



**HELIX ARTS**

Annual Report **2007/08**

# Introduction

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**Helix Arts** specialises in the development of projects and initiatives, including artist residencies and commissions, which explore the role and potential of the arts in a social context. Projects are created for specific contexts and artists are selected for the relevance and quality of their work. Building longer-term partnerships, particularly with the public and voluntary sectors, has enabled Helix Arts to produce projects designed to engender broad participation, collaboration and sustainability.

Our overall aim is to provide opportunities for the development of individual creative potential and we are committed to the kind of collaborative approaches that ensure participants have a central role in shaping projects. Since 1983 we have worked with more than 200 artists in the delivery of over 150 projects.

In a typical year Helix Arts works with 30 to 50 artists selected for their ability to co-produce high-quality art through a participatory process. We work across a range of art form areas including visual arts, film-making, creative writing, graphic design, street dance, music and MCing, photography, drama and kite-making.

We deliver between 7 and 10 projects each year, ranging from short-term projects that take place within a 6 to 12-month period to longer-term projects lasting 5 years or more.

Helix Arts has charitable status and is revenue funded by Arts Council England, North East. We welcome approaches from agencies planning to develop new projects.

*"I cannot recommend Helix Arts enough. I just wanted someone to come and do it for us, but in a way that was going to be positive and fit with our values – and there you were!"*

**Philippa J Scott, Operations Manager  
Northumberland Children's Fund**

# Chair's Report

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**Helix Arts**, now 25 years old, has continued to develop and consolidate its position as a leader in the North East in the delivery of a wide range of initiatives which explore the role of the arts in a social context. Projects with young people involved with the criminal justice and care systems flourish, with some of them running for over five years. New projects have started – A Day in Our Lives, working in partnership with Tyneside Cyrenians and Trading Places to address issues of homelessness and mental illness; Let's Create, a programme commissioned by Northumberland Children's Fund which includes working with young people with special needs and disabilities. Each of these, as with our other projects, furthers our aim to increase equality of access to the arts for the most disadvantaged in society.

In the report you can read about our projects and the challenging and creative opportunities they offer to all involved. Our staff have continued to be in demand regionally for consultancy and feasibility projects relating to both public sector procurement of the arts as well as the development of artists working in participatory arts. In addition, we have continued to take forward the business planning and preparation for the implementation of the Arts Council England Thrive! investment.

Under the excellent leadership of Robert Laycock, Director, our energetic and creative staff have continued last year's team building and development programme to ensure that they have the necessary skills and expertise for the challenges of Thrive! and beyond. In November we said goodbye to John Murray, Finance & Resources Officer, and I would like to thank him for his efforts in managing our finances over the last 10 years. The staff team is vital to the success of Helix Arts and without such a dedicated and talented team we would not be able to deliver such high-quality work.

I would like to thank every one of them for their enthusiasm, hard work and consistently high standards of work.

We were pleased to welcome Sue Kennedy to the Board during the year and sorry that Shirley Campbell decided to stand down because of personal commitments. Board members play an increasingly important role in the development and governance of the organisation and this is one of the few opportunities I have to formally express my sincere thanks for their many and varied contributions. Helix Arts welcomes the wider engagement and support of members of the public and I would be delighted to respond to anyone who, on reading this report, is interested in finding out more about our work.

And last, but by no means least, we have continued to value the financial support, active involvement and sound advice of Arts Council England North East and I thank them for this and their regular attendance at Board meetings.

**Susan Winfield, Chair**

# Projects

## Choices

An annual programme of arts activity for young people (10 to 18 years old) in the youth justice system, devised and delivered in partnership with the North of Tyne ISSP (Intensive Supervision and Surveillance Programme) and Newcastle Youth Offending Team.

It was a busy year for the Choices group. Following on from 2006/07, the group continued to work with IF Films to create a 10-minute romantic comedy film called *Day Trippin'* in which love blossoms over an electronic tag. The final DVD also incorporates a short documentary by IF Films capturing the fun and achievements experienced by the current Choices participants. The work with cartoonist Suzy Varty also came to an end with the production of a series of cartoon portraits exploring the lives and identities of the young people.



The group worked with graffiti artist Paul Richardson to create graffiti boards based around anti-knife crime, commissioned by Nexus and displayed at the Chillingham Road Metro station. Workshops took place with street dancer Robby Graham, and Kate Sweeney was appointed filmmaker in residence to work with the group on a film exploring issues of identity in relation to the theme of angels and demons in collaboration with photographer Lindsay Duncanson.

During the summer of 2007 the group took part in a series of cultural visits ranging from a trip to the BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art to a session on sugar craft.

Towards the end of the year there were participatory workshops with CoMusica at The Sage Gateshead and sessions with graphic designer Joe White, to design a logo, and animator Jorn Ebner, to create a flash animation, for the new North of Tyne ISSP and Choices website [www.issp.org.uk](http://www.issp.org.uk) Activity during 2008/09 will include a six-month artist's residency together with a series of sessional workshops.

*Funded by North of Tyne ISSP, Arts Council England North East and Connexions Tyne and Wear.*

## Climate Change Explorer

A programme of arts activity based around climate change in the North East and North West of England, involving artist residencies in schools and scientific institutions.

Continuing the work undertaken in the North West during 2006/07, artist Adam Clarke worked with pupils from Dowdales School in Cumbria to produce a series of animations on issues of climate change. Lorraine Berry completed her work with the UK Environmental Change Network, creating a powerful series of fractal images around the theme of climate change. Shoreline Films worked with both Dowdales School and the Dropzone to create a short film called *Cecil and the Penguins*.

In the North East, filmmaker Emily Barber, graffiti artist Paul Richardson, musician Jonny Deeper and street dancers Robby Graham and Conor O'Kane ran a series of workshops at Mortimer School in South Shields to enable pupils to create a climate change music and dance performance.

A set of learning resources has been developed through the programme which is being made available to schools for use in conjunction with the programme's interactive website

[www.globalvoice.org.uk/cce](http://www.globalvoice.org.uk/cce)

*Supported by Defra, Arts Council England North West, the UK Environmental Change Network, Dowdales School, Creative Partnerships Cumbria, Creative Partnerships Northumberland, Cumberland Building Society.*



## Let's Create

Northumberland Children's Fund commissioned Helix Arts to design and deliver a programme of arts activity with four of its services, each with a different artistic discipline and focused on both participation and process.

*Ears 2 U Participation Service* supports children and young people to have a say and become involved in decisions which affect them. Working with drama practitioner Rosa Stourac McCreery, the group created a short, modern-day version of Cinderella.

*InPact* provides a single point of contact for information, advice and support for families of children with special needs and disabilities. The group worked with photographer Louise Hepworth to create a series of photographs of and by the participants.

*Scotland Gate* is an isolated housing estate two miles from Bedlington and a former coalfield town. They had great fun making kites with kite-maker Frances Anderson.

*Ability to Play* provides new sport and physical activity sessions for children and young people with disabilities and special needs. They worked with IF Films to create a documentary of their activities.

The project ended at a celebratory event held at Alnwick Gardens in November 2007 where delegates were treated to the premiere of a film of the whole programme, created by IF Films, capturing the processes that each group went through during the workshops.

*Funded by Northumberland Children's Fund.*

## Moving On

An annual programme of work with the South of Tyne ISSP (Intensive Supervision and Surveillance Programme) and the Sunderland Youth Offending Service, working with young people within the youth criminal justice system and those leaving custody.



Phase two of this programme commenced with a series of taster workshops including aerosol design, street dance and DJ/MCing. Following these sessions, the participants chose to work with street dancers Robby Graham and Conor O'Kane and with MC Jonny Deeper.

Towards the end of the year the group worked with filmmaker Kate Sweeney and photographer Lindsay Duncanson to create a film based on the idea of the 'new monkey club'. These workshops proved to be a great success, with some of the young people volunteering to attend and some sessions in danger of being over-subscribed. The film will be produced on DVD during April 2008. Future activity includes a six-month artist's residency.

*Funded by the National Probation Service (Northumbria), Sunderland Youth Offending Service and Arts Council England North East.*





## A Day in Our Lives

Helix Arts, Tyneside Cyrenians and Trading Places are working in partnership to deliver a new 12-month programme of arts-based activities for homeless and chronically excluded people in Newcastle upon Tyne and Gateshead. The programme, funded by NESTA (National Endowment for Science, Technology and the Arts), will start in early 2008 and will serve as a mechanism for tackling mental health issues directly by engaging service users in activities which enable them to explore issues of status and self-esteem, and associated problems with drug and alcohol misuse, through a creative process.

Lead artist Magali Pettier has started working with the group to design and plan the programme of arts activity that will take place during 2008/09.

*Funded by NESTA (National Endowment for Science, Technology and the Arts).*

*“When I came to the session I didn't really know anyone else and I was nervous and didn't want to say anything. I was asked to help to make part of the kite with another woman and her child and got so into it that we were soon chatting and laughing. I wasn't very good at making kites but it didn't matter. By the end of the session we were talking about the children and I told them about my child and the bullying she has had at school.”*

**Parent – Scotland Gate project (part of the Let's Create programme)**

## Ynot?

An ongoing programme of arts activity for young people (16 to 21 years old) living in the Sunderland area. The programme is particularly focused on the aspirations of young parents and those leaving care.

Started during 2006/07, the street dance book/DVD *Freeze Motion* was completed and published in the summer of 2007 and showcases three short films together with prints, photographs, aerosol art and creative writing, all created by members of the group. During this time the group also worked with Tommy Anderson to produce a series of aerosol art boards based on the Park Lane Metro station that were used as part of the set for the *We Will Rock You* stage show, commissioned by Sunderland Empire.

Musician-in-residence Sam Palmer held a series of music production workshops with the groups to create a databank of work.



Based on a piece of creative writing developed by the group in 2004, writer Paul Summers, graphic designer Tommy Anderson and illustrator Bethan Laker worked with participants to create the children's book *The Lost Rainbow* to be published for distribution by the group during 2008. Sessions were also held with puppet-maker Emma Boor to create a set of puppets based on the characters in the book that will be used during storytelling sessions in schools and nurseries.

As Ynot? moves into its sixth year, activities for 2008/09 include issued-based work around substance misuse, a celebration of the work and achievements to date and work on mapping out progression routes for participants wishing to continue their arts activity.

To order copies of *Freeze Motion* and *The Lost Rainbow* please visit [www.helixarts.com/publications.html](http://www.helixarts.com/publications.html) or contact us.

*Funded by City of Sunderland, Connexions Tyne and Wear and Arts Council England North East.*

# Consultancy & Feasibility

## Public Sector

### Procurement of the Arts

Started during 2006/07 and undertaken as a commission from Arts Council England North East, Helix Arts continued to work closely with the Northumberland Tyne & Wear NHS Trust and with the Probation Service, Co. Durham, to explore and develop best-practice models for public sector procurement of the arts. The process included a series of focus groups led by a range of experts. A final report was submitted to Arts Council England North East in early 2008 and we will continue to work with both the NHS Trust and the Probation Service through 2008/09.

*Funded by Arts Council England North East.*

## Skills Action Plan

Following on from work completed in 2006/07, Helix Arts worked closely with regional arts organisations, artists and education providers to design a tailor-made programme of short courses for artists working in, or wishing to work in, participatory arts. These courses, which commence in May 2008, are being delivered by Northumbria University and the pilot phase will be supported by Business Link.

*Funded by Arts Council England North East and Business Link.*

## Thrive!

At the end of 2006/07, Helix Arts was selected by Arts Council England to take part in their national Thrive! programme. This meant that a significant amount of work took place during 2007/08 to develop and refine our plans for the investment. The funding will be used for both organisational and sector development and can be broadly mapped against the following four areas:

**Market Development** will include in-depth stakeholder analysis and continuing professional development for artists.

**Organisational Development** includes investment in ICT and staff CPD together with consultation and advice from external experts to continue work on our business model.

**Product/Practice Development** will be achieved through the development of contracting and project management toolkits, establishing a multi-disciplinary advisory panel and investment in innovative programme development.

**Evidence Gathering and Dissemination** will draw together regional, national and international information and evidence in order to establish arts activity more at the centre of work aimed at addressing social exclusion. A conference event will be held to share and discuss the findings.

*Funded by Arts Council England.*

## Image Credits

**Choices:** Graffiti board by the Choices group working with Paul Richardson; Angel from the film *Who am I?*, Kate Sweeney and Lindsay Duncanson.

**Climate Change Explorer:** Front cover image *Shells* by Lorraine Berry; back cover image *Gangster Rabbits* from animation by Adam Clarke.

**Let's Create:** Black and white photograph by Louise Hepworth working with the InPact group.

**Moving On:** Cow face from the film *Poison* by the Moving On group working with Kate Sweeney and Lindsay Duncanson.

**Ynot?:** Black and yellow image from *Freeze Motion* by Ynot? working with Tommy Anderson; chameleon illustration from *The Lost Rainbow* by Bethan Laker.

## Artists

Special thanks to all the artists and creative organisations that we worked with during the year, including:

Adam Clarke, Adam Hill, Beth Coverdale, Bethan Laker, Betty Nwabineli, Caroline Roach, CoMusica, Conor O'Kane, Emily Barber, Emma Boor, Emma Hughes, Frances Anderson, Graham Cleland, Heath Bunting, IF Films, Joe White, Jonny Deeper, Jorn Ebner, Kate Sweeney, Lindsay Duncanson, Lorraine Berry, Louise Hepworth, Magali Pettier, Nicola Lumley, Paul Richardson, Paul Summers, Pete Rogers, Robby Graham, Rosa Stourac McCreery, Sam Palmer, Shoreline Films, Suzy Varty, Tommy Anderson

### During 2007/08, Helix Arts:

- Delivered over 250 arts sessions to over 3,800 attendees
- Provided more than £114,000 worth of work for over 30 different artists

**Staff:**

Robert Laycock  
*Director*

Rowena On  
*Operations Manager*

Toby Lowe  
*Programme Manager*

Kate Roebuck  
*Project Manager*

Teri Sayers  
*Project Manager*

Yvonne Dobson  
*Administration & Finance Officer*

John Murray  
*Finance & Resources Officer*  
*(Retired November 2007)*

**Board:**

Susan Winfield (*Chair*)

Mary Coyle (*Vice Chair*)

Jules Preston (*Treasurer*)

Morag Polmear

Jennifer Hives

Mike Worthington

Claire Frater  
*(Appointed July 2007)*

Sue Kennedy  
*(Appointed November 2007)*

David Haley  
*(Resigned July 2007)*

Shirley Campbell  
*(Resigned March 2008)*

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