



THE DINNER PARTY

**ORLEANS HOUSE GALLERY
WORKING WITH
STRATHMORE CENTRE**

EVALUATION REPORT



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ORLEANS HOUSE GALLERY
RIVERSIDE, TWICKENHAM
MIDDLESEX, TW1 3DJ

tel: 0208 831 6000 fax: 0208 744 0501
e-mail: galleryinfo@richmond.gov.uk

for further information on education work at Orleans House Gallery, visit us online at:
www.richmond.gov.uk/orleanshouse
for further information about The Dinner Party, and other Opening the Doors projects go
online at www.youngpeopleandmuseums.org.uk

ORLEANS HOUSE GALLERY & THE DINNER PARTY PROJECT

The Dinner Party was a seven-month project between Orleans House Gallery and the Strathmore Centre, working with young people outside of formal education to create a site-specific art installation.

Using image manipulation, textiles, ceramics, food sculpture and sound, the young people created their own Dinner Party installation, site-specific to the baroque Octagon Room at Orleans House Gallery. Taking inspiration from Judy Chicago's *Dinner Party* piece of 1979, the young people selected their own icons as characters. They worked with the artist Paddy Hartley to create sculptural tributes to each 'guest', in the form of ornate place settings, customised food and candelabras. Around the installation, their sound-piece of unseen dining guests chomping, gulping, digesting, of clinking glasses, conversation and laughter filled the Octagon. In evidencing the project, the young people have interviewed and recorded each other at work, facilitated by Meg Ferguson, a young video artist, to create a video document of the project from inception to the night of the private view.

The Dinner Party was a challenging and rewarding project to undertake, and was an important part of our educational commitment over 2001-2. The young people involved have worked very hard to produce an outstanding final piece that was on display to the public as a gallery exhibit. As an exhibit, it was used as the springboard for other educational work, for art groups to discuss and interpret, and day-projects and schools classes have taken part in workshops developed in response to it.

In recent years, Orleans House Gallery has actively developed its work with schools, alternative education centres, youth centres and other organisations supporting young people in the area. The Dinner Party has formed a continuation of the provision being developed by the gallery to assist young people in learning new skills, be they creative, educational, social, or in the form of work experience. From the many projects we have delivered, a recurring issue for young people is that galleries, museums and the arts are "not for them", and we aim to allow them to develop a sense of ownership and confidence in entering the gallery space. The number of our young people who remain in contact with the gallery of their own volition after completion of a project is testimony to the positive impact that these projects can offer young people outside of formal education.

We would like to thank all the young people who have contributed to this project and made a final piece that exceeded so many expectations. We would also like to thank artists Paddy Hartley and Meg Ferguson, all of the staff at the Strathmore Centre, Teddington Park, Richmond upon Thames Exclusions Unit and Orleans House Gallery for all their commitment and hard work. We would also like to thank the Opening the Doors programme for their ongoing support and commitment to in-sector dissemination and training.

NATHALIE PALIN, EDUCATION & OUTREACH PROGRAMMER
RACHEL TRANTER, HEAD OF ARTS

STRATHMORE CENTRE

The Strathmore Centre offers alternative education to young people between 15-16 who do not attend mainstream school. Jointly resourced by Education and Social Services (Services for Children & Families), the Strathmore Centre works with pupils in the secondary phase who are considered to be in need of personal support, because of significant social and educational difficulties.

The aim of the Centre is to assist young people with social, educational, emotional and behavioural difficulties in the transition from adolescence to adulthood. In addition to support to schools, the Centre support includes their Year 11 full-time day programme classified as education other than at school.

The specific objectives of the Strathmore Centre are to help young people:

- Develop alternative strategies for decision-making.
- Modify inappropriate behaviour and develop self-control.
- Form successful relationships with their peers, parents and other adults.
- Broaden experience in both academic and non-academic areas of learning.
- Improve their self-esteem through the development of special interests.
- Learn to use leisure time more constructively, leading to possible links with local community recreational resources.
- Have an opportunity for work experience, to provide support when they make the transition from school to work or school to college.
- Achieve a greater level of emotional, social and personal maturity through the use of programmes in life and social skills.
- To give young people in conjunction with all the staff opportunities to look at and think about their own behaviour, both in one-to-one situations as well as in the variety of group settings.



STRATHMORE CENTRE: PROJECT REVIEW

As each New Year begins and the Strathmore Centre meets with the new group of young people and their parents/carers, we also invite outside agencies to speak with the group and let them know how each agency will become involved in their forthcoming year. Therefore it was with some excitement and trepidation that I listened to Rachel Tranter's contribution and what plans she had for the Strathmore Centre's year-11 programme.

The year 11 programme is very fortunate in some ways: it takes young people who have been excluded from school, have excluded themselves, have lost confidence in their abilities and in general, may just be floundering waiting for someone to "pick them up" and direct them towards another goal. How is that fortunate? Well, our staff know that all the previous methods have been tried and probably failed. The approach now required needs to be a little different, a little bit "off the wall", but needs to progress young people to attain, make decisions and select for themselves their chosen path for a year's time.

With the help of outside agencies, the centre is able to offer a wide range of opportunities to young people who may never have considered themselves to be good at or interested in a particular activity before. This is what we have seen through the art projects we have run with Orleans House Gallery. An idea can be transformed into a project that most of the young people attending the day programme can contribute to. A Dinner Party as an art project was one such idea that for the most part of 2001-2002 helped staff and young people to focus on arts and crafts, GCSE Art and other aspects of the general programme.

My initial thoughts went to woodwork and carpentry. How would the centre make furniture, a table? What did we mean by inviting guests to dinner? Would we have to make the food as well? How could we have a dinner party lasting a week and have LEA dignitaries viewing and observing. This was to be the dinner party from Hell!

The event was made by the venue, the Octagon, the dedication of the staff and young people who contributed to it all happening. All of the young people who entered for GCSE Art passed, and other young people took part who stated at the outset that they were not interested in art at all. It was a tremendous success.

Would the PRS do it all again? Definitely.

With a bit of problem solving and lateral thinking anything is possible. When staff are sometimes seen as "off the wall", both the centre and the young people can take a risk and have a go at anything. Some of the young people are used to taking risks. With the gallery coming forward with such a project, it gives them the opportunity to have new experiences.

I am looking forward to the next Gallery project.

RON WALLACE, HEAD OF PUPIL REFERRAL SERVICE

AIMS & OBJECTIVES

For the young people

- To effect how the participants approach learning, and to expose them to new, innovative ways of responding to stimuli & developing skills.
- To help them identify their strengths & acquire new skills: creatively, in the development of ideas, collaboration & teamwork.
- To help the young people identify their options for the future, in conjunction with the careers advice service at the Strathmore Centre.
- To give them a sense of ownership over ideas developed through the project – by involving them from initial inception through to final exhibition.
- To arouse interest in the arts, museums & galleries and to help the young people gain a sense of ownership in entering the gallery space.
- To develop responses of the young people, in a way that is relevant to them, forming their ideas into a creative piece: in order to stimulate their interest & increase their self-esteem through helping them to value their own achievements.
- To raise the motivation & confidence of those involved, by exhibiting the final piece in the gallery as a symbol of their achievement.
- To expose parents to the project and the accomplishments of their children.

For the organisations

- To allow an exchange of information & knowledge between the Strathmore Centre & Orleans House Gallery & to strengthen relations, so further opportunities can be pursued.
- To use evaluation & promotion of the project to increase awareness of this area of work and to widen the discursive forum around it.
- To generate new future opportunities for young people through the Orleans House Gallery, the Strathmore Centre, and other centres serving disengaged young people in the area.

Additional Beneficiaries: Young People Working On Documentation & Reporting

- 2 young people to assist in video documentation, including one young video artist.
- a young person/reporter to cover project & final exhibition.
- a young person to design evaluative CD-Rom.

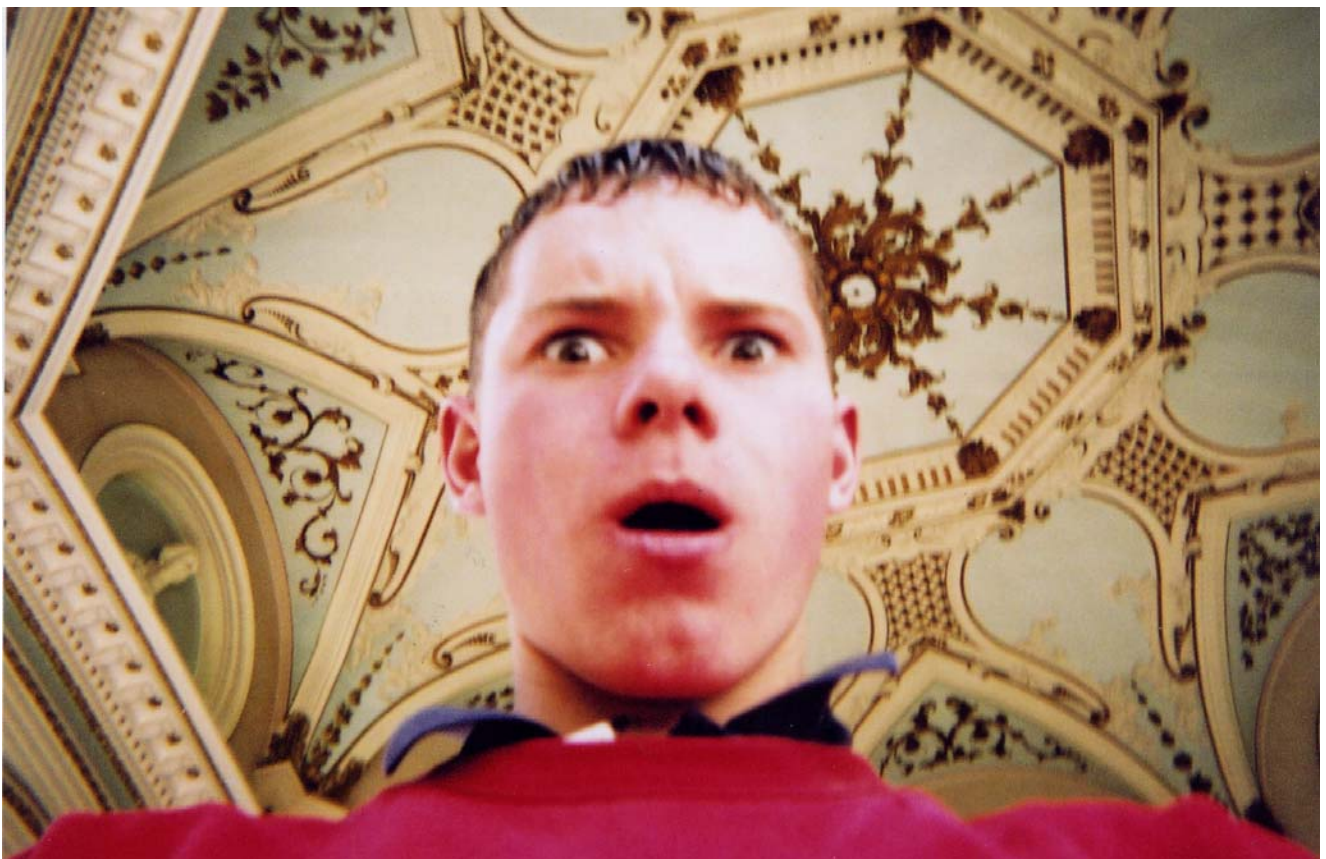


PROCESS

INITIAL VISITS FOR INSPIRATION

The project involved two initial visits, to gather ideas and inspiration for the project's themes. The first was to Orleans House Gallery in November 2001 to see the James Gibbs Octagon Room (C1720) where the final piece would be installed. We visited the Octagon Room as the first "brainstorm" session, grounding the themes of the project in the history of the room. As a group, we discussed the history of the Octagon's interior, its original use as a place of entertainment, and made comparisons with modern-day equivalents, as contemporary Interiors, as well as the kind of parties that the group would go to. This threw up a whole range of ideas and helped the group to relate to the Octagon – a room that, for them, was so grand and historic, they had initially found difficult to talk about.

We also visited the Victoria & Albert Museum with a smaller group of 5 young people. The breadth of the V&A's collection allowed us to look at a whole range of objects, from cutlery and silverware, glass, and costume, as well as the building itself. We felt that the Radical Fashion show on exhibition would break down some of the group's assumptions about art - what constituted art and how pieces could be displayed. Some of the young people had attended another major gallery space at their previous schools - they described the experience as "boring" and any suggestion of returning there with cries of "no not again!" After further discussions, it appeared that this had mainly been due to the young people being left to wander around, which had left them feeling undirected and confused. With a carefully directed tour of the V&A, the group seemed to have a very positive experience, and gave very positive feedback both during and following the trip. They particularly enjoyed the glass collections, where they could interact with the staircase and other large objects "because you can walk on it and touch it". The Cast Courts were also a definite favourite.



Another very important element of the visits was the time spent travelling and eating. On a timetabled project, it is easy for the group of young people to maintain a distance from the adult staff, be they key workers or artists. Spending an hour on a train, or eating lunch, is an invaluable way of breaking down those barriers and brokering more equal relationships. Going into the centre of London was a big adventure for this group, and some found it quite intimidating being outside their familiar territory. With the right support, this is a valuable way of allowing them to "try out" the wider world. It formed an important part of allowing individual young people to go through fear-barriers and gain confidence.

Following these initial visits, a number of individual young people accompanied gallery staff to other historic buildings, museums and galleries over the project. One young person went with the staff team to Marble Hill House, as part of his work experience with the gallery. Before the visit, he'd resisted: "I've been before, and I didn't like it". But, on this second visit, effectively as a "member of staff" he had a very positive experience – he was there for a specific reason, which gave his visit more validity in his mind, and none of his peers were present.



WORKSHOPS

Artist-led workshop sessions ran as morning and afternoon sessions over a seven-month period, from November 2001 – May 2002. Workshops began as outreach at the Strathmore Centre, and then, as the group became more comfortable with the artist and gallery staff, they were held over both sites for the last half of the project. They were designed to be developmental in order that the group would gradually gain ownership of their own work and the piece as a whole. Each session did also allow for individuals to "drop-in", as attendance of certain young people could be sporadic.

Although the initial concept of The Dinner Party was put forward by the gallery, we felt that it was very important that the project developed out of ideas generated by the group of young people themselves. These ideas-based workshops were quite a struggle for most of the young people, because they had to rely on ideas and not on a physical task they had been set. It requires a fair amount of confidence to put forward ideas in front of ones peer group. From our very first meeting with the young people, many assumed that they would fail to live up to the potential of the project. As we began our first workshop, one said: *"Why don't you go and do it with some normal kids? - we'll just screw it up, we won't get it finished.."* After overcoming these initial worries, they began to select characters and role models that would form the basis of the individual elements of the installation. They worked on maquettes and layout designs, in order to create a miniature of the final piece that everyone could relate to. At this point, the group began to feel much more confident about the project and this allowed their commitment to grow.

In creating in the actual piece, workshops incorporated a wide range of different media:

- Creating sculpture and relief-sculpture, using chocolate and sugar
- Ceramics, using slip-moulding, casting and slab-work
- Image-transfer onto ceramics and fabrics, using Lasertran
- Textiles, constructing the main base of the installation
- Carpentry, constructing the 8-foot diameter table
- Sound-recording and editing
- Video-recording



Recruitment and Retention

Prior to the start of the project, we recruited 16 young people attending the Strathmore Centre, or using the centre's educational and social outreach provision. Within the first few weeks, 2 of the young people decided not to continue with the project, and some weeks later, in their place, 3 other young people joined. Over the whole project, 19 young people took part at some level. Due to periods of non-attendance by some of the young people, a maximum of 13 young people attended project sessions in any one month.



Group Working

As the different elements of the project took form, participants began to share work. Some participants didn't want the pressure of working on their own 'piece' so they collaborated with others and began to teamwork well. There had been concerns expressed that some young people would damage each other's work but this did not happen. Their team spirit of helping each other got stronger and stronger over the course of the project.

As the project drew to a close and became more demanding, the gap grew between those who were really interested and those who were less interested. Certain individuals put in more and more effort, and the other members of the group felt less ownership over the project, and withdrew further. Certain individuals would only attend sessions when the group was large, and so options to "get through" to them was much more difficult. Those less involved, much preferred the larger groups, where they could maintain a level of contact with the project, yet not feel that they were on the margins.

Certain individuals identified with different members of staff from Orleans House Gallery, and developed a relationship with the gallery that was on some level independent from the Strathmore Centre. This worked well for the small number of young people who took this route.

Refinement and Installation

Following the core of the workshops, the group were worked incredibly hard on the intensive period of refining the work and installing the final piece. Individuals took pieces of work home to finish in their spare time, and came to the gallery on evenings and weekends to ensure that it would be ready on time. This level of commitment marked the beginning of the gallery's long-term relationship with certain young people.

PRIVATE VIEW



The day of the private view was frantic for everyone involved. With all the main elements of the installation in place, the food sculptures needed making (last-minute so they wouldn't rot) the sound piece was being tested, food for the private view being prepared, and information pamphlets being printed. The sheer amount of work kept everyone motivated and through this, some of the young people who had been anxious to avoid each other, overcame their differences and worked and chatted together.

As with many private views, the ratio of "adults" to young people was high. However, as testimony to their progress and achievements, the young people took this on board and enjoyed the validation of their hard work and successes beyond their own peer group. They integrated with people of different ages, initiated conversations with press, funding representatives, as well as chatting and mutually congratulating each other.

Most of the participants who attended the private view brought parents and family. This reflected the pride of the young people in their own achievements. Some families had never been to the gallery before and were evidently amazed by both the quality of work that their children had produced, and the enthusiasm, commitment and maturity they showed. One of our young people got up in front of a room of over 150 people and gave a speech she had written about her experiences on the project.

"I'm very pleased with what we've achieved over the last few months. At the beginning I didn't really want to get involved in the project, because I didn't like the sound of it. But when I saw that it was all coming together I decided to take part. I really liked working with the food and I think it brings life to the whole project. Because everyone was so laid back and down to earth it made it more fun, and easier to have a laugh. Also, that attitude

made other people at the centre want to join in. Because of this project I have learnt that art isn't just about drawing or painting, but it's also about creativity and ideas. I'd like to thank the staff at Orleans House Gallery and the Strathmore Centre for allowing me to have such a good experience."

Heather

The private view generated a great deal of interest from local press, museums and galleries and educational workers, as well as other visitors. This celebratory event and the volume of people who attended really helped cement the experience for the young people who had worked so hard to bring it together. 173 people came to the private view and a further 810 visited during the week of the exhibition, including groups from some the young people's previous schools.

A large number staff attended from the Borough's Education Department, Strathmore Centre and other similar organisations, including Hounslow Pupil Referral Service and Kingston Pathfinders. Sustaining these links has been very important for us as an organisation, and has allowed potential for centres developing their own projects. Following the private view, Christ's secondary school returned with a group of their students and used The Dinner Party installation as the springboard for a project of their own. The young people involved in the project were very aware of these additional benefits, and as a result, a number of them volunteered as support workers to run drop-in creative workshops at the gallery for children and families, based on the skills they had learnt over the year.



EVALUATIVE METHODS

Through the following methods we tried to use a diverse range of approaches to evidence & monitor the progress of the project and of the participants individually:

Registration & Attendance Records

All the young people were “registered” onto the project, and attendance records kept for each of the sessions. This allowed us to monitor changing levels of engagement of those involved. This does, however, have its drawbacks: some young people found paperwork intimidating. They were concerned about signing forms & had many questions regarding whom they were for and how they would be used. This brought funders’ requirements their attention & formalised the intentions of the project.

Ongoing evaluation: observation, video & photography

Throughout the project both staff & young people took photographs & video footage of each other and their work. This gave us a very honest view of the highs & lows of a project, of the development of the young people and their increasing confidence in the gallery environment. Many of the young people didn’t feel comfortable being recorded, so the video artist encouraged them to record and interview each other. This gave a very different flavour to the video produced - focusing on the interests & concerns of the young people rather than those of the project staff.

Looking Back: questionnaires & recorded discussions

At the close of the project both staff & participants completed questionnaires - to reflect back on the project as a whole. For some young people written questionnaires were inappropriate, so we also conducted and recorded informal discussions (group & one-to-one).

Self-evaluation & action plans

We had intended that action plans would be used before, during & after the project, to help the young people identify their skills, & to assess the project’s contribution to their future plans. It became evident early on that this would further formalise the project and increase the resistance of certain young people to take part. Instead, we relied on the centre’s own review procedure: for both the young people’s self-evaluation and to follow progress after the project.

Additional contributions: poetry, written pieces, & speech making

Some of the young people wrote poetry, made drawings, wrote their own personal assessments of the project, and made speeches on the night of the private view. Although encouraged, this was not required of them and it reflected those young people who were most engaged in the project. Some of these contributions are shown in this document.

Visitors to the Exhibition

The visiting public could record their views in a Comments Book. All the remarks were very positive, and this was both valuable feedback for the project, and a personal affirmation for the young people involved.

SWOT Analysis

(Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities & Threats)

Strengths

- Clearly defined aims & objectives from the outset of the project.
- Flexibility in addressing changes to project schedule & group needs.
- Visits to broaden the scope of the project and participants experiences.
- Gradual transfer of the project from outreach to gallery-site.
- Young people felt at ease in the gallery environment.
- Focused celebratory event & certificates to mark young people's achievements.
- High quality of finished installation piece.
- Developing work with one group of young people through one academic year.
- Incorporation of other young people in documenting and evaluation work.
- Project design allowed for individual work and group collaboration.

Weaknesses

- Unequal partnership responsibility between organisations, leading to reduced "shared ownership" of project.
- Limited consultation with participants at planning stage.
- Delayed appointment of key coordination post.
- Difficulty for young people to imagine context & value of work prior to final exhibition.
- Insufficient resources to allow for after-care for more than 4/5 young people, after completion of the project.

Opportunities

- To work with new young people and maintain contact with them through work experience and support.
- To develop peer mentoring in future work by supporting and training young people from this project.
- The gallery's introduction to the GCSE framework.
- Relationship building between partner organisations for future projects.
- Application of experience and lessons learnt in future work.
- To disseminate information about this project to generate debate and information-sharing, and to inspire other to generate similar projects with the support of the Opening the Doors programme.
- To meet with other partners in Opening the Doors & The Art of Inclusion to learn and hear from other projects about progress and development.
- Development of other opportunities working with young people through VIP, PAYP and the Youth Offending Team.

Threats

- Interruption of project due to half term, residentials & work-placements.
- Mounting pressure of GCSEs on young people at critical final stage of project.
- Difficulty of engaging all the participants fully in the project.
- Challenging behaviour from some young people.
- Lack of commitment and/or non-attendance by some young people.
- Acrimony between some young people early in the project.
- Large group of young people – better supported in small groups.

KEY OUTCOMES

FOR THE YOUNG PEOPLE PARTICIPATING

Personal

- Identifying new and appropriate role models, through having a range of different staff and artists to relate to.
- Being able to “try out” an adult form of themselves, through being in a new environment with different connotations.
- Learning to negotiate their peer group and overcome conflict.
- Developing teamwork and collaborative skills.
- Recognition of their achievements by peers, family, adults and general public.
- Opportunity to affirm their capabilities with their previous schools.
- Overcoming emotional barriers, through managing to work under pressure to meet a deadline successfully.
- Increased motivation, both during and after the project.
- Increased confidence, in decision-making, communication and risk-taking.
- Use of the gallery by some young people as a surrogate “family”.

I felt very tired after all the hard work and very happy with myself, and so were a lot of other people. The night of the private view was OK because there were so many people who came to see the dinner party I had so many people saying well done, including the Mayor. My Home Tutor Katherine came to see and so did a member of staff from where I live. Later on, three more came when it was open – they came to visit my work for the first time. One of the people was crying because she was so proud of me. She read my poem and really liked it – she was so surprised that I could write poetry.

Nicole

Educational

- Attainment of GSCE Art for 3 young people.
- Special Recommendations for 2 young people in the Artworks Awards 2003.
- Certificate of project completion for Record of Achievement.
- New creative skills acquired – in ceramics, textiles, sound, design and construction.
- Increased confidence to generate ideas and brainstorm.
- Identifying their strengths in relation to future educational and life-choices.
- Increased attainment in subjects by specific young people who accessed the gallery for educational support following the project (2002-3).
- One participant, who had a particular interest in heritage, is now studying A-Level History at college.

The V&A was all right, but when I first went there I weren't as interested as I am now. It made me more interested after I'd seen it all ... The art project turned out to be like pick your own character. I chose Bob Marley and it just went from there. I'm interested in some of his songs – he's quite a good singer isn't he. So it's quite like a tribute to him basically.

Billy

Vocational

- Experience of appropriate responsibility through support-working on children's art sessions at the gallery.
- Long-term work experience placements for 3 of the participants.
- References for work placements and educational placements.
- Mentoring and support for young people following the project by gallery staff.

Cultural

- Increased confidence in entering the gallery space, feeling that they are entitled to be there.
- Increased confidence in entering other cultural spaces, museums and galleries.
- Increased confidence in expressing their views about exhibitions.
- Increased willingness to engage in discussions about exhibited work.

*With art and galleries, I just turned round and went b****cks to them. 'Cos you don't know what to expect when you go into a gallery. All you see is either knitted stuff or artwork that people have drawn. You don't see normal videos and stuff like you've got here, it's a totally different world.*

Nicole



FOR ORLEANS HOUSE GALLERY

- New relationships built with individual young people over the long-term.
- Improved partnership with the Strathmore Centre and residential services for young people in the borough.
- Demand from other organisations working with young people wanting to work with the gallery on future projects.
- Expansion of our young people's work, to incorporate Art & Design GCSE delivery.
- Public recognition for good-practice and for the quality of our projects with young people, including a National Children's Art Day Award 2003 and dissemination through conferences/seminars and web/paper based publications organised by Opening the Doors.
- Increased profile of the Arts Service within the Local Authority, leaving the gallery less vulnerable as an organisation.
- Increased "voice" in community priorities and local policy making.
- Creation of dedicated education posts.
- Strengthening of the case for an Arts Education Centre at the gallery, and £50,000 seed funding towards the Heritage Lottery Bid (submitted Jan 2004).

"I enjoyed the Octagon Room because it was very pretty and peaceful."

Andrew

FOR STRATHMORE CENTRE

- Involvement in high profile project.
- Aspirations of the project carried through organisation.
- Support for Strathmore centres own priorities.
- 3 young people pass GCSE.
- Initiation of further projects based at the centre including re-design of their hall with interior designer and gallery (Strathmore express).
- Funding for a further project as part of the Artworks Award 2003.

"It was wonderful to see young people who are difficult to engage becoming and excited by what they were doing"

Katherine Ashley – Key Worker and Tutor.

OTHER OUTCOMES & INDICATORS

- A number of young people took their own initiative to write poetry, give speeches and write their own more in-depth assessments of the project.
- Most of those who attended the private view brought parents & family. This reflected the pride of the young people in their own achievements. Some families had never been to the gallery before and were evidently amazed by both the quality of work that their children had produced, and the enthusiasm & commitment they showed.
- It was very evident that the young people felt very at home in the gallery, and this enabled families & newcomers to enjoy the evening in a relaxed way.
- As the evening drew to a close and parents & friends left, several of the young people stayed on to clear up and didn't want the evening to end.
- The comments book from the exhibition included the following statements:
"Really wonderfully imaginative – just like a film set! Fantastic – really loved it!"
"The exhibition is a real eye opener – the colours, the use of unusual materials and the high standards achieved by those who have few opportunities"
"Wonderful attention to detail: I went around three times and still found something new"
- A number of local schools visited the exhibition, and were evidently impressed by the quality of work produce. Some of the young people at the Strathmore Centre had previously attended these schools. This was an excellent opportunity - it gave the young people a platform to show their capacities and achievements to the schools, and an opportunity for the schools themselves to see what these young people could produce.
- The exhibition was used for a series of workshops to celebrate Museums and Galleries Month, working with children & families, and the after-school art club, to create pieces to add to the installation. This provided a successful model for integrating our different education programmes, to maximise the benefits of a project for the community.
- The Dinner Party project was included in a special display as part of the Ofsted inspection of the LEA (2002).

My words to describe the project are -

- *Fun*
- *Exciting*
- *Happy people*
- *A good laugh*
- *An experience*
- *A shock for the staff – 'cos they've never seen me so happy!*

Nicole

CONCLUSION

The Dinner Party was developed to offer sixteen young people a new perspective into the arts, into galleries & museums, and on themselves and their capabilities. As a project we had had contact with eighteen young people over the course of seven months. Not all remained with the project until the end, but from their evaluations, even those who non-attended as the project progressed, considered that the experience had been valuable and that they had taken something from it. The finished piece that the young people produced was outstanding. The project won an Artworks Award in 2003, and has been shown in a number of other educational settings since.

A number of young people gained a great deal from the project - in terms of self-esteem, increasing their skills base and gaining new approval from those who are important to them. Of the initial group of sixteen, nine saw it through to the end, and over that time they had come to see the gallery as a place where they could feel at home.

Two years on, three of the original participants still have a regular and committed relationship with the gallery, for work experience and pastoral care. One is now an important part of our advocacy work for forthcoming projects, and also supports individual young people engaged in our GCSE programme.

Looking back, The Dinner Party marked a real change in the gallery's work with young people. The young people involved were very verbal in expressing their views about the gallery, other museums and centres we visited, and about the content of the project. Through the range of staff on the project, different participants would gravitate to those they related best to, and this allowed for a different level of openness and communication across the group.

Working with young people outside of formal education is challenging and difficulties have had to be overcome over the course of the project. One key thing we take from this evaluation is that the partnership between Orleans House Gallery and the Strathmore Centre has been strengthened and improved, allowing future projects to be developed to support other young people in the area. Already, this has included the interior-design based project Strathmore Express (2003) and Dig (2003-4) a project based on garden-design and heritage, which is still ongoing.

Billy the kid serves up a dish for Bob

BOB MARLEY was the inspiration behind an exciting project in West London. Talented schoolboy Billy Shirbon, 15, chose Bob Marley as his 'iconic character' for a customised tablecloth, plate and knife and fork. The nine-month project which was organised by Orleans House Gallery in Twickenham, involved 18 youngsters based at the Strathmore Centre. They worked with an artist Paddy Hartley and co-ordinator Nathalie Palin to create a special dinner table installed in the Octagon Room at Orleans House Gallery.

Curator and project manager Rachel 'Miss Tortola' Tranter is thrilled that Billy had chosen the reggae legend. She is a regular visitor to the British Virgin Islands.

'I brought back a special Bob Marley banner for Billy that my friend One Love had given me in Tortola during my last visit,' she said.

'One Love who has a retail outlet on Cane Garden Beach, on the west side of Tortola, was fascinated by the project. In fact, he may well end up using Billy's ideas to manufacture plates and cutlery in the future.' Tranter intends to promote the arts scene in the BVI with her mother Sandra when she eventually moves there permanently.



CREATIVE: Billy is talented

Working in partnership

The Dinner Party was the first artist-led project between Orleans House Gallery and the Strathmore Centre, and it has been an excellent opportunity for us to build closer relations. Working with different agencies brings with it a number of challenges, not least, a much broader array of agendas and priorities that all organisations are subject to. The flexibility of this particular project allowed us as a partnership to overcome a number of obstacles, such as exams schedules, changing timetables, residencies and the like. And of course the flexibility to respond together to responses from young people who wanted something different from the project. From subsequent collaborations with Strathmore Centre, we have all been keen to establish:

- a more equal partnership: allowing for more shared input, responsibility and opportunities for both organisations.
- a more in-depth consultation period between organisations at planning stage.

This has improved our partnership-working in the following ways:

- Improved sense of shared ownership over the project.
- Commitments & priorities of each organisation identified at planning stage.
- Improved communication throughout the length of the project through review meetings.
- A more 'unified voice' to participants on the purposes and validity of the project.
- Improved continuity for participants following completion of the project, due to stronger links between organisations.

Working with young people

Many of the young people at the Strathmore Centre bring with them issues that impact on attendance and time-management. Not all of the participants saw it through to the end. To work with young people who are struggling to engage, any process of self-selection prior to a project beginning would run the risk of "loosing" the very young people who might benefit most. So, although it can feel like a symbol of failure, allowing a whole group to "taste" a project and then choose whether to continue seems like the most appropriate approach.

In future projects the following efforts can be made to improve recruitment and retention:

- Improved consultation with participants in the planning stages of the project to improve their sense of ownership.
- Early assessment of the level of interest of young people and/or their potential to become interested.
- Division of the project into different elements so that young people with different interests and skills focus on their chosen area.
- Division of the project into a number of smaller groups, allowing for more personalised sessions.

Working with groups

Early in the project we identified that working in a large group was inappropriate for our young people. We noticed that:

- With larger groups, individuals found it difficult to show a level of interest or enthusiasm above group as a whole. This hindered the progress of individuals who wanted to become more involved.
- With larger groups the development of a relationship with individuals was hindered.
- Larger groups, however, did allow those less involved to maintain a level of contact with the project, and stop them feeling that they were on the margins.

- The group dynamic quickly showed that in a larger group, individuals were less engaged with the project, and easily disrupted & distracted. It was much more appropriate work in small groups and for finite periods of time. This allowed them to step out of the expected behaviour of their peer group. This was expressed by a number of the young people themselves *"It's just too manic when it's too many people ... I get really distracted."* Billy

As the project drew to a close and become more demanding, the gap grew between those who were really interested and those who were less interested. Certain individuals put in more and more effort, and the other members of the group felt less ownership over the project, and withdrew further.

Certain individuals would only attend sessions when the group was large, and so options to "get through" to them was much more difficult. This dynamic requires more support staff on hand who already knew the young people, allowing the artist to focus on supporting those needing creative and practical guidance. Those struggling to concentrate can more easily be able to engage in conversation and individuals' needs can be addressed in a more flexible and immediate way. Division of the group of sixteen into three small groups, focusing each group around different activities, depending on how they would best respond.

Certain individuals identified with certain members of staff from Orleans House Gallery, and developed a relationship with the gallery that was on some level independent from the Strathmore Centre. This worked well for the small number of young people who took this route.

Cultural Context

One of the most interesting things that came out of the evaluation with participants was that they had not anticipated how professional the final outcomes could be and for some of the less engaged members, this meant they regretted not having been more involved. All had found it difficult to imagine the end product as something of real quality and value, as they had no experience of exhibitions or private views. This made it quite difficult for them to take complete ownership of the piece until the end of the project.

With this in mind, the role of young people from previous projects in future recruitment has a huge benefit. Creating a video of The Dinner Party project has been useful not only as a document, but also as a tool for recruitment. Potential young people can relate directly to the young people taking part and see the work progress from workshop to final show.

One young person from the Dinner Party project is now heavily involved at the gallery as a peer-mentor, supporting not only recruitment, but also retention - by taking part in workshop sessions with young people on other projects. He has a real experience of being a participant on an extended project and is happy to articulate the benefits to himself to young people a couple of years his junior. For these new participants, his testimony has far more authority than anything we as staff could say.

I enjoyed the VIP projects because we were making sculptures and helping with young people. That was a good experience for me, because I like working with plaster and I had never done work like that before. I found seeing as I was closer to their age group so I got on well with them. It was good working with Martha because we were good at different things so we worked well together. I thought the young people were well behaved - they looked up to me as an example because I had already done a project (dinner party) with the gallery and that helped me to grasp an idea of what a project was about.

Billy (2004)

THE FUTURE

Post-Project Support For Young People

With many short-term projects, one challenge has been to maintain contact with young people after the close of the project. At Orleans House Gallery a healthy number of young people maintain regular contact with the gallery as volunteers, or for Art support. However, the gallery cannot support the number of young people who complete projects. In order to better meet the needs of young people after such projects, we are working towards:

- Recent establishment of two Education & Outreach posts to further develop our work with schools & with young people outside of formal education.
- Improving partnership-work, to build in post-project support at planning stage, using a range of agencies.
- Developing stronger relationships with other agencies supporting young people – such as Inclusion officers, the VIP programme, the Social Services and Education providers.
- Sign-posting young people to appropriate organisations.
- Developing peer-mentoring opportunities through the gallery, including young people co-running workshops, and involving other young people through peer-advocacy.
- The development of a dedicated Arts Education Centre, through the conversion of our Coach-house and Stables buildings.

Strathmore Centre & Orleans House Gallery: Partnership Working

- Orleans House Gallery & the Strathmore Centre have continued to work together on a number of extended projects, including *"Strathmore Express"* (2003), and *Dig* (2003-4 ongoing).
- We have also been developing work with the Youth Offending Team, sited adjacent to Strathmore Centre, through which we are now developing an extended project for Positive Activities for Young People (PAYP), in partnership with Hounslow PRS, the VIP Programme and the National Portrait Gallery (2004).
- For the forthcoming year, we have programmed an exhibition of young people's work in our Stables Gallery, incorporating the work of young people presently working on their GCSE art with us or through our extended partnership-projects.

Future Projects at Orleans House Gallery

- In the light of the proposed development of an Arts Education Centre at the gallery, we have been developing a series of projects based on the history of the Orleans House site, in partnership in a number of organisations, including Hounslow PRS, Strathmore Centre and Feltham Youth Offenders Institution. In particular the *Turf* project 2003 took place as part of the Opening the Doors three-year programme and we are continuing to work with them on dissemination of good practice and fundraising for future work.
- Orleans House Gallery is also delivering Art & Design GCSE through the borough's VIP programme, an alternative to formal education for young people in year- 11.
- For further details of the gallery's education and outreach work please visit our website at www.richmond.gov.uk/orleanshouse

"I think the Coach House would be vital for the future of young people in arts. It's a big area with big potential The gallery help a lot of young people. I've really benefited from the gallery and hope they can go on helping young people in the future."

Billy (extract from letter to the Heritage Lottery Fund 19th January 2004)

The piece below was written by Helen O’Rain, an independent evaluator who observed the installation and attended the private view

Orleans House: The Dinner Party

Queen Caroline would have been amazed. Queen Victoria might even have been amused. Both royals dined in the Octagon room in their time, but their banquets could not have touched the rich variety of this one. How could oysters and venison compare with this display? Eight individual decorative place settings designed with eight hand-made table cloths and plates with beautiful matching motifs; cutlery befitting the guests (microphones, dreadlocks); an amazing plate of ivy leaves covered in dark and white chocolate (M C Romeo) with trails of ivy around it; chocolate pyramids for Cleopatra; fantasies and flags; sculptures skilfully made of bread (‘Breadheads’); a luscious red cherry star for Che Guevara; chains and butterflies; a vegetable gun and spatters of blood; honeycomb cells (Who? Guess!) - all these details imagined, researched, collected and designed by students from the Strathmore Centre with artist Paddy Hardy supported by tutors and gallery staff.

Picture the scene on a May afternoon as the hour to dine approaches: chocolate oozing in all directions, star-shaped sandwiches shooting off a laughing production line, grapes being threaded into giant necklaces, dollar signs being made with recalcitrant dough, pound signs baking in the oven, the vegetable growth of candelabra... (‘Surely tuna and chocolate sandwiches can’t go on the same plate?’). This final race against the clock is the culmination of months of effort for students and artist alike: researching famous dinners of the past; looking at other artistic installations; visiting the V & A; researching the chosen characters; experimenting with different ideas and motifs, different creative processes and techniques and how to work with an unusual range of materials. All this goes along with the excitements and doubts, the enthusiasms and misgivings, the learning to work as a team (so different to GCSE work), the varying levels of commitment as examination demands increase, the self-learning, the obstacles and the fun.

Up in the office one student is writing a speech. “I don’t know what to say” turns into clear and fluent communication about being pleased to have taken part despite initial reluctance; feelings of pride in the result; the realisation of personal gains made through involvement with the project and thanks to the staff and everyone involved.

The guests begin to arrive. The ‘music’ of the dining table floats out from under the settings. As time goes on, more students appear and tutors and the Mayor and members of students’ families... One relative on a first visit to the gallery is clearly amazed by the work and the setting. Many are so delighted to see how much the students have achieved. The core of students who have stuck at the work all day begin to relax and enjoy it. A few others, who kept a low profile at first, begin to join in. A hurried phone call – “...but Mum, everyone is here – all the tutors have come!”

Looking back? One student who found the project difficult at one point had felt like giving up but had stuck at it and found it was really worth it in the end. She had learned that it’s no good giving up the race at the pain barrier. All the students attending looked pleased and surprised at the reception the installation received. The press was there. The neighbourhood will read about it. The Centre will display photographs. People who have never visited the gallery before have taken that step. These ripples will spread. Who knows quite how far? Certainly several of the students will never be quite the same. One tutor said to a student after her speech, “That was your magic moment. Some people never have one all their lives. Don’t lose it.” I don’t think she ever will.

Helen O’Rain May 2002



The Dinner Party

By Nicole

*The clock struck six
1,2,3,4,5,6*

*The sound of the chairs scraping along the floor
As people get ready to say their prayers
Then they all take a seat*

The table is set –

*M.C Romeo, Bob Marley, Winnie the Pooh,
The Kray twins, Papillon, Che Guevara,
Anthony and Cleopatra.*

They All sit down to hand made tablecloths –

*Roaring Lions, buzzing bees, stinging scorpions, gushing waterfalls, silver bullets, flapping flags, fluttering butterflies, money, ticking clocks, honey comb,
Ancient maps, jingling coins, lashing leather, and shining silk diamonds, mega microphones making music.
On top of these tablecloths lay the Chocolate plates, knives and forks and spoons. All hand made ready to eat from.*

May you all enjoy your dinner !!!

Now

Dinner is served

The Dinner Party

May 9th - 16th May

Date 15-02 Name J.S. Flanagan

Comments Please

The exhibition is a real eye opener - the colours the use of unusual materials and the high standards achieved by those who have no opportunities.

11.5.02	A. MENEACA	Absolutely brilliant
11.5.02	S. O'BEIR	Stunning & very well
11-5-02	A. LIMBRICK	Wonderful attention to detail I went around three times & still found something new

Re Beulah family: Wonderful fascinating
we all loved it.
So clever! HA HA

12.05.02 D. Sivertsen +
J. Metsoja

Stimulating!
Fantadulosis.

Really Really Good! No serious! How CLEVER!

wonderful and its totally
original. Every time you go!
brilliant. Will "Chord
school

The Dinner Party

May 9th - 16th May

Date 11/5/02 Name Cliff Short Comments Please

So much to discover as you delve
into the individuals' settings.

- Yes, like food slowly going bad
Shouldn't think Queen Caroline
likes it much.

Annabelle Wilding

Really wonderfully imaginative
- just like a film set. Fantastic -
really loved it!

Wonderful project I am not sure about
using food as Art when thousands are
starving

Really enjoyed the exhibition - Caroline Lang.

Visit to the Orleans house gallery

As part of a school trip I visited the Orleans house gallery. We went into a room called the octagon room it was in the shape of a octagon and had eight tables in the shape of a octagon in it. Each table had a different theme there was Eygption table, a Papilion table and we found out papilion was a french man who was in prison. There was also a DC Romeo table, a Mark Anthony table, a Winnie the pooh table, a Bob Marley table and lots, lots more they were all decorated with fruit candle holders and lots of chocolate. They all decorated their knives and forks the Bob Marley cutlery was my favourite they all had dreadlocks hanging from them. My favourite section of the table was the Eygption part all of the cutlery had bandages twirled around it to make the effect of a mummy. There was a plate of chocolate pyramids and an egyption styled table cloth. Another favourite of mine was the DC Romeo from so solid it had microphones stuck to the ends of the cutlery and a plate of chocolate iced with the words SO SOLID CREW and the table cloth had pictures of microphones stuck to it. It was a very interesting exhibition to see.

"The last week of making the dinner party was manic! There were all the chocolate plates to make, table clothes to finish and all of the tables to set out for the display. The tables were shaped in a octagon because that is the shape of the room they are in. We had all the table cloths to finish off. Once they were completed we were so relieved to be able to start working on the candles sticks. These were made out of food, e.g. vegetables, fruit & bread. They were held together using cocktail sticks. We strung the grapes on wire like a necklace!

I felt very tired after all the hard work and very happy with myself and so were a lot of other people. The night of the private view was ok because there were so many people who came to see the dinner party, I had so many people saying well done, including the Mayor. My Home Tutor Katherine came to see it and so did a member of staff from where I live. Later on, three more came when it was open - they came to visit my work for the first time. One of the people was crying because she was so proud of me. She read my poem and really liked it - she was so surprised that I could write poetry. My next door neighbour came down too, and was very surprised with all the involvement I had with the dinner party.

My favourite thing was making (and eating) the chocolate plates!

My worst thing was working with some of the other young people. I preferred to work on my own or with the gallery staff. By the end of the project, I did get on better with some of them, especially at the private view. If I could, I would do it all again (only for the chocolate -only joking! Nicole Fawcett, May 2002

YOUNG ARTIST'S STORY

MEG FERGUSON

For the last seven months I have been involved with "the Dinner Party" an outreach project that culminated last week in an installation at Orleans House Gallery, in West London.

As a young video artist, I was brought in to document progress and offer a new angle on the evaluation process. To date, my work has been concerned with constructs of identity and the relationship between the viewer and the viewed. My previous experience had been making short art videos where I was in control of the subject matter. Often in front of the camera, I found that making the documentary was an opportunity to explore these concerns from a new angle.

Now solely behind the camera, I became increasingly aware of its intrusiveness. Throughout the project we were building relationships and gaining trust. The camera gave me a level of authority and a measure of distance that meant my relationship with the young people was slower to develop. One solution was to allow the young people to film: another was to get them to think of themselves on television and present in a "Blue Peter" fashion. By giving them some control they were more willing to be filmed.

I feel that the project has been a success. The young people have put in a lot of commitment and hard work and built relationships that will continue into the future.

I have learnt a lot. Portraying people as they are has been challenging. Like all documentaries, I'm ultimately giving my own point of view – but dealing with actual identities, rather than my own constructs, has meant adopting a more democratic process. I've gained an invaluable insight into the artist/subject relationship.

Like many recent graduates, my experience had been largely insulated by the institution. Contact with a wider section of the community, and 'art audiences', has meant I've avoided much of the isolation new graduates experience. I've experienced how mutually beneficial outreach projects can be. And, they are almost unique in offering the artist a chance to see how the wider community receives art.



Rachel Tranter
Curator
Orleans House Gallery
Riverside
Twickenham
TW1 3DJ

Your Ref:

Our Ref:

10 May 2002



Dear Rachel

THE DINNER PARTY

Thank you very much indeed for inviting me to your 'The Dinner Party' event yesterday. This is a good example of the very real benefits to social inclusion that can result from the collaboration of museums and galleries with organisations supporting disadvantaged people. It is excellent that the Orleans House Gallery and the Strathmore Centre have linked up in this way.

I was very impressed by all the hard work that has gone into the project and by the obvious enthusiasm of the young artists. Their results are certainly of a high standard and a real tribute to the inspiration of Judy Chicago's original work.

Please pass on my congratulations and best wishes to all involved.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mark'.

Mark T Mason
Head of Education and International Team



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

PROJECT BUDGET

EXPENDITURE

£

STAFFING & ADMINISTRATION

Artists Fees	3750.00
Project Co-ordination	3196.50
Project Management	3366.00
Other staff support	1821.00
Staff training & information materials	116.40
Administration & utilities	350.00
Total:	12599.90

BENEFICIARIES' COSTS

Travel, subsistence & incentives (incl. visits costs)	1267.40
Total:	1267.40

PROJECT MATERIALS & EVIDENCING

Workshop Materials	2866.40
Printing & publicity	523.93
Final Exhibition & Private View	349.24
Total:	3739.57

EVIDENCING & EVALUATION

Evaluation Report Costs (100 copies)	
Photographic & documenting materials	422.94
Young video artist fees & duplication	988.15
Evaluation	560.00
Total:	1461.09

PROJECT TOTAL: 19067.96

FUNDING INCOME

Learning & Skills Council: <i>The Art of Inclusion</i>	10998.87
Opening the Doors (Heritage Lottery Fund)	5000.00
Orleans House Gallery contribution	3069.09
TOTAL:	19067.96

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 - The Art of Inclusion funded by the Learning Circuit (Learning & Skills Council)
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THE DINNER PARTY

ORLEANS HOUSE GALLERY
RIVERSIDE
TWICKENHAM
MIDDLESEX
TW1 3DJ

tel: 020 8831 6000

fax: 020 8744 0501

e-mail: galleryinfo@richmond.gov.uk

for further information on education work at Orleans House Gallery, visit us online at:
www.richmond.gov.uk/orleanshouse

for further information on The Dinner Party,
and other Opening the Doors projects go online at
www.youngpeopleandmuseums.org.uk