do you know what? The first night that we came down there, your husband said I'm gonna marry that girl because she's got feelings'

So it was all rather romantic.
And we really had a very good marriage together. Right till the end.

We came to live up here at Woodberry Down. We had a son and a daughter.

It was probably the early fifties...and people would come up, to see how we've done after the war. Before the war people didn't have central heating and things like that. They would come in groups to see the estate sometimes. They'd come just to have a look around.

There were steps from one landing to the next. And there was a lady living opposite me. We were told by our landlord that he wouldn't clean the steps for us. It was up to each one of us to do it. When he used to come and collect the rent on Mondays he would come and knock on the door. He would come in and say: 'I've come to collect the rent and inspect the stairs; I see you are keeping yours nice and clean'. So I said, 'Well, we take in turns. I do it one week she does it the next. And if you do it regularly, they stay clean.'

Children used to run up and down those stairs.

... There was loads of kids, yeah!
We used to get together in a little gang and go around, so it was quite fun.

I lived here all of my life.
Originally my mum was from Hoxton, in Haggerston Road and they got the flat up here in 1956.

I was born in September, so from a baby I was brought at Woodberry Down. For others it was a move to go there but for me obviously, I never knew anything other than here.

It was decanted three years ago, because they needed to knock the blocks down. Now I settled in Pickering House, which is still a part of the estate but I will have to de-cant again at the end of this because obviously they'll get around to knocking these down too...

Our flat was a five bedroom flat. There was thirteen of us, my mum and thirteen children...
So it was fun, but it was also really annoying because you never really had a room for yourself because there were so many of us, we used to all be put together.

And we used to do meals in the kitchen. It was quite strange, a massive flat and a very small kitchen. So my mum used to do it in sections, obviously the younger ones first and then as the others came in, because the old ones would be working, they used to come in and have their meals.

I remember sitting on that old, wooden sink. You used to sit on there and they used to play music and enjoy what they were doing.

In the whole of that side of the estate it was five bedrooms, so it was all big families. We used to all get together. We used to go scrumping over the fence. If we couldn’t get over the fence, there was a big massive generator. We used to get up there over the generator and get over into the school. But it was quite funny because we used to sit up in the tree and laugh, and the caretaker would get the dog after us but the dog got so friendly with us he didn’t do anything anyway! He would just stand there and bark. But he never used to catch us...

But in the end, I can remember, we virtually had shed full of apples. I don’t quite know what we thought we was gonna do with them! But yeah we had masses of them.

It was fun because we knew when the ice-cream was coming around. So you used to see all the kids running indoors: ‘I want an ice-cream!’ and they’d just be getting the money and queuing up and getting ice-cream.

But we used to play a lot around the courtyard.

Knocking down someone’s letter box, you know what I mean?
We used to go hop-scotching or skipping.

The grounds around the back of Sherwood used to be full of massive roses. And in the summer we used to pick the roses and make perfume.

Although we knew we shouldn’t be kicking the football we still used to do it. We had this little log bit, and that courtyard was the main area where we knew we could go and just do what we wanted to do.

We had to be in between half past six in the winter and half seven, in the summer, and I could remember looking out and seeing the others playing and I’d say to my mum : ‘Mum I wanna be out there’

Each side of this estate had their own porters. We knew who he was, he knew every kid. If something went wrong in your house like, someone left a tap open and it was leaking through, he’d obviously go. Because he got his own flat.

But if I was ever to be laying out sunbathing on the grass, that was it. The porter would just come. We used know we used to wait until he wasn’t around.

As I say, you knew who everyone was. So you even knew who the local beat copper was, he knew you, he knew everybody.

The community in this estate, you knew everybody at one time.
Now, it’s only a handful of people you really know. A lot of changes have happened in here.

Jackie, my niece, she lives over in Delamere with her two children. I’ve got a brother over at Annendale, that’s the next block over. He’s got two girls. My sister lives with me here. So it’s like we are still all together.

The rest, they’ve moved on.
But there’s still a few of us around
In 2009 artist Barby Asante worked with women from Southwark's InSpire Reminiscence group to investigate the East Street Market in South London. As part of Southwark Council's major regeneration scheme of the Elephant and Castle area, the Market was being tendered to private management. For residents and shop owners this marked a period of extreme uncertainty. Extending beyond those in the group, Asante, joined by researcher Cristina Garrido Sánchez from Goldsmiths Centre for Urban and Community Research, organised The Sarsaparilla Summits. Named after the drink historically sold at East Street Market, the summits were created as a forum to bring together market traders, campaigners, historians, activists and other people with concerns for the future of London street markets. The following poster and map were created for distribution across London markets, the profits of which are to support local market campaigns.
SAVE LONDON MARKETS

1 USE IT
2 CAMPAIGN
3 NETWORK
4 REvive,
DON’T GENTRIFY
5 Boycott

A Recipe for Action

1. Shop there! Discover its history, meet the traders & understand what is happening with it.

2. Start or get involved with a campaign to increase community involvement in the future of your market. People coming together equals a powerful voice.

3. Good campaigns involve traders, local organizations, shoppers, the community, landlords/management companies and the local Council. Markets are complex places get to know everyone. Connect, debate and and swap strategies with community groups, market campaign groups, traders and users of markets in and beyond—London.

4. The issue of gentrification is about private versus community control. Ensuring the future should come out of a community dialogue and reflect the diversity, desires and needs of the community. Everyone should be involved in the process. Don’t forget the environment and its sustainability.

5. Stop shopping in supermarkets.

This recipe was developed in the Surpresa! kitchen by Rachel Assante & Cristina Garrido-Sanchez in which market traders, campaigners, historians and activists came together to swap recipes for local food and ideas for how to save London Markets.
Contributors’ Biographies


Barby Asante’s practice is grounded in participation and engagement with different audiences, particularly encouraging people to use their voices. She has exhibited widely nationally and internationally in conventional as well as unconventional spaces, and her work includes creating an allotment with Ali Zaidi for Harvest It in a London Park (2007), Wig Therapy (2001-2005) at various venues in the UK and abroad, Journey into the East (2002) at The Showroom Gallery, Comfort Zones, Futurology, New Art Gallery, Walsall (2004), Self, Angel Row (2004) and Summer Sunset Pumphouse Gallery (2005). Her most recent works, Down at the Bamboo Club, Baby’s Karaoke and The Funk Chorus, explore music, memory and social relationships that are created around the collective appreciation of popular music.

Franco Berardi (Bifo) is a writer, media-theorist, and media-activist. He founded the magazine Al traverso (1975–81) and was part of the staff of Radio Alice, the first free pirate radio station in Italy (1976–78). Involved in the political movement of Autonomia in Italy during the 1970s, he fled to Paris, where he worked with Felix Guattari in the field of psychoanalysis. Bifo published the books After the Future (2011), The Soul at Work (2010), Felix (2001), Cibernardi (1994), Mutazione e Cyberpunk (1993) and contributed to the magazines Semiotext(e), Chimères, Metropoli, and Musica 80. He is currently teaching Media Aesthetics at the European School of Social Imagination, in San Marino.

Camden Council’s Homes for Older People project aims to improve and increase services and accommodation for older people in the borough. A consortium led by Shaw Healthcare Trust will design, build and run a new care home with nursing and an extra care sheltered housing scheme at Maitland Park followed by a second care home with nursing at Wellesley Road. Guest rooms for visitors, bedrooms with en-suite bathrooms in bright, attractive buildings and landscaped gardens are just some of the things care home residents can now look forward to. The new care homes will enable residents to remain independent for longer.

The Centre for Urban and Community Research was established in 1994 as an interdisciplinary research centre within the Sociology Department of Goldsmiths, University of London. Today our research stretches from New Cross to New York, Hong Kong, Mexico City and Ljubljana. With core expertise ranging from visual sociology to digital geo-demography, the CUCR remains central to debates about community, ecology, governance, multiculture, citizenship, arts and media in contemporary cities.

Marcus Coates is well known for his video works, which record the artist making performances. These events tend to take place in municipal spaces such as offices or council housing buildings, and happen in front of members of the public. The viewer is left unsure as to Coates’ convictions, as the work oscillates between comedy and a proposition that art can be restorative. Coates’ work has been widely exhibited in the UK and abroad. Selected solo presentations have been at Baltic, Gateshead; the Whitechapel Gallery and Cafe Gallery Projects, London. His work has been featured in the 2009 Tate Triennial and the touring exhibition British Art Show 6, as well as in group shows at the Hayward, London; Museo Arte Contemporanea, Rome; and Israeli Centre for Digital Art, Holon.

Silvia Federici is a feminist activist, writer, and a theorist. In 1972 she was one of the co-founders of the International Feminist Collective, the organization that launched the international campaign for Wages For Housework (WFH). In the 1990s, after a period of teaching and research in Nigeria, she was active in the anti-globalization movement and the U.S. anti-death penalty movement. She is one of the co-founders of the Committee for Academic Freedom in Africa, an organization dedicated to generating support for the struggles of students and teachers in Africa against the structural adjustment of African economies and educational systems. From 1987 to 2005 she taught international studies, women studies, and political philosophy courses at Hofstra University in Hempstead, NY. All through these years she has written books and essays on philosophy and feminist theory, women’s history, education and culture, and more recently the worldwide struggle against capitalist globalization and for a feminist reconstruction of the commons.

Beatrice Gibson is an artist based in London. Working in diverse mediums from text to performance to film, her practice is largely site-specific, research based and often participatory in nature. Referencing experimental music and film, recent pieces have explored sound, sociality, models of collective production and the problems of representation. Recent pieces include if the route: the great learning of london [A Taxi Opera], (2007) developed in collaboration with musician and composer Jamie McCarthy and A Necessary Music (2008) developed in collaboration with composer Alex Waterman. Gibson was a studio artist in residence at the Whitney Museum of American Art ISP, during 2008, and since 2006 has been a PhD student in the department of Visual Cultures, Goldsmiths. Earlier this year she won the Tiger Award for best short at the Rotterdam Film Festival.

Originally trained as a Geographer, Janna Graham has initiated a number of pedagogical, artistic and research projects in and outside of the arts. Graham is currently Projects Curator at the Serpentine Gallery, where she worked with others to create Skills Exchange: Urban Transformation and the Politics of Care, a five year art and research project about the meaning of care in the context of urban change. She has also worked with artists, writers and designers to create The Centre for Possible Studies, a research space in the Edgware Road neighbourhood of London where artists and local people develop ‘studies of the possible’ in response to social inequalities in urban space. She has been an educator, researcher and curator at institutions such as the Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, the Whitechapel Gallery, London, Vanabbenemuseum, Eindhoven, Plymouth Art Centre, Plymouth. Graham is a member of the international sound and political collective Ultra-red and is a PhD candidate and teacher at Goldsmiths University of London.

Born in Dorset, artist Tom Hunter moved to Hackney, London in 1986. He graduated from London College of Printing in 1994 and from the Royal College of Art in 1997. In 1998 Hunter received the John Kobal Photographic Portrait Award at the National Portrait Gallery for the work Woman Reading a Possession Order. Compositionally based on a Vermeer painting, the photograph reflected the reality of Hunter’s life in squatted housing in Hackney, using those around him as models. Amongst other social and political themes, Hunter’s work in photography and film has continued to reflect his deep knowledge of east London, drawing from the headlines of the Hackney Gazette, histories of the area and his relationships to the people who live there. His solo exhibitions have included Life and Death in Hackney, White Cube, London, 2000; Living in Hell and Other Stories, National Gallery, London 2005–2006 (where he was the first artist to have a photography show), Flashback, Museum of London, 2009–2010; and, most recently, Unhallowed Stories at Purdy | Hicks Gallery. His work is included in collections at the National...
Gallery, London; Victoria & Albert Museum, London; Los Angeles County Museum of Art; and the Saatchi Collection, London. He is currently a Senior Research Fellow at London College of Communication.

With training in architectural design and research methodology, Dr Yanki Lee is a social designer and design researcher based in with her design practice (www.exhibit-goldenlane.com/www.yankilee.com) in London. In 2012, Dr Yanki Lee joined the Hong Kong Design Institute as the Adjunct Professor after a decade researching at the RCA’s Helen Hamlyn Centre for Design. She was the co-investigator of the i-design research project, a pioneering design research project in inclusive design held in the UK. In 2011, she was awarded the UK’s BIS UK - China Fellowship of Excellence 2011 and Fellow of the RCA for her contribution of design researches.

Markus Miessen is an architect, spatial consultant and writer working in Berlin, London and the Middle East. In 2002, he set up Studio Miessen, a collaborative agency for spatial practice and cultural analysis. He is a founding partner of the Berlin-based architectural practice nOffice, whose site-specific pavilion exhibited at the Lyon Biennial 2007. The practice is currently working on a series of international projects, including a library and cultural centre to house the private collection of the Swiss curator Hans Ulrich Obrist, as well as a mediateque in north-east Brazil. His work has been exhibited widely, including at the Lyon, Venice and Shenzhen Biennials. Through various collaborations, Miessen has published books including East Coast Europe (Sternberg, 2008), The Violence of Participation (Sternberg, 2007), With/Without – Spatial Products, Practices and Politics in the Middle East (Bidoun, 2007).

Mohammed Yousef is an artist based in Westmead Care Home in West London. A former accountant and postman, Mohammed’s work responds to the barrage of mail delivered to the home to coerce older people to enter sweepstakes and other promotional schemes by recycling envelops and drawing maps of the world from memory.

St John’s Hospice, an independent charity located within the Hospital of St John’s and St Elizabeth in St John’s Wood, provides specialised palliative care to more than 2,000 terminally-ill patients and their families every year. For the last 29 years, the hospice has been providing high quality hospice care, free of charge, to those living in and around Central and North West London. Their services are underpinned by a respect for human dignity and care for the physical, psychosocial, spiritual and emotional needs of the total person, whatever their age, lifestyle, culture and spiritual belief. Patients face a range of conditions, including cancer, respiratory disease, heart failure and HIV.

Sally Tallant is the Artistic Director and CEO of the Liverpool Biennial. She was previously the Head of Programmes at the Serpentine Gallery, London where she was responsible for the delivery of an integrated programme of Exhibitions, Architecture, Education and Public Programmes. Since 2001 she has been developing an ambitious programme of artist’s projects and commissions, conferences, talks and events. She has curated and organised exhibitions in a wide range of contexts including the Hayward Gallery, Milch, Chelsea and Westminster Hospital; lectured on graduate and post-graduate courses at the internationally and is a regular contributor to conferences nationally and internationally. She is a Trustee of the Chisenhale Gallery and Raking Leaves and the external examiner for MA Fine Art at Central St Martins.

Westmead Elderly Resource Centre is a residential care home housing 42 residents in West London.

Constructed as a response to the wreckage of World War II bombing Woodberry Down Estate was built in 1946 and completed in 1962, when it was heralded as an ‘estate of the future’. The 57 housing blocks on the estate provided 2,500 homes for people living in impoverished accommodation in the area. It is now the site of a 20 year regeneration programme. Older residents on the estate have played an active role in responding and advocating for low income housing and meet regularly at a tea and coffee group developed by older residents in collaboration with Age Concern.

Based at the crypt at St. Peter’s near London’s Walworth Road and East Street Market, InSpire works to build up the community, seek justice for people on the edge and serve those in need in Walworth and beyond. InSpire is home to a regular reminiscences group who, in the face of major re-development plans - work to keep the history of the neighbourhood and its working class character alive.
Thank you

The generosity of supporters is vital to the Gallery’s success. The Serpentine continues to employ innovative ways for all ages to engage with modern and contemporary art, architecture, design and education. In 2012-13, the Gallery raised 81% of its total income through donations, corporate sponsorships, trusts, foundations, endowments and other educational initiatives. The Serpentine would like to thank the individuals, trusts, foundations and companies whose generosity and foresight enable the Gallery to realise its acclaimed Exhibition, Architecture, Education and Public Programmes.


Johan Elaisch Joey Estafani Malia and Oliver Haarmann The Hon Robert Hanson Petra and Darko Horvat Mr and Mrs Michael Hue-Williams Michael Jacobson Dakis Joannou Jolana Leinson and Petri Vainio Elena Bowes Marano Jimmy and Becky Mayer Víviane and James Mayet Gail Mackay Matthew Mellon, in memory of Isabella Blow Tamara Mironov Martin and Amanda Newson Pia-Christina Miller J. Harald Ormerod Stephen and Yana Peel Silvio and Monica Scaglia Olivia Schuler-Volith Mrs Nadja Sparovski-Adams Phoebie and Bobby Tudor Hugh Warrender Beatrice Warrender Michael Watt John and Amelia Winter Michael and Anna Zaccari and members of the Council's Circle who wish to remain anonymous Founding Corporate Benefactor Bloomberg Exclusive Professional Services Adviser Deloitte LLP Platinum Corporate Benefactor AECOM Arij Bloomsberg Diesel Dornbracht Hiscox HI J.P. Morgan Private Bank My Beautiful City Qatar Museums Authority Rise UVA Vitra zuein Well, Gotshal & Manges Gold Corporate Benefactors COS The Independent Laurent Perrier Silver Corporate Benefactors Asahi Benerberg Art Advice Gleece L’Wren Scott


196 197

Skills Exchange was curated by Janna Graham Projects Curator, Serpentine Gallery and Sally Taliant, Artistic Director, Liverpool Biennal (former Head of Programmes, Serpentine Gallery)

And initiated with Louise Coysh Curator, Art on the Underground (former Project Organiser, Serpentine Gallery)

In partnership with Age UK, Hackney Camden Homes for Older People InSpire at the Crypt, Southwalk St John’s Hospice Westminster Care Home Woodberry Down Coffee Group

Produced by Catherine Hawes, Serpentine Gallery Projects Assistant Amal Khalaf, Assistant Curator, Projects, Serpentine Gallery Rose Lejeune, Interim Projects Organiser, Serpentine Gallery

Advisor Markus Miessen

Skills Exchange: Urban Transformation and the Politics of Care


The Trip Location: St John’s Hospice, St John’s Wood. Artist: Marcus Coates with Alex H. Research Assistant: Ananda Ferlauto. Co-Researchers: Alex H, outpatients and workers at St John’s Hospice, including Andrew Gallini and Sheena Boyd.


The Future’s Getting Old Like the Rest of Us Location: Camden Homes for Older People. Artist: Beatrice Gibson with writer George Clarke. Research Assistant: Mara Ferrieri. Co-researchers: Residents of Camden Homes for Older People with care home staff and Programme Coordinator Sally Mercer.

Skills Exchange Acknowledgements: Thanks to all of the project artists, researchers and co-researchers listed above for their tireless work. We are also grateful to writers Franco Berardi (Bifo), Sylvia Federici, Sally Tallant and Yanki Lee for contextualising the work of Skills Exchange. Thanks also to Tim Joss, Rayne Foundation; Jemmie Read, Bloombberg; Denis Kane, Penfold Street Hub; David Ruse and Valentina Wong, Westminster City Council; Sue Heiser and Mary McGowan, Camden Homes for Older People; The Baring Foundation; Mark Greenwood, Abbeyfield Trust; and friends of the project Suely Rolnik, Elizabeth Lima, Nicholas Vass, Irl Rogoff and Susan Kelly, Goldsmiths, University of London.

Skills Exchange was funded by Bloomberg, the Rayne Foundation, the City Bridge Trust, The National Lottery through Big Lottery Fund and Camden Homes for Older People. It was delivered in partnership with Age UK, Hackney; Westminster Housing Care Services; Camden Homes for Older people; the InSpire programme at the Crypt; Southwalk; St John’s Hospice, Camden; and Westmead Care Home, Westminster.

[Insert logo block from Modalities of Exchange]

Skills Exchange

Publication edited by
Janna Graham

Projects Curator
XX

Copy edited by
Melissa Larner

Transcripts
Nicolas Vass and Vittorio Bini

Designed by Åbåke

Printed in the UK
XX Colour Ltd.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise without prior permission of the publishers.

© 2013 Serpentine Gallery, London; Koenig Books, London; and authors

[REPRINT CREDITS]
ISBN (Koenig Books, London)
ISBN (Serpentine Gallery, London)

(SG LOGO)

Serpentine Gallery supported by

Barter With The Future Self

The Future’s Getting Old Like the Rest of Us

Ch 8910 Affolteren a.a. Fund and Camden Homes for Older People. It was delivered in partnership with Age UK, Hackney; Westminster Housing Care Services; Camden Homes for Older people; the InSpire programme at the Crypt; Southwalk; St John’s Hospice, Camden; and Westmead Care Home, Westminster.

(Areas loved by

Publication edited by
Janna Graham

Projects Curator
XX

Copy edited by
Melissa Larner

Transcripts
Nicolas Vass and Vittorio Bini

Designed by Åbåke

Printed in the UK
XX Colour Ltd.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise without prior permission of the publishers.

© 2013 Serpentine Gallery, London; Koenig Books, London; and authors

[REPRINT CREDITS]
ISBN (Koenig Books, London)
ISBN (Serpentine Gallery, London)

(SG LOGO)

Serpentine Gallery supported by

Barter With The Future Self

The Future’s Getting Old Like the Rest of Us


Skills Exchange was curated by Janna Graham Projects Curator, Serpentine Gallery and Sally Taliant, Artistic Director, Liverpool Biennal (former Head of Programmes, Serpentine Gallery)

And initiated with Louise Coysh Curator, Art on the Underground (former Project Organiser, Serpentine Gallery)

In partnership with Age UK, Hackney Camden Homes for Older People InSpire at the Crypt, Southwalk St John’s Hospice Westminster Care Home Woodberry Down Coffee Group

Produced by Catherine Hawes, Serpentine Gallery Projects Assistant Amal Khalaf, Assistant Curator, Projects, Serpentine Gallery Rose Lejeune, Interim Projects Organiser, Serpentine Gallery

Advisor Markus Miessen

Skills Exchange: Urban Transformation and the Politics of Care


The Trip Location: St John’s Hospice, St John’s Wood. Artist: Marcus Coates with Alex H. Research Assistant: Ananda Ferlauto. Co-Researchers: Alex H, outpatients and workers at St John’s Hospice, including Andrew Gallini and Sheena Boyd.


The Future’s Getting Old Like the Rest of Us Location: Camden Homes for Older People. Artist: Beatrice Gibson with writer George Clarke. Research Assistant: Mara Ferrieri. Co-researchers: Residents of Camden Homes for Older People with care home staff and Programme Coordinator Sally Mercer.

Skills Exchange Acknowledgements: Thanks to all of the project artists, researchers and co-researchers listed above for their tireless work. We are also grateful to writers Franco Berardi (Bifo), Sylvia Federici, Sally Tallant and Yanki Lee for contextualising the work of Skills Exchange. Thanks also to Tim Joss, Rayne Foundation; Jemmie Read, Bloombberg; Denis Kane, Penfold Street Hub; David Ruse and Valentina Wong, Westminster City Council; Sue Heiser and Mary McGowan, Camden Homes for Older People; The Baring Foundation; Mark Greenwood, Abbeyfield Trust; and friends of the project Suely Rolnik, Elizabeth Lima, Nicolas Vass, Irl Rogoff and Susan Kelly, Goldsmiths, University of London.

Skills Exchange was funded by Bloomberg, the Rayne Foundation, the City Bridge Trust, The National Lottery through Big Lottery Fund and Camden Homes for Older People. It was delivered in partnership with Age UK, Hackney; Westminster Housing Care Services; Camden Homes for Older people; the InSpire programme at the Crypt; Southwalk; St John’s Hospice, Camden; and Westmead Care Home, Westminster.

[Insert logo block from Modalities of Exchange]

Skills Exchange

Publication edited by
Janna Graham

Projects Curator
XX

Copy edited by
Melissa Larner

Transcripts
Nicolas Vass and Vittorio Bini

Designed by Åbåke

Printed in the UK
XX Colour Ltd.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise without prior permission of the publishers.

© 2013 Serpentine Gallery, London; Koenig Books, London; and authors

[REPRINT CREDITS]
ISBN (Koenig Books, London)
ISBN (Serpentine Gallery, London)

(SG LOGO)

Serpentine Gallery supported by

Barter With The Future Self

The Future’s Getting Old Like the Rest of Us


Skills Exchange was curated by Janna Graham Projects Curator, Serpentine Gallery and Sally Taliant, Artistic Director, Liverpool Biennal (former Head of Programmes, Serpentine Gallery)

And initiated with Louise Coysh Curator, Art on the Underground (former Project Organiser, Serpentine Gallery)

In partnership with Age UK, Hackney Camden Homes for Older People InSpire at the Crypt, Southwalk St John’s Hospice Westminster Care Home Woodberry Down Coffee Group

Produced by Catherine Hawes, Serpentine Gallery Projects Assistant Amal Khalaf, Assistant Curator, Projects, Serpentine Gallery Rose Lejeune, Interim Projects Organiser, Serpentine Gallery

Advisor Markus Miessen

Skills Exchange: Urban Transformation and the Politics of Care

REPLY AWAITED

An incredible sum of money!