

Age of Creativity Festival Blog

Week Two

Farrell Curran, Festival Manager



Age of Creativity Festival map of events

Wow. So we are on week two of the festival! I've been blown away by the number of events in our programme this year and the level of engagement we've had on social media. Not only have we connected with events from across the country, but I feel as though I've really got a flavour of the type of work so many of you are doing both in person and online. It's easy to see 'creative pop up shop', 'dementia craft session' or 'dance for Parkinson's' in the brochure and make assumptions, but only when you see it for yourself do you really understand. If that's how I feel after a decade of specialising in this work, then it just proves why we need a festival like this to raise the profile of our work and share what we do on a national platform.

This is why I was so pleased to see 'Our Dementia Choir with Vicky McClure on the BBC' - sadly it wasn't my doing - but the timing couldn't be better. If you've seen it, then I don't need to explain why. Watching someone who has been touched by dementia, going on a journey to better understand why music has such a positive influence, is powerful stuff. It reminds me of why I came into this field in the first place, but it also reminds me that not everyone has been on this journey, not everyone understands the impact our work has on individuals every single day. Sometimes it's easy to imagine that with so much evidence behind us, we are now preaching to the converted - but we're not. We still have a lot of work to do to get our work into the mainstream, but the time is NOW.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/m0004pyb>

Not making assumptions is a theme that came up a lot this week and prominently in the form of our 'Ageing provocateur twitter hour'. This is the first time we have delivered a month long festival, but we are late to the party in many ways, because our friends in Scotland, Ireland and Wales have been

doing this work for years- and in case of Bealtaine - 20 years! So we have a lot to learn and it has been great to share ideas and connect up our approach where possible. One outward facing connection that we share this year is our weekly twitter hour, led by each festival on a weekly basis. The first week was our turn and we took this opportunity to share the provocations produced for the Age of Creativity Festival headline conference. If you haven't seen them yet, then take a look and connect with our conversations by using #AgeingPros. Each provocation asks us to rethink the way we approach our work in this field- check it out.

<http://www.ageofcreativity.co.uk/festival/provocations>

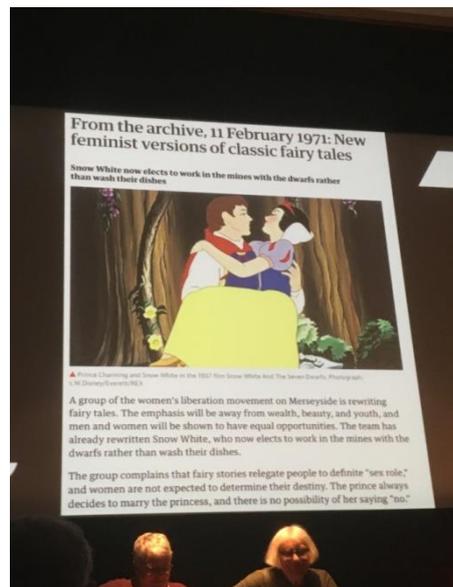
I want to talk about two specific events that I went to in Liverpool this week. The first was the Lunchtime Music Concert at the Victoria and Albert Museum; an afternoon delight for a packed room of older people on a wet, windy day. What was also interesting is that a number of the musicians performing were also aged 50+, alongside much younger MA students from the University. The fact that 'older people' were part of the cohort of MA students developing their skills as musicians and composers should come as no surprise of course, but it brought my mind back to the conversations we had at the headline conference last week and the assumptions we make as a sector about older artists. Would we call these individuals 'emerging' artists, 're-emerging' artists perhaps- or does it even matter? In many ways, it doesn't; the quality of their performance as a collective was extremely high and that's what we, as an audience, care about irrespective of age. But in terms of them as artists, their career prospects and how they are perceived within the creative industries, I can't help but wonder if it does. Will their life outside the academic institute take a different path because of their age and what is our collective role within our sector to challenge this? I'm keen to explore in more detail with partners soon.



Lunchtime Music Concert, Victoria Gallery and Museum

The second performance of the day in Liverpool was at FACT. The discussion I saw was not part of the festival programme, but it definitely should've been (and I mentally added our logo). 'Once and Future Tales' was a 're-emerging' of a series of books published by the women's liberation group in Merseryside in the 1970's. Using classic fairytales as an inspiration, they updated them from a feminist perspective, as a way of challenging the social norms around gender and inspiring younger generations to see beyond the stereotypes. Books such as 'Little Red Hood' were re-imagined and published by a

group of women with few resources but huge aspirations, challenging assumptions about equality groups that are still hugely relevant today.



Once and Future Tales, FACT Liverpool

So my final thought for this week, as we move into the second half of the festival, focuses on the assumptions often made about the Age of Creativity Festival as a whole; that it's a vehicle in which we give some old folk something to watch on a wet and windy afternoon. Not so. There has been no evidence in any of the work that I have seen online, on TV, or in any of our events where older people have taken a back seat as passive recipients of culture. This festival celebrates older people as the artists, producers, thinkers, doers, makers and innovators that they were when they were young and still are today, irrespective of their age. I just hope that the unconverted are seeing what I am.