Considering Co-Creation

A report produced by
Heart of Glass & Battersea Art Centre — *April 2021*

heartofglass

BATTERSEA ARTS CENTRE

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Image credit: Collaborative Arts Partnership Programme
https://www.cappnetwork.com/about-capp/collaborative-arts/

Introduction

Early in 2021, Arts Council England asked us (**Heart of Glass →** and **Battersea Arts Centre →**) to share some thoughts on principles, ethics and references pertinent to the area of Co-Creation. We were asked to undertake this research to support Arts Council England's newly launched strategy for 2020–2030, Let's Create.

It was impossible to consider this task without the heavy weight of Covid hanging over us. We still very much felt in the middle of the accelerated learning and challenge precipitated by the global pandemic, caught somewhere between floating and falling!

Our instinct, as always, was to collaborate. To use the title of Myles Horton's critical publication on education and social change, 'we make the road by walking', and so we wanted to check in with those walking the path, artists, producers and community members. We thank them for generously sharing their experiences at this time.

Both Battersea Arts Centre and Heart of Glass centre communities as part of our practice, so we leaned into those relationships. It is important for us to state that this research is not exhaustive. It would be impossible to bottle and capture such a complex and multi-faceted practice, not least at a time of such upheaval. One of the key strengths of this field of practice is that it resists definition because it is owned by many.

Instead, what we offer are a set of perspectives, and a potential roadmap to encourage further exploration. From the personal testimonies of artists and community members who have worked on, and continue to work on co-created projects; to some of the resources and texts that we draw upon for guidance, inspiration and challenge; what we present here is for you to re-shape, rebuild and re-imagine.

There is no doubt that national and global lockdowns, referred to by some commentators as the 'Great Pause', have presented a unique opportunity for reflection. As we take stock and move into phased routes out of lockdown and consider 'roadmaps' to recovery, the questions remain where are we now, where are we going, and where to next?

In considering the practice of Co-Creation (and associated practices) at this time, we must acknowledge that there have been significant shifts in recent years. There has been a move from discourse about the democratisation of culture to more expansive discussions about cultural democracy, specifically in terms of supporting everyone's cultural capability and the substantive freedom to co-create versions of culture.

There has also been a marked shift from conversations about equality, to more nuanced understandings of equality and equity, and the necessary and urgent unlearning and relearning we need to do as a field of practice, and indeed as a cultural sector and society. There is a growing appetite to interrogate notions of power, both in the formation and delivery of projects, but also in the structures we rely upon to support cultural practices. These shifts loom large in the reflections presented.

There is a wider demand, in our opinion, for a deeper level of connection and collaboration, and a much broader sense of who gets to be part of the making of meaning, and where that meaning takes form, and how it can affect change, both personal, and at a community and structural level.

This demand has always existed, but it has been brought more sharply into focus in recent times. We find ourselves, in the field of Co-Creation, not advocating from the margins as we have done historically, but moving closer to being recognised as espousing accepted and necessary principles of good and ethical practice. This is evidenced by initiatives (to name a few!) such as **Tate Exchange →**, **Calouste Gulbenkian's Sharing the Stage →**, and **Inquiry into the Civic Role of the Arts →**, the on-going work of **Migrants in Culture →** and **AHRC's Cultural Value project →**, and the recent move of Arts Council England's own **Creative People and Places →** programme from project to portfolio status.

Writing for The Financial Times in April 2020, in the midst of the UK's first national lockdown, Arundhati Roy described the pandemic as "a portal, a gateway between one world and the next".[1] It would appear Roy's rallying call to leave "the carcasses of our prejudice and hatred, our avarice, our data banks and dead ideas, our dead rivers and smoky skies behind us" and instead to "walk through lightly, with little luggage, ready to imagine another world" has been received loud and clear.

At the same time, after a year living largely indoors, in bubbles, in facemasks and at 'social distance', there is an almost tangible sense of the need for the reassurance of familiarity, human recognition and reconnection with others, and with ourselves, as we set out on the journey forward. Socially engaged arts in particular has a long and rich heritage and praxis of co-creation, placing art and artists in direct interaction with community, society and social issues and cutting across art-forms and contexts in the making of shared meaning. These levels of deep connection and collaboration are instinctive to artists and practitioners with many years of experience in working with communities of place, enquiry and interest, with marginalised groups, with people of all age ranges, gender, ethnicity and sexual orientation and, increasingly, in a variety of settings and 'non-arts' civic spaces such as hospitals, prisons, schools and older people's homes.

Socially engaged arts has always been at the forefront of explorations in new ways of measuring value and impact through depth, reach, 'wellbeing' and sentiment. What we offer through this research is a connection to some of those explorations.

This is a moment – and arguably the moment - for cultural leadership, with co-creation practice and principles, front and centre!

[1] https://www.ft.com/content/10d8f5e8-74eb-11ea-95fe-fcd274e920ca

Background to Research

In February 2021, Arts Council England commissioned Heart of Glass and Battersea Arts Centre to carry out some work that would provoke debate on co-creation. The aims were:

- To support the cultural sector to develop a shared understanding of what is meant by co-creation;
- To pull together existing learning and resources, and commission a written piece on principles along with case studies and podcasts.

We use hyperlinks throughout this document to link to relevant information.

Look out for interactive links that appear like the below:

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Approach to Brief

Following a series of meetings to review the brief, the project partners, Heart of Glass and Battersea Art Centre, approached the invitation to collaborate on this brief by proposing the following:

- The partners will engage an experienced professional(s) to undertake a **literature review** of current and historic resources and thinking linked to co-creation and associated fields of practice. The reviewer will share a reading list, and produce a short reflection of the current lexicon available and what it communicates about the principles of co-creation.
- Across both organisational networks we will invite responses to a **bespoke survey** produced to gain wisdom by active practitioners in the field. We will work with a freelance practitioner to shape the survey questions and synthesize key learning into a produced report. We will target our existing active networks to generate a sample, these networks include: Faculty North – a learning cohort managed by Heart of Glass, Co-Creating Change – a national network managed by Battersea Arts Centre, Working Class Artist Network – a network project supported by Heart of Glass, Creative People and Places – a peer learning network of which Heart of Glass are a member and Social Arts Network – an independent artist run network of which Heart of Glass are an associate.
- We will co-commission a **podcast series** of 3 × 1 hour conversations with Artists, Producers and Participants linked to the field to gain valuable experiential insight.

We engaged Susanne Burns and Chrissie Tiller as principal researchers. Susanne Burns was already working with Battersea Arts Centre on evaluating the **Co-Creating Change Network →** which was already addressing some of the key challenges in this field of practice and Chrissie Tiller had been working with Heart of Glass on several programmes for some time and had authored the influential Power Up[1] Report for Creative People and Places. It was therefore felt that the two consultants could address the brief on behalf of, and with the partners in the timeframe allocated.

[1] *www.creativepeopleplaces.org.uk/sites/default/files/Power_Up_think_piece_Chrissie_Tiller.pdf*

Limitations & Considerations

It is important to note that this is not an exhaustive piece of work. It has been designed as a 'check-in' with a part of the sector as described above.

This field of practice has a long and contested history and resists easy categorisation. It is important to note that what we provide here is a snapshot of some of the current live conversations and considerations as experienced by practitioners and communities engaged in these practices. It is not a comprehensive review.

Given world events, Heart of Glass and Battersea Arts Centre felt the best approach to utilising the resources attached to this project was to distribute them and harness a wisdom of crowds. In the delivery of this project, and in a short space of time, we have supported 77 practitioners and contributors financially to share their views. Additional relevant elements of supporting research are also included in the report and credited appropriately.

This research was completed remotely between February and March 2021 when the UK was in a full lockdown due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

About Heart of Glass

Heart of Glass is a national agency for collaborative and social arts practice based in St Helens Merseyside. Founded in 2014, we are a proud member of the **Creative People and Places (CPP) →** network and a founding member of the **Collaborative Arts Partnership Programme (CAPP) →**. We believe that art has the power to bring us together and create real change, for the people of our community, and the place we call home. We unlock stories, reimagine public spaces, ask awkward questions and forge new connections. Why? Because we know that art can transform lives and deeply affect our relationship with the world around us. Art is the starting point for each and every journey. Our core philosophy is inspired by co-production - communities and artists making together. People are central to both our thinking and our practice. We are interested in building communities of enquiry, in sharing skills and experience, and placing art in direct interaction with all areas of life. The results of this activity ranges from theatre to visual art, and everything in between.

You can find out more about Heart of Glass by visiting our website

www.heartofglass.org.uk →

About Battersea Arts Centre

Battersea Arts Centre is a hub for everyone's creativity, based in an iconic building with a radical history, the old Battersea Town Hall. We take creative risks to inspire change, locally, nationally and globally.
Our building, and the people who make it special, have transformed the lives of young people, kick-started creative careers, and helped communities connect through making and sharing art. Our Scratch Bar has seen friendships and creative relationships born, and our smallest spaces have been home to the earliest sparks of projects that have gone on to tour the world.
We see ourselves as a creative hub, meaning we use our resources to give creative people the space to play, experiment, fail and grow. We call this Scratch.
For us, everyone is creative, and we exist to support our community to discover their creativity through co-creation. We might provide the tools, the space and the time, but the ideas and invention are yours.

You can find out more about Battersea Arts Centre by visiting our website **www.bac.org.uk →** and more information about Co-Creating Change can be found here:

www.cocreatingchange.org.uk/contact →

Podcast Series

In March we hosted three discussions with Artists, Producers/Commissioners and Participants engaged with co-creation and collaborative practices. The Podcasts were produced by Heart of Glass and the conversations were designed to be peer to peer conversations. A set of questions were offered to each group in advance, and the podcasts were recorded remotely. The initial questions were as follows:

Artists

- There's a lot of terminology surrounding this field of practice - how do you define your practice in terms of working with others OR communities of place and/or interest?
- What, if anything, does the term co-creation mean to you?
- Why do you as a practitioner choose to make work in this way?
- What do you think are some of the defining principles/qualities of this practice, and why?
- What would say are some of the biggest challenges facing this area of practice?
- What are the supports you've needed and/or lacked in terms of making work? Please try to be specific to this field of practice?
- How do you currently address your professional development needs currently?
- If you could offer some advice, or make a request of funders/commissioners and policy makers at this time, what would it be?
- Is there anything else you'd like to add or share?

Producer/Commissioners

- There's a lot of terminology surrounding this field of practice - how do you define your practice in terms of supporting artists to working with communities?
- What do you think are some of the defining principles/qualities of this practice, and why?
- What would say are some of the biggest challenges facing this area of practice?
- What makes a successful project from your perspective?
- What are the supports you've needed and/or lacked in terms of making work? Please try to be specific to this field of practice?
- How do you currently address your professional development needs currently?
- If you could offer some advice, or make a request of funders/commissioners and policy makers at this time, what would it be?
- Is there anything else you'd like to add or share?

Participants/Collaborators

- What made you want to collaborate on arts projects?
- What did you understand your role to be in the project(s) you have been involved in?
- What, if anything, does the term co-creation mean to you?
- What do you think are the main ingredients in a successful project?
- What do you think are some of the main challenges?
- If you were to give advice to a friend about to take part in a creative project, what would you tell them to expect?
- Is there anything else you'd like to share?

Additional Podcast Content

In addition to the newly commissioned podcasts, Heart of Glass wish to signpost to their pre-existing Podcast series **HOGCAST – Conversations Over a Brew.** In each episode, an artist and collaborator reflect on a creative journey they have recently undertaken together. Four episodes are available, and they touch on work across artform and across context. They are wide ranging conversations that give a valuable insight into the nature of collaboration and the dynamics of co-creation.

You can find these episodes by clicking on the link below:

anchor.fm/hogcast-conversations →

Listen free now

1. **Podcast One – Artists**
   Featuring Sheila Ghelani, Marjorie H. Morgan and Conrad Murray
2. **Podcast Two – Producers**
   Featuring Debbie Chan, Alan Lane and Chantelle Williams
3. **Podcast Three – Collaborators**
   Featuring Ant Shea, Arthur Britney and Halima Malek

All three podcasts are available [HERE] →

Full transcripts of each podcast are attached as an appendix.

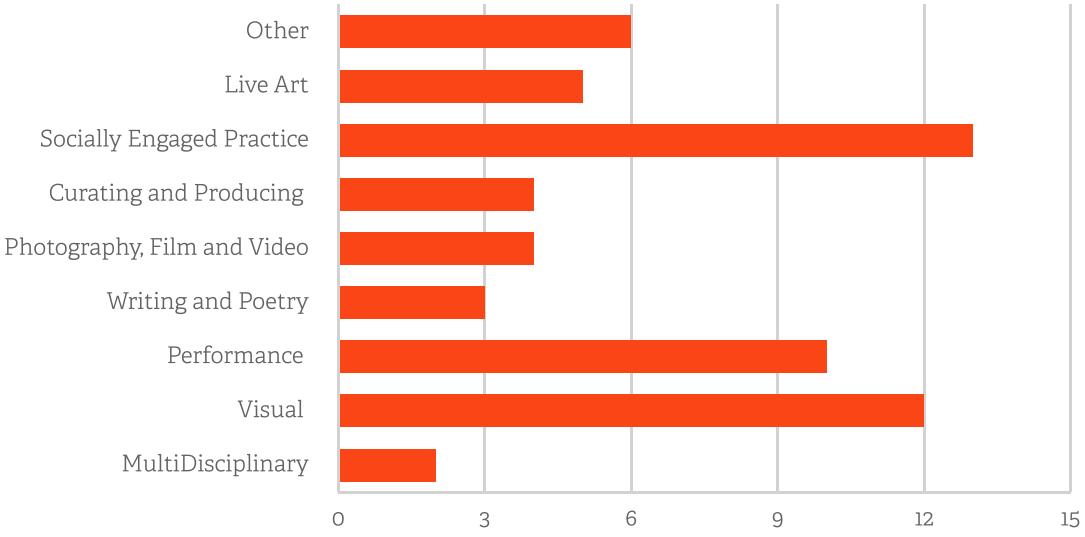
Survey Analysis

Towards an Understanding of Co-Creation as a Practice
Summary of the Artist Survey

April 2021
By Susanne Burns

In February 2021, Arts Council England commissioned Heart of Glass and Battersea Arts Centre to carry out some work that would provoke debate on co-creation.

It was agreed that artists would be paid to complete the survey and the questions were determined as open questions that would elicit qualitative data. This short report seeks to highlight the key themes to emerge from the survey in order to support sectoral understanding of co-creation and its outcomes.



Primary Art Forms

The Sample:

A total of 59 responses were received. The survey was mailed to potential respondents through the networks of the two partners and artists were paid £50 to complete the survey. The survey closed on March 26th 2021.

The sample appears to have been representative of a range of art-forms but what was interesting were the non-formulaic self-descriptions of the primary artform of the respondents.

- *I support citizen journalists*
- *Spoken Word Animation*
- *Walking based practice*
- *I work in all forms, I say I do stuff with words*
- *Video, textiles, writing, design, no primary form*
- *Participatory & socially engaged food art*

It is possible that those artists interested in co-created practice may work outside of the traditional art-form definitions most often used – dance, music etc. However, the overall balance between the more conventionally described art-forms felt representative of the sector. Respondents described themselves as working in primary art-forms as follows:

- 13 in socially engaged practices and working with people;
- 9 in performance;
- 5 in Live Art;
- 3 in Writing and Poetry;
- 12 in Visual Arts (including collage, textiles, print and sculpture);
- 4 in Photography and Film;
- 4 in Curating and Producing;
- 2 respondents specifically stated they were Multidisciplinary.

We know that these practices are highly nuanced and, even in the survey responses, it was evident that respondents were describing their practices in different ways – for example, collaborative art, socially engaged art, participatory art – what they share is of course that the work involves those who describe themselves as artists working with groups and communities. In some ways, this is not helpful when trying to determine what we mean by co-creation and determining whether it is different to the other ways of working and if so how it might differ.

The survey asked 7 key questions:

- How would you define co-creation?
- In your view, what are the (up to five) essential conditions or characteristics of effective co-creation?
- In your view, what are the (up to five) most important outcomes of effective co-creation – in particular those you feel make it different to other participatory work?
- In your view, what are the (up to five) main barriers to effective co-creation?
- Has your experience of COVID-19 impacted on your practice/your notions of co-creation? If so, tell us about one thing it has taught you?
- Are there any other thoughts you'd like to share with us about the field co-creation, or collaborative practice and how it is supported in this country currently?
- Where do you currently go to find resources, information and support around socially engaged practice or your practice more generally?

The short report that follows will seek to surface themes that emerged from the responses along with illustrative quotes. Our aim is to identify the key stories and themes from the body of raw data that was submitted. All text in italics are quotes from the survey responses.

Defining Co-Creation:

It is an enormously valuable approach but highly challenging - and the term is increasingly often misapplied.

I have no idea if this is an established ***arts jargon concept*** *or if it means what I think it means: making things together, owning things together.*

It's a buzzword in many funding agreements but there is a real lack of understanding of what it is and practical systems to support its application.

I feel like co-creation is a popular buzzword but few people actually understand what it means and how powerful it can be when done well.

—

It is possible that artists are becoming uncomfortable with some of the labels being offered to the field – the *"established arts jargon concept"*. Co-Creation is perhaps one of these labels and is increasingly being used by funders as a term that is a possible catch all for many different ways of working. As noted above, the language around the practice has shifted over the last 50 years or so, often in response to funders highlighting one particular set of phrases or words, and this leads to artists and arts organisations adopting the language as a means of validating the work.

Thus, co-creation has become an important label supporting the procurement of resources and a degree of validation in what may already have been the artists' existing practice.

It is therefore important to ask what the language means for the actual practice? What is the lived experience of the artists concerned with this practice? And are we able to reach a shared understanding of what it means?

Co-Creation is a process and methodology:

- *A methodology which aims towards the shared creation (including devising, planning, negotiating, disseminating, evaluating) of an artwork, project or activity.*
- *Co-creation is the process of exploring a collective creative response to a situation which may be initiated by an individual but has the views and ideas of others represented and incorporated throughout from design to production to reflection and evaluation.*
- *For me, co-creation is any artistic process in which creative responsibility, authority and agency are shared.*

Co-Creation shifts agency and power:

Shared authorship of a creative work or project, where each party plays an equal role (but not necessarily the same role). Each party has creative agency throughout the development and production of the creative work or project.

- *A practice where an organisation actively shares their decision-making power with a (non-establishment) community, that is equitable and non-tokenistic, in which process is prioritised over product, and which inspires a change in traditional power structures.*

Co-Creation involves equality:

A recurring theme was the challenging of the language, binaries and hierarchies between 'professionals', 'artists' and 'participants'

- *Making and being in a space as equals. Some may have more experience in some areas than others, some may be defined as 'expert', but all are willing and equal contributors and participants. The power of listening, talking, learning, eating, making, playing, TOGETHER.*
- *Working with others, equally, from the beginning to the end.*
- *All involved have authorship/ownership Co-creation is the act of making something collaboratively with either an individual, group or environment. There is a democracy in the making process, which acknowledges the capacity, skills, ability and interests of the participants.*
- *Co-creation is when a group has a shared creative outcome or process in mind. The focus is on collaboration and the wholeness of the group rather than an individual artist.*

Co-Creation generates Social Change:

- *Work that achieves social change and lasting impact(s).*

Interestingly, this featured less prominently in the responses than would have been expected given that most artists who choose to work in this way are committed to bringing about social justice or social change through their work. It is therefore possible that this principle may be presumed. All the respondents speak of working with others in a way that goes beyond making something together and many spoke of collaborating with others to provoke social change:

- *Collaborating with like-minded companies/communities/freelancers to provoke positive social change via creative projects*

Co-Creation is premised on collaboration:

Perhaps the most commonly used term in responses to this question was 'collaboration'. For some this meant working with other artists to create work, for some this meant working with others who may not define themselves as artists to make work which will achieve change through creative working. These are actually very different processes and have become conflated in the discourse surrounding co-creation.

- *Working on a project with one or more collaborators*
- *A collaborative effort between different parties to create something mutually beneficial together, as a united force, with shared authority/ownership over whatever is created.*

The emerging findings of the Co-Creating Change Network on definitions are perhaps of interest here:

Co-Creation is... a set of processes and working methods and approaches that seek to generate change

- *It takes place 'with' and not 'to'*
- *It has not set outputs but is outcome focussed*
- *It focuses on the 'how' and not the 'what'*
- *It is process driven not product driven*
- *It may be facilitated but leadership shifts*
- *It may use art to generate changes but is likely to apply to all stages of programme development, design and evaluation*
- *It shifts agency and power and challenges privilege*
- *It brings partners together on an equal footing*
- *It is relational and not transactional*
- *It empowers and includes*

Characteristics of Effective Co-Creation:

To me the key elements to co-creation are: LISTENING : As an artist, it's about taking in what people want from the work/ from the process, it's about listening to the geographical and political landscape. RESPONDING: Then in turn it is about offering a response, either something that re-presents, highlights, challenges, creates anew. CARING: It is about being generous, creating something with and for other people as opposed to a selfish act. It can be challenging at times to find a balance between what an artist wants to do and what a community wants from the work. But it is this balance that makes for interesting work. ADAPTING: If the work is to be collaborative/responsive, it will inevitably evolve as it is created. There may be a main vision from the start, but the final outcome will always shift. DIVERSITY: The best collaborations are when people from different fields and walks of life come together.

—

From this response, we can see encapsulated some of the above definitions of co-creation as collaboration, shared ownership of the process and creating with people again pointing to the nuanced and unstable use of language in describing the practices.

We asked respondents to give us up to five essential conditions or characteristics of effective co-creation and whilst there were recurring themes, there was also some resistance to reducing complex processes to a kind of formula or prescription.:

- *I find the question unanswerable. While there might be some conditions or characteristics of effective co-creation that are common, or dominant, I don't think that any of them can be marked as essential, in so much as it is possible to imagine effective co-creative works without any particular condition being present.*

It is also arguable that many of the characteristics identified by respondents could be applied to any work created between an artist and a group of other people who may or may not define themselves as artists. However, what emerges does start to suggest a series of principles that might inform the sector as we move forward.

Transparency, Honesty and Fairness

- *Everyone knows what the project is, why it is happening and who is involved*

Trust, Respect and Care:

- *Respecting all ideas and contributions.*

Time and Resources:

Several respondents mentioned aspects of this both in relation to the time it takes and the resources it needs to co-create effectively.

- *Significant time allowance for the project to unfold*
- *Enough time (duration); resources (financial and human)*
- *Sufficient funding for all stakeholders*
- *No time pressures*
- *Time to understand each other, a situation, for things that need to happen, to happen.*
- *Systems that respect that the people we collaborate with have other things happening, that the experiences that we work with don't happen in neat funding blocks or financial years.*
- *Good amount of time to create (the right amount of time) including Research time and getting to know people time. Support from arts organisation/s, producer and perhaps other professionals/organisation (depending on participants e.g. if they have specific needs or issues that may come up and need support outside of artists expertise).*

Clarity on aims and expectations:

- *Realistic and honest expectations*
- *Shared understanding of aims/purposes*
- *Shared values*
- *Clear understanding of purpose.*
- *A shared goal/ collective vision.*
- *Linked to this is the concept of usefulness*
- *Useful to everyone involved*
- *Mutual benefit. A shared goal/ collective vision.*

Equality and Reciprocity:

Several respondents mentioned the notion of consent citing the need for consensual participation in a context of equality and interdependence.

- *A safe and open space to talk, all participants choosing to take part.*
- *Acknowledgement of interdependence.*
- *Power relationship as equal as possible.*

This also seemed to relate to the need for **Non-Transactional relationships:**

- *The "artist" isn't mining communities or individuals for their information or expecting emotional labour to result in a creative output- those co-creating only work*

Flat hierarchies and equal payment were mentioned by several respondents

- *A diverse and equal space that understands that everyone involved has a unique experience that should be considered within the work. This doesn't mean doing everything everyone says, but at least understanding and using it to ensure that what is being produced is representative for whatever field/thing/artefact/event.*
- *Whilst an artist may be sharing skills, or tools etc. decisions are taken democratically and openly. If everyone is creating work which is to be exhibited they are all remunerated, not just the "artist"*
- *That your partner is on an equal footing to you - that it is a dialogue in which there is not a power imbalance. That it is open and honest about what is expected and what can be achieved. That it is something not only of benefit to one side- the institution or the group, individual or community involved. That each side receives some benefit and it is a reciprocal exchange.*

Good Communication and active and responsive listening were recurring themes and appear to be characteristics that will support all of the above:

- *Open, honest communication.*
- *Communication (internal and external)*
- *Building on suggestions/dialogue. Mutual respect.*
- *Open dialogue*
- *Sensitivity and the will to change after listening*
- *Authenticity*

Creating a 'Safe Container'

- *Commitment to creating and continually renegotiating a safe and nurturing space that recognises everyone's contribution*
- *A safe and open space to talk, all participants choosing to take part.*

Outcomes of Effective Co-Creation

It is noticeable that several respondents talked about the need to design outcomes with the co-creators:

- *The outcomes should also be co-created and co-designed, so from the outside those outcomes are decided by those creating the work.*
- *Co-Creation applies to the whole process, from consultation, development and realisation and that the community or participants are not just brought in at the later stages of an already agreed output or project.*

Personal Outcomes:

Many respondents cited personal outcomes such as learning and skills development, confidence and personal growth, greater understanding of others and empathy, compassion, experience, friendships, networks and enhanced relationships with others, pride and empowerment were the most commonly mentioned personal outcomes for those involved in the co-creation process.

- *Reduction of competitive thought and increase in collaborative mindsets;*
- *New ways of thinking, seeing and understanding yourself and others;*
- *SENSE OF ACHIEVEMENT AND PRIDE from the co-creators. When people feel their views are being listened to, they feel valued and empowered, they want to do 'more', they feel like they can have an impact on the world.*

Again, it is arguable that these are no different to many other approaches to making work with people.

Artistic Outcomes:

Respondents cited the value of multiple voices and perspectives, the diversity of voices/viewpoints, the richness generated by this and the impact of the co-creation process on the actual work that might be generated as an outcome of the process:

- *An outcome that is more than the sum of its parts i.e. challenges group think.*
- *Each person coming away with new knowledge. End result couldn't be reached without collaborative effort.*

- *People seeing or experiencing the work as an audience should feel inspired by seeing the process of doing things collaboratively. These kinds of practices help break the contemporary belief that success is an individual thing, and should promote diversity and collaboration.*
- *I think it is difficult to create things collaboratively without layers, because there are always many different views and perspectives. Layers might mean actual layers (visual layers, layers of voices...), or layers of interpretations. It might also mean that the work can take on different forms at various times and various places, it can shape-shift.*
- *Every time there is a collaboration, there is an exchange of ideas, and usually this grows beyond the remit of the commission/project. There are always extra outcomes that could lead to new projects, news skills or ways to look at the world to be explored further. I think long term collaborations are always best in that they allow for those 'end of project' ideas to become new projects.*

Social Outcomes:

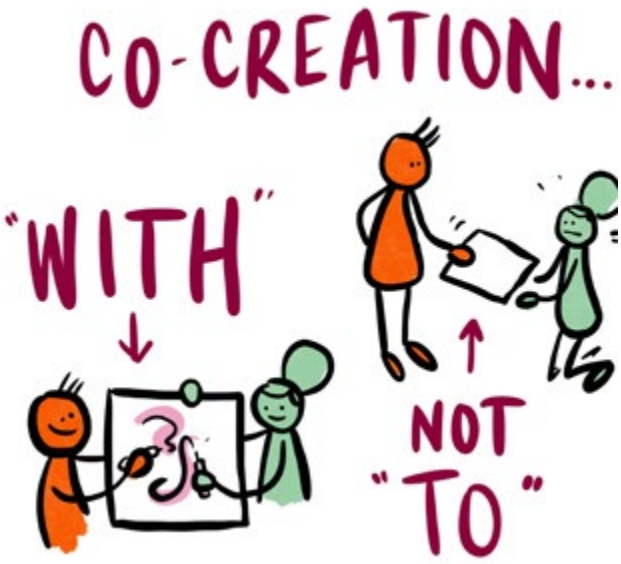
Social Change was rarely mentioned as an outcome which was interesting – the focus was on personal change and outcomes rather than social or political outcomes. However, within all the other characteristics mentioned - shared power, flattening hierarchies, being representative, listening, taking time - there is an implicit and implied understanding that social justice, as far as arts and culture are concerned means different voices are heard, different narratives shared and different people are in the space. These practices and approaches are therefore already challenging the elitism of much arts practice.

When social outcomes were explicitly mentioned they were related to the authenticity of the representation of the people, story or place:

- *It says something or tells a story unique to that time and place*
- *The work represents the people who made it*

Several respondents mentioned consciousness raising through the diversity of topics voices and viewpoints which might challenge mindsets.

- *Further ideas, knowledge and potential are generated. No harm is done and the process hasn't negatively affected the current social situation that it puts itself in. Relationships built and social value has improved - an awareness of something has been raised, a group or organisation are able to use new tools to do what they do, but more effectively*



Shifting of Ownership and Agency:

There was a recurring theme around shifting power imbalances that seems to underpin the work for many of the respondents perhaps forming the why of the process.

- *Equal ownership of final product*
- *That people own it as much as the organisations and artists. That it's a collaborative endeavour, by and with people, not at them.*
- *All parties contribute more-or-less equally to the process and outcome, power is shared in manner that is not typical in our society (non-hierarchically), those involved know that their voices have been heard and that their contributions have been valued by the group*
- *Shared authorship (everybody's name is acknowledged or nobody's is); everyone is involved in devising, planning, determining parameters, judging success/failure - not a singular artist or organisation's vision/judgement; work that is meaningful to all stakeholders and functions in multiple spaces/contexts; enduring feeling of goodwill/ satisfaction amongst all those involved - even if a project is challenging, all stakeholders feel valued and listened to; the project is actively enriched by the contributions of all members, and actively models the values of the group.*
- *Peoples voices are heard, people can take ownership of the outcome, connection to the wider public.*
- *Democratisation of the practice (that all those who took part feel like they had a fair share, fair say, and the results are reflective of the co-created process and not singularly driven by the "artist")*
- *All participants/creators should feel as though the outcome/end product reflects the group's collective ideas - e.g. the end product shouldn't be dictated by the facilitator and instead should reflect all members' input.*

Barriers to Effective Co-Creation

My experience of collaborative socially engaged projects in the UK is that they are often too short. It takes time to build meaningful relationships and the trust needed to create significant work. I have often felt rushed in this process which makes the outcomes feel more superficial.

Perhaps to be expected, the most commonly cited barriers to effective co-creation largely reflected the conditions of effective co-creation outlined above and provide major messages to commissioners and funders of co-created work.

Time, resources and unrealistic expectations dominated the responses.

- *Co-creation needs to be WELL-funded over a LONG period to be effective and this is SO rare.*
- *Unresponsive funding (project funding is often based on specific timelines, aims, outcomes etc. and the nature of co-creating, especially with more marginalised people and communities is that the process can take a lot of twists and turns - it needs to be inherently reflexive and responsive, which funding often doesn't allow for)*
- *Lack of sustainability (co-creation projects are underfunded)*
- *Time - good co-creation needs time and space to allow trust and understanding to flourish.*

- *Nearly all commissions and funding applications ask for specific outcomes, budgets, timelines. Before the project even starts, an artist is asked to plan every detail until the end. It is rare as an artist to get a R&D period with people/communities/other artists to let ideas develop in a collaborative way.*
- *Lack of planning, not taking time to build trust, lack of time, lack of money*
- *Short contracts, parachuting in and no long term investment*
- *Lack of money for the TIME this approach takes. A parachute in/out mentality.*
- *Short time scales, restrictive parameters,*

This idea of 'restrictive parameters' connected to the fact that so many respondents saw **predetermined outcomes** and aims set by commissioners as mitigating against genuine co-creation were:

- *The funders outcomes tend to be a barrier to effective co-creation, forcing specific outcomes by specific time frames.*
- *Outcomes set before discussion*
- *Preconceived aims or expectations of the outcome of that co-creation*
- *Focus on outcome/product*
- *Goal-oriented funding requirements*
- *Rigidity*
- *Existing impact reporting structures, tokenistic collaboration (and wrongly calling it co-creation)*
- *Predetermined aims by (project) initiators*
- *A fixed idea/outcome before the process has even begun.*
- *High-pressure environments e.g. very high expectations of the outcome. Co-creation should be as much about the process of making as it is about the end product, perhaps even more so.*
- *We have to accept that the outcomes of a co-creation project might not match our expectations going in.*

This need to meet the agenda of the funder or commissioned rather than the agenda of the co-creators could lead to a **lack of authenticity**:

- *Lack of authenticity to the community*
- *Forced engagement, solely working with groups to receive funding equalling non-authentic partnerships*
- *Loss of trust between communities and institutions - the imbalance of financial security between parties, perhaps educational imbalance, previous experiences of being instrumentalised, exploited, feeling of being patronised in the past, forgotten, not represented*
- *Lack of sustained investment from institutions in the community (different value systems operating in institutions - education departments vs income generating departments)*
- *Imbalance in power during projects (who is paid to be there, who isn't)*
- *People (especially minority groups) being 'Needed' for a project rather than a relationship that has naturally developed over time*
- *Transparently tokenistic objectives on the part of the institution/organisation*

- *Versions of co-creation are too easily co-opted by those in power to give the impression of equality/ diversity/generosity, when in actuality they continue to be about upholding status quo/power.*

Some respondents cited the need for art as an outcome as a barrier as this places pressure on the artist to generate a 'product' that meets quality standards of external agencies:

- *Art is still viewed as an 'outcome', often physical. It is meant to be something that can be experienced by a passive audience. Even I feel the pressure to create something tangible. But I am gaining confidence in trusting the process, and understanding the value of the process. I used to draw in order to create images. I started to draw because the act of drawing feels good and I am learning something as I do it. And usually, when I learn something as I do it, the resulting drawing will look good too. I think it is a good metaphor for co-creation. Often it is not the thing you have worked towards that is the best outcome, but a surprising off-shoot.*

An important point was made about **connection** between the artists and the co-creators:

- *If the "artist" or maker, or organisation is understood as "other" or having disingenuous ambitions and aims, even if their accent is different or they are not from the community, then it can take a while for true connectivity and community to happen and can slow a project*

Capacity barriers for artists were also cited:

- *Lack of safeguarding knowledge, grounding techniques and or de-escalation/mediation skills, lack of facilitation skills*
- *Fear and the Bad/wrong facilitation – not all artists are collaborative facilitators. Ability to not lose your control*
- *Confidence*
- *Need to feel in control*
- *Lack of ambition, inability to hand over power, inattention, lack of skill, inability to take risks*

Several respondents mentioned the need for artists to park egos and move beyond this despite the fact that the value of this work is still perceived as of less value. This can lead to fear and to a sense of hierarchy:

- *A sense of division/separation between the facilitators vs participants. People seeing themselves as 'artists' or 'non-artists' affecting the way they feel able to contribute their ideas.*

A **lack of support** for the artists carrying out what can be emotionally challenging work was also cited as a barrier by several respondents:

- *Mental health support within projects (for participants) - when working with vulnerable participants, the lack of mental health support (societally and project-specifically) means that I sometimes need to limit what I do/address within a project.*

Impact of COVID on Co-Creation

I think we need to spot and review the aftermath of COVID-19 not only in the art but the impact on everyday life. The aftershock and impact it will have on mental health - we will need to shift to a practice of care and holding to support.

Many of the things working against artists (especially those marginalized for whatever reason) existed before COVID, and we need to co-create a more just world, and that art can help with this mission.

It seemed important to examine the specific impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the practices of co-creation and the artists who carry out this work as the long-term impact of the pandemic is likely to be felt in society and in the sector for a very long time.

The impacts cited fell into three broad dimensions:

- *Artists*
- *Approaches to the work*
- *Communities*

Artists

The pandemic has fronted the inequalities within the sector and the fundamental fragility and precarity of the freelance workforce. Freelancers are vulnerable and a large number of respondents cited the lack of work and income as major impacts.

- *It has taught me that some artists have become very fearful about the future of their own practice, as there is less work around, making them resort to unprofessional approaches and behaviour to collaboration and its taught me that there is opportunity in everything.*

However, it was encouraging to read so many responses that focused on the ways in which artists have adapted to adversity, reflected on their practice and used the hiatus to move forward in different ways:

- *I've had substantially less work.*
- *All my work has been cancelled or postponed. I have been trying to find alternative ways of working. This forced hiatus has given me time to reflect critically on my work.*
- *It has made me more adaptable and willing to explore new ways of communicating my themes.*
- *Lockdown restrictions haven't held me back. For example, I made my first live streamed performance on zoom, which was a collaboration with 2 other artists and an academic. I have learnt I am resilient and can and will create whatever.*
- *It has challenged, stretched and refined my practice and my choice of project.*
- *As a result of my privilege as someone whose part-time employment has continued through the pandemic, COVID has allowed me more space than I've previously had to really think about my practice and take important steps to make it more resilient/sustainable, including by exploring new ways to work with others online.*

- *COVID has meant less networking and less exposure to live events but more time for reflection and growth. I'm more determined to own my work, not be co-opted by others, to be really choosy about what I do.*
- *My experience has been a positive one, living with the people who my practise involves. Solution based outcomes, making the most of the situation. Accepting what can and can't be done and working within those parameters.*

Approaches to the Work:

This resilience and reflection has clearly impacted on the work they do in many different ways. Whilst many cited the challenges of 'digital poverty' as a major barrier to ongoing engagement for some, there were many advantages mentioned of working in digital ways:

- *Practice has moved largely online as a result of COVID-19. The biggest issue to overcome has been the digital divide - trying to ensure work includes everyone when not everyone has equal access to the internet or devices.*
- *Digital tools have opened up access for some who have these tools, this has in some cases increased accessibility to diverse potentials (such as joining in more projects), but people often cannot communicate in the same way that they do in person. It's important to experiment with tools so that they are not marginalising people.*
- *Amazing collaborations and creative conversations can be maintained in the online space.*
- *Meaningful engagement can be accomplished through technology, but requires considered facilitation and strong foundational relationships.*
- *The relationships therefore take much longer to develop and more effort to sustain. This can affect the level of ownership in a project felt by groups - online or phone based activities often need to be 'led' more and participants are more directed than organically contributing and therefore feeling ownership.*
- *It has taught me that co-creation can still happen but it has been really difficult to do the same level of safeguarding and safer spaces work as you are not seeing people face to face and some of those natural conversations that you might have after a meeting aren't happening.*

However, it is clear that for many respondents, the digital space will not replace the 'room':

- *This has demonstrated to me the benefits to being in the same space, especially when it comes to communication.*
- *I never realised how important those cups of tea on the fly with people were. The small chats that humanise my work and my practices.*
- *The value of interactions when they happen with no agenda i.e. the small exchanges during the coffee breaks.*
- *Online working, especially being neurodivergent, has made co-creation messy and hard work, especially with those I haven't worked with before. It has taught me the importance of bodies in space and human connection.*
- *Co-creation can take place remotely if necessary (worldwide/International co-creation is possible), but there is something special about being in a room together that gives a deeper sense of shared experience.*

There were also many positive learning reflections on practice that appear to have emerged that will inform the practice and processes of co-creation moving forward.

- *I have learned to approach with great care to respect other people's boundaries.*
- *I understand how important listening and supporting each other is on a deeper level than I did before and I have learned how to actively and positively use social media/ communication tools to stay in touch and co-create.*
- *The way I work has changed, but the fundamentals are still the same. I'll keep these methods, any form of challenge in how to deliver strengthens the creativity of my practice. I can work with people all over the world, as a disabled artist, it's been a liberating time.*
- *It has impacted greatly; my usual approach to co-creation and participation involves walking with others. I have also learnt to completely adapt, rewriting the way I practice with others, relearning more accessible approaches that I will uphold after the pandemic.*
- *I had previously tried to avoid the digital space, favouring in person but going forward I think a hybrid model is valuable.*
- *I've learnt that smaller numbers are better. It's the quality of the people you engage with not the quantity. That wellbeing and health come before art at times. To be gentle.*
- *The pandemic has highlighted that there isn't one method that suits all - predominantly because of varying access needs and access to resources. Different approaches will always create barriers for different people and this has been something that has to be problem solved.*

Communities:

It is clear that many communities have suffered long term damage from the pandemic and this will take time to repair. The pandemic has underlined demographic, health and economic inequalities:

- *COVID has emphasised the cracks/gaps & made them deeper & wider - so already marginalised groups are suffering further due to even more of a lack of access. This has made me think about we need to plan for slower projects*

A large number of respondents cited what they saw as the longer-term impact on the communities they served and the ways in which the sector might adapt to meet these needs. Notions of relevance dominated some responses:

- *It has highlighted the importance of understanding your context and listening to what people want and need. It has taught me that the creative industries can have a massively increased impact on the communities in which they are based if buildings and companies become open and collaborative and genuinely interested and respectful of the needs of audiences/individuals they are benefiting. It has shown me that co-creation is needed more now than ever, and that many organisations show an increased interest in it, because they have realised the same. COVID has shown that arts organisations are there for the people, and they can't fulfil that role if they don't work with those people.*
- *I think COVID-19 has brought the question of relevance into sharp relief. After more than a decade of systematic defunding of social and community care, what is the responsibility of art organisations to centre social questions in their practice? How can institutions pivot to be places of service, rather than extraction?*

There was a sense of optimism about the value and role co-creation can play in this context:

- *The pandemic will inevitably shift things, although it's hard to tell just yet. Co-creation - and a broader fostering of spaces in which power is shared equally - is only going to become more urgent.*
- *Perhaps most fundamentally the social isolation and fragmentation caused by COVID-19 has only reaffirmed the value of creative processes that necessitate reaching out beyond our own social or artistic communities - that foreground empathy and care, and attempt to sit with the difficulty of bringing different voices, ideas and perspectives together within a single project.*
- *I feel it has reinstated the need for more co-creation and highlighted the power and importance of partnership work, from ground to global levels.*

Final Thoughts

We asked respondents to contribute any further thoughts they had about the field of practice and how it is supported in this country currently. There were some important points made that further illuminate some of the above responses and that might inform commissioners and funders of co-created practice as we move forward.

The practice is still perceived to be marginalised and siloed within institutions and the funding system:

- *Funding bodies silo co-creation practices within Education departments adjacent to the 'main work' of organisations/institutions. The Arts Council needs to draw explicit links between how the power structures within organisations impact relationships with external communities. They are linked!*
- *ACE's Let's Create strategy highlights relevance, access and participation. I believe organisations often instrumentalise participation, fudging the detail on what is meant by this. Deep level engagement takes a lot of resource and time, and I think there's a systemic problem by which organisations say they can do participation on the cheap '100 people will do this project' when meaningful engagement actually is expensive and people are afraid to say this in case it knocks them out of the competition for funding. They overpromise and under-deliver for communities as a result.*
- *There is an ongoing sense that the practice is not seen as equally valid and important I feel it's the lesser of, the forgotten or dismissed relative of the arts. The choice that appears, to some, for those who didn't make it!*

The notion of cross sector working to effect social change through co-creation was also an important theme to emerge in this final question

- *Co-creation and facilitation in the arts should partner more closely with the charity and activism sectors for mutual benefit and growth - working horizontally rather than top down from funders.*

A group of responses related to how this growing field of practice needs to be supported in other ways through advocacy, workforce development and organisational support

- *It feels as if support is growing through organisations like Heart of Glass - important as is complex work & needs to be supported well. It's quite an exciting time for artists working in this field. As it grows as an 'industry' and more artists work in this way, both artists and communities need to be supported so bad experiences are minimised.*
- *I feel there could be more opportunities for artists with less experience to learn from more experienced artists in a mentoring/assisting role.*
- *It's so difficult to gain experience - especially at the moment - in the field and still get paid. I want to experiment more informally with co-creation to learn and gain experience but because of its precariousness, I don't.*

Artists praised the work of several organisations leading work in this practice including Heart of Glass, Axis Web, In-Situ, Creative People and Places and the Co-Creating Change Network. Several stated the importance of developing a shared and deeper understanding of this field of practice in all of its complexity.

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Literature Review

Annotated Bibliography: Co-Creation and Collaborative Arts Practice

By Chrissie Tiller

Background 'Guidebooks'

If you were to Google 'co-creation' and 'arts' together very few links would appear and most of these will be connected to design. The language used to describe more collaborative arts practice is constantly shifting and changing and currently many artists and organisations are likely to refer to this work as collaborative or socially engaged or social (art) practice. To separate co-creation as a term would therefore seem to diminish the understanding of this practice. As would separating the principles which inform it from over fifty years of thinking about what it might mean in terms of making art, learning and bringing about meaningful social change. The three publications below are therefore offered as a good basic resource. They summarise and collect much of the thinking around the practice and identify key questions and concepts. The first, commissioned by Creative People and Places, with linked pieces for **British Council →**, **Creative Scotland →** has a strong UK focus, the second emerged from the **Creative Time →** summits and has a stronger US focus and the third, which has a more European and public art focus, nevertheless identifies important contemporary publications and historical texts from around the globe.

Power Up. Chrissie Tiller.
Creative People and Places. 2018

Power Up →

Poses, and then addresses, ten key questions of co-created arts practice in a UK context, with a special focus on Creative People and Places programmes. Including asking where the Power lies in co-creation and what we really mean by Collaboration, Cultural Capital, Reciprocity and Privilege.

Living as Form. Socially Engaged Art from 1991–2011. Nato Thompson. MIT Press 2014.

https://mitpress.mit.edu/books/living-form →

This collection provides excellent examples of some of the best of the practice over 20 years, including Jeremy Deller's work, and essays from both ends of the **Kester/Bishop debate [PDF] →** around Ethics/Aesthetics around the role of participants, authorship and resulting ethical issues.

Collectively Annotated Bibliography. On Artistic Practices in the Expanded Field of Public Art. Eds. Judith Wielander & Matteo Lucchetti. Issuu 2020

Collectively Annotated Bibliography [Issuu] →

Emerging from Swedish Public Art Agency's examination of the way public art was developing in more collaborative, co-created directions this is curated by the Visible Project (at Cittadellarte) as a resource at the axis of practice/theory for artistic and curatorial commissions and collaborations.

Key Websites

The Co-Creating Change Network is one of the few publications or websites to offer a working definition of **co-creation →** and **a later reflection →** by evaluator Susanne Burns on its meaning in the context of the network and wider practice. All these websites do, however, have invaluable material around co-creation, including resources, examples of practice, case studies and current debates. The first six are more UK focused, the seventh based in Ireland, the last two EU and US focused.

Co-Creating Change Network – hosted by Battersea Arts Centre

www.cocreatingchange.org.uk →

The Arts Council funded network which brings organisations together across the UK to explore the role artists, cultural organisations and communities can play in working together and co-creating change. Includes its working definition of co-creation as a 'co-operative process in which people with diverse experiences, skills and knowledge come together and work in non-hierarchical ways to address a common issue, and which enables people and communities to be actively involved in shaping the things which impact their lives.'

Creative Civic Change – hosted by the Local Trust and supported by Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, Esmée Fairbairn Foundation and National Lottery Community Fund.

Local Trust - Creative Civic Change →

Modelled on the Big Local programme, it offers long-term funding, mentoring and peer learning to communities across England to work together with artists and other creative agencies to bring about the change they wish to see in their local area.

Social Art Network – created by artists from the **Collaborative Arts Peer Forum →**

www.socialartnetwork.org →

UK based community of artists committed to building agency for the field of art and social practice, developed to support creative professionals working with and dedicated to community-led projects providing online resources and regular meet-ups.

Artworks Alliance – network formed from Paul Hamlyn Artworks programme.

www.artworksalliance.org.uk →

A network for discussion which brings together artists, arts organisations, HE and FE to support participatory arts, including community arts, socially engaged arts, voluntary arts and arts in education and learning

Inquiry into the Civic Role of the Arts Organisations – Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation

What is the Civic Role of Arts Organisations? →

Focusing on the 'civic role' of the arts, looking at building 'a movement of change-makers' who will impact in their local communities, across the UK and internationally. Includes the commissioning of the **Common Vision Report 2020 [PDF] →** which looks at ways in which the arts sector has responded to COVID and how this might inform policy moving forward.

Cultural Learning Alliance

https://culturallearningalliance.org.uk →

National agency working across the education and cultural sectors, to champion the right to arts and culture for every young person and child in the UK, as a social justice issue.

CREATE: National Development Agency for Collaborative Arts Ireland

www.create-ireland.ie →

National development agency for collaborative arts working across sectors and across national and international partnerships to support artists and communities to co-create work of depth, ambition and excellence.

CAPP Network – Europe-wide collaborative arts network

www.cappnetwork.com →

Set up as an EU project funded to support Collaborative Art Practice across Europe its rich resources include cultural policy reports as well as blending critical theory with projects, practice and guidebooks.

FIELD: A Journal of Socially Engaged Art Criticism

http://field-journal.com →

Set up to respond to the development of new collaborative artistic practices devoted to forms of political, social and cultural transformation. Produced by artists and art collectives throughout North, South and Central America, Europe, Africa and Asia. Theory/Practice.

* *The online resource* **Participatory Arts Alphabet →** *originally commissioned for Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation as part of its* **Sharing the Stage →** *programme still provides a useful reference resource for many of the key terms and critical texts around this practice. It includes a more collaborative practice focused re-working, of the influential Audience Involvement Spectrum in* **Getting in on the act: How Groups are Creating Opportunities for Active Participation, James Irvine Foundation 2013 →.**

Plus some art form specific sites:

Community Dance.org.uk - Knowledge Bank →

Centre for Excellence
Participatory Theatre Timeline →

https://youthmusic.org.uk →

www.cmsounds.com →
(Community Music)

www.tandfonline.com/toc/crde20/current →
(Applied Theatre Journal)

Contemporary Thinkers And Practitioners

The practitioners and thinkers below are frequently referenced and have influenced a good deal of the thinking around this practice – often writing about the training and support needed by artists working in this field as well as the work itself. We have only included one key text here but much of their other writing is equally useful.

Grant Kester. The One and the Many. Contemporary Collaborative Art in a Global Context. Duke University Press. (2011)

www.dukeupress.edu/the-one-and-the-many →

Looks at the nature of collaborative/co-created work as 'dialogical' and conversational not 'instrumental' or driven by 'a goal 'already-in-mind' but by its very nature, being 'anticipatory and open.' Examines the sharing of knowledge and creating new knowledge and the possibility of art to bring about change by working, 'in the space between'.

Mary Ann Jacob. Reciprocal Generosity, pp. 3–10 in: Ted Purves (ed.), What We Want is Free: Generosity and Exchange in Recent Art. State University of New York Press, 2005

Reciprocal Generosity [PDF] →

Curator and writer who pioneered public, site-specific and socially engaged art as a shared practice, Jacob looks here at the need for reciprocity and generosity as part of a process of 'listening, speaking and reflecting' in collaborative practice.

Gregory Sholette/Chloe Bass. Art as Social Action: An Introduction to the Principles and Practices of Teaching Social Practice Art. (2018)

www.gregorysholette.com - Art as Social Action →

This brings together much of Sholette and others thinking about the practice into chapters around what might be important for artists working in more collaborative contexts to understand and learn. It includes chapters by other important artist/curators/teachers/thinkers working this field including – **Jeanne van Heeswick →** *and* **Gretchen Coombs →**.

Suzanne Lacy. Leaving Art. Duke Press. 2010

www.dukeupress.edu/leaving-art →

Brings together Lacy's writing from 1974–2007 on an extensive collaborative, socially engaged arts practice which has concentrated on giving voice to the more marginalised in society.

Pablo Helguera. Education for Socially Engaged Art. New York: Jorge Pinto Books 2011

Education for Socially Engaged Art [Google Books] →

Helguera emphasises the importance of pedagogical practices which reflect the socially engaged nature of the work while exploring the importance of dialogue and conversations in working with communities.

Miwon Kwon. One Place after Another.
Site Specific Art and Local Identity. MIT Press. 2004.

One Place After Another →

A critical history of 'site-specific art' from the '60s onwards and one of the important critical contributions on thinking around what place means in this context.

Nina Simon. The Participatory Museum. 2010.

Available online at:

www.participatorymuseum.org/read/ →

Published in 2010 and mainly focused on the US museum/gallery model, this was an important influence on thinking differently about 'visitors' and co-creating projects by inviting communities and others to bring their ideas and working styles to the table. See also the Art of Relevance 2016.

Kae Tempest. On Connection. Faber 2020

On Connection →

First non-fictional book by the poet explores why creative connection can be the first step towards acknowledgement, accountability and responsibility for others.

A UK Perspective

A good deal of important UK thinking around this practice either originally emerged from those involved with the community arts movement or still places itself within that context.

Su Braden. Artists and People. Gulbenkian Studies Routledge and Kegan Paul 1978

Artists and People [amazon.co.uk] →

Despite being written for the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation in 1978 this is an absolutely seminal book on the principles and values of co-creation and collaborative practice. It is however really difficult to get hold of copies.

Baz Kershaw. The Politics of Performance:
Radical Theatre as Cultural Intervention 1992

**The Politics of Performance:
Radical Theatre as Cultural Intervention →**

Still regarded by many as a seminal text in terms of looking at theatre and performance in more alternative, community and socially-engaged contexts, including the work of Welfare State International.

Sonia Boyce. 30 Years Art and Activism 2018

30 Years Art and Activism →

This interview with Boyce captures some of Boyce's long and influential history of engaging with social art practice in her research, her teaching and her own work.

Lorraine Leeson. Art: Process: Change. Inside a Socially Situated Practice 2018

**Art Process Change:
Inside a Socially Situated Practice →**

Leeson looks at socially situated practice from the viewpoint of a practitioner and writer and examines the relationship of collaboration to participation and the delivery of projects with more social agendas.

Francois Matarasso.
A Restless Art:
How Participation Won and Why it Matters

https://arestlessart.com →

Matarasso gathers together participatory arts projects from around the world, interspersed with chapters on concepts, definitions and the history of community arts practice. Includes a section on co-creation from a community art viewpoint.

Influential Historical Thinkers

Frequently referenced and influencing the principles behind co-created work these thinkers have given us many of the key terms central to this work.

Raymond Williams. Raymond Williams on Culture and Society: Essential Writings. Ed. McGuigan, Sage Publications. Brought together in this collection. 2014

archive.org →

Williams introduces the idea of cultural democracy and the importance of lived experience.
'Culture is ordinary: that is where we must start.'

Sherry Arnstein. A Ladder of Citizen Participation JAIP Vol. 35, No. 4, July, pp. 216–224 1969

A Ladder of Citizen Participation [PDF] →

Although created to explain what giving up power might mean in social and political contexts, Arnstein's Ladder remains a useful model for artists wanting to share power and make their work in less hierarchical relationships with participants and communities.

Pierre Bourdieu

The Forms of Capital [PDF] →

Bourdieu identifies cultural capital, which includes access to arts and culture, as something that brings with it power and status in societal exchanges. Artists and practitioners have drawn on his thinking in the context of mutual exchange within collaborative and co-created work.

Gramsci. On Hegemony.

Selections from the Prison Notebooks →

Gramsci's concept of hegemony, or the notion of power is driven by our general acceptance of the values and ideologies of the dominant group impacts as fiercely on arts culture, especially when considering who has a voice in the room or is able to contribute equally in any process of co-creation.

Stuart Hall. Conversations, Projects and Legacies. 2018

Conversations, Projects and Legacies →

Hall's contribution to our thinking around culture, popular culture and cultural studies is inestimable. This book brings together essays from writers and thinkers such as Angela Davis, Sara Ahmed, Lola Young, David Edgar to contextualise the breadth of his thinking.

Radical/Critical Pedagogy, Social Justice, Racial Justice and other theory which has, and is still, influencing Values and Principles

Most artists, curators, producers working in more collaborative, co-creative practice will have engaged with some of the key figures and ideas from radical pedagogy including:

Bell Hooks. Teaching Community: A Pedagogy of Hope, Routledge. 2003

Teaching Community: a Pedagogy of Hope →

Following on from her seminal text Teaching to Transgress, in this book hooks looks at the possibility of drawing on notions of spirit, struggle, service, love and the ideals of shared knowledge and learning to work collectively for progressive social change.

John Dewey. Dewey for Artists. Mary Ann Jacob 2014

Dewey for Artists →

Jacob examines Dewey's progressive politics and their relationship to art, especially in terms of how they illustrate social practice art as an aesthetic experience.

Miles Horton and Paulo Freire. We make the Road by Walking. Temple University Press Philadelphia 1990

We Make the Road by Walking [Google Books] →

This dialogue between two of the most prominent thinkers on social change and learning highlights the importance of continually engaging with the dialogue between theory and practice, of learning as a collective and collaborative process and of valuing different knowledges.

Audre Lorde: Your Silence Will Not Protect You

Your Silence Will Not Protect You →

Poet and activist Audre Lorde never writes directly about this field but her belief in the power of language to articulate selfhood, challenge injustice, and bring about change in the world remain as central to any transformative practice as ever. She is continually quoted by artists as an inspiration.

Tara J Yosso: Whose culture has capital?
Race Ethnicity and Education, 8:1, 69–91, DOI: 10.1080/1361332052000341006

Whose Culture has Capital? →

Yosso uses cultural capital and critical race theory to discuss whose lived experience is of value and promote a framework from which to look at questions of power and promote notions of community cultural wealth.

Children and Young People

In our efforts to specifically consider the context of Children and Young People (CYP) in relation to Co-Creation, we consulted a number of practitioners in this field. We asked them to share 'go-to' resources and principles. Unsurprisingly there was much duplication with the resources offered through our broader literature review, suggesting a shared sense of ethics and principles, and critical armature.

Although our research has not been exhaustive, the available literature related specifically to Children and Young People appears to focus on pathways and approaches to engagement and project case studies. Whilst from the many case studies and project descriptions available, such as the links below, there is a clear sense of shared authorship, there does not appear to be much dedicated analysis to the specificity of *co-creation* with Children and Young People available.

The Lowry: Arts for Social Change →

Youth Forum: Duchamp & Sons →

Engage, the National Association for Gallery Education do offer a series of case studies on their website, with the link below detailing case studies focussed on young people as co-producers.

Young People as Co-Producers: One Collective's Journey →

The work of **Action Transport Theatre →** was regularly cited as best practice, and the study linked below offers a critical analysis of artists working with vulnerable young people in educational settings and includes a broad range of key considerations and learning.

Safe-spaces, support, social-capital... [PDF] →

Company Three provides a range of training workshops on co-creation with CYP:

Company Three Training Workshops →

A few great articles on creative co-production with CYP by Effervescent Social Alchemy in Plymouth:

Co-Production: The Future of Authentic Marketing →

Our Top Tips for facilitating Digital Co-Creation →

Why consulting young people about their lived experiences isn't enough* →

**(includes a downloadable 10-step guide)*

In the main however, it would appear that we are drawing upon the same principles. At the time of conducting this research we were also made aware of the work of the **Youth Performance Partnerships →** programme, who are currently working to put together a set of co-creation principles with young people, before testing them out over the coming year as action research, with a view to refining the principles. A current draft of this work has been shared as a supporting document, and appears to echo many of the principles offered through other parts of this research.

Reggio Emilia

www.reggiochildren.it/en/reggio-emilia-approach/ →

A child-centred approach to early childhood education, developed in a northern Italian town of the same name shortly after World War II, which focuses on the child having rights which include access to creativity and culture and arts as part of their learning.

Sybille Peters: Live Art and Kids

Live Art and Kids [PDF] →

A useful annotated guide to the literature around working with children developed for the Live Art Development Agency.

Some current texts around impact of COVID and other inequalities

COVID times have highlighted the inequalities in the cultural sector and in the power relationships between artists, communities and arts organisations and policy makers.

Eleanor Belfiore. Who Cares? At What Price? The Hidden costs of socially engaged practice and the moral failure of cultural policy 2021.

https://journals.sagepub.com/ →

Looks at the unacknowledged costs, financial and personal, involved in a practice which goes far beyond participation.

Susanne Burns. We are not in a Room. Co-Creating Change 2020.

We are not in a Room →

Looks at the impact of COVID on the principles and values at the heart of co-creation.

David Jubb. Time to Change the Structure and Time to Change the Story etc. 2020

https://davidjubb.blog →

Plus his important piece when Artistic Director of BAC. **'How can cultural centres also be community centres' →** 2017

Chrissie Tiller. Care as a Radical Act.
For Heart of Glass 2020.

Care as a Radical Act →

Looks at whether the crisis of COVID might be the time to revisit our priorities and our structures.

Lyn Gardner. One Year On, Let's Vow to Return with Greater Support for Emerging Artists

One Year On →

Looks at the need to see artists as our most precious resource and come back kinder and without barriers.

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Carex

Credits & Contributor Biographies

Heart of Glass and Battersea Arts Centre wish to thank all of the contributors for their time and valued insight. A particular thanks to Fox Irving and Working Class Women, the Faculty North Cohort 2021, the Co-Creating Change Network, the CPP Network, the Social Arts Network, Sarah Bailey, our Podcast Producers Ben and Suzanne, Natalie Hughes, Marina Sacco and all of the collaborators out there doing the work. Finally we wish to thank Susanne Burns and Chrissie Tiller for all of their time, effort, wisdom and continued collaboration. Biographies are included below.

Susanne Burns

Susanne Burns has worked in the arts and cultural sector since the mid 1980's at a senior leadership level both in employed roles and as an independent. She started her career teaching dance and then joined Northern Arts in 1985. She has directed her own consultancy since 2004 and previously worked in senior management for the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic and FACT Liverpool and was Head of Enterprise at the Liverpool Institute for Performing Arts as well as leading an MA Cultural Leadership at LJMU. Her current portfolio includes providing evaluation support for the Paul Hamlyn Foundation, Sage Gateshead, National Glass Centre, MiMa, Ballet Cymru, Fevered Sleep, the Co-Creating Change Network and she has led the evaluation of the In Harmony Liverpool programme since 2009. She is currently a Visiting Professor at the University of Sunderland, has a D Prof from Middlesex University and is a qualified coach, mentor and Action Learning Facilitator. She lives in Sunderland.

Chrissie Tiller

Chrissie Tiller is a writer, thinker, practitioner and educator, with an extensive history of working through collaborative and social art practice, particularly in trans-national and cross-cultural contexts including the EU and Nordic countries, Central and Eastern Europe, Palestine and Japan. She currently has a Fellowship at the Technological University, Dublin to undertake a PhD by prior publication and practice, focusing on class and gender in the arts and cultural sectors. Having set up and run the MA in Participatory and Community Arts at Goldsmiths, London University, for many years, alongside her practice, she is now co-director of the Faculty North social arts learning programme. Currently acting as critical friend and associate for a number of UK arts organisations including Heart of Glass, Counterpoints Arts, Cultural Spring and English PEN, she continues as an external expert for the EU Commission, Goethe Instituut and British Council on questions of the arts and participation, inter-cultural dialogue and participatory governance. Some of her more recent think pieces and provocations include *Power Up* for Creative People and Places, *Sharing Power: from Participation to Collaboration* for British Council and *Care as a Radical Act* for Heart of Glass.

Patrick Fox

Patrick is Chief Executive of Heart of Glass, a national agency for collaborative and social arts practice based in St Helens, Merseyside - a proud member of the Creative People and Places Network and a member of Arts Council England's National Portfolio. He is a producer, commissioner and senior arts leader who supports artists to engage with communities of place/interest to create contemporary work that reflects the politics of our times. He is former Director of Create, Ireland's national development agency for Collaborative Arts, and a founder of the European network Collaborative Arts Partnership Programme (CAPP). He the former Head of Collaborations and Engagement at FACT (Foundation for Art and Creative Technology) Liverpool, and led the acclaimed arts and older people project tenantspin as part of his portfolio.

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