

Motivating marginalised groups from various backgrounds-

The Art of Intercultural Dialogue

When someone enters a museum or gallery, possibly for the first time it can appear strange and exciting, or alien depending on to prior experience.

All artwork is created out of a context, both personal and social and has the potential to open up dialogue with its audience.

Artworks are metaphors, carriers of meaning, and repositories for ideas. They connect the artist to the world around her and connect that world to the artist. An encounter with an artwork may connect us to many states of being, and evoke a reservoir of meanings that connect us to our past, our present and allow us to imagine our future. Artworks can create spaces to grow.

Co constructive pedagogies¹ promote creating a 'shared' space for both learner and educator in order to establish what prior experience is being brought to the encounter with the artwork.

Engaging the learner in an 'open ended conversation' which explores his/hers responses to the artwork establishes the possibility for an exchange of knowledge between the educator and learner.

Asking 'open –ended' questions about the artwork provides a framework of references and establishes what the learner may feel about this encounter, what prior knowledge he/she brings to the dialogue and what information the educator may need to contribute to develop the field of knowledge. All experience and contributions are relevant in building up a 'shared' understanding of the artwork and opens up the potential for sharing of experience and intercultural dialogue. In the course of the dialogue, the role of educator is to facilitate a greater understanding of the context that the artwork has been made in, by adding to the 'co constructive learning framework' from his/her bank of knowledge.

*'the choices made by the artist may appear to be determined by recognisable social or cultural forces or knowledge of other artist's practices but the space in which the artist operates is often aimed at deliberately overturning, redeploying or placing in a new juxtaposition their chosen ideas and images. Where this is successful, they reveal a quite unexpected or different understanding of the world.'*²

Contemporary artwork is created to offer multiple readings, is often ambiguous and presents the possibility for metaphorical and allegorical readings. Many artists believe that the artwork is not 'complete' until another person engages with it and 'adds new meaning' to it. Therefore the response of the viewer/is valid and there is no 'right' or 'wrong' interpretation. This 'open-endedness' offers the potential to

¹ See HEIN, George E. & ALEXANDER, Mary (1998) Museums: Places of Learning, USA, American Association of Museums Education Committee and PRINGLE, Emily (2006) *Learning in the gallery: context, process, outcomes*, UK, Arts Council of England.

² Katy Deepwell; Dialogues with women artists, 2004

engage knowledge and experience in a flexible manner, creating 'shared understandings' therefore offering the potential for 'intercultural exchange'.

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