

A Note From Sharon Gill.

Apologies for the delay in bringing the Roaring Times to you, we have been a little distracted by global affairs! We all at ROAR sincerely hope everyone is safe and well and taking all the necessary precautions to maintain that situation.

We are all being challenged to re-prioritise our work and life, and try to remain positive and productive in an uncertain present and unknown future. What is certain is once restrictions on movement and isolation are lifted, there will be a new role for arts and culture to play in healing our society and reframing the world.

There are plenty of digital and online resources and activities being made free to help entertain, amuse and educate people during lockdown. The team here can help you navigate that landscape, if you are looking for something in particular, or even if you have any good ideas you want to get started with locally. So right up until that fateful Friday 13th when it became clear we would have to close the ROAR office, we had been delivering some remarkable programmes. After our Shefest night of artists talks, with Carol Robson, Chinwe Russel and Liz Churton, we also hosted the amazing Amber Topaz with her final performance of the world touring, award winning show, *The Rude Awakening*. True to form, the audience were offered clean (new) G-Strings to use as face masks!

WE Great Place have enabled ROAR to work in partnership with Wentworth Woodhouse to pilot a scheme that enables artists to get support with their first public commission. These are small scale training tools, that help set out and explain the processes involved, and we hope to find a way to make this project sustainable so it can roll on. The proposals are in, so keep a watch on this new cultural offer using the Chapel space. The Creative People and Places project, Flux Capacitor, is moving along at a great pace, the Consortia have been working with Chrissie Tiller on their own development, and with Gill Thewlis from Aperté on the business plan. We also interviewed recently for the Project Manager and are confident we have been able to recruit for this position, which is very exciting as work can start in earnest.

Finally, while you have a little extra time on your hands, if you have found your inner artists and have been making, writing, painting things, please send us your work to share

Sharon Gill

Automaton

Back in November artists joined us for a day of simple automaton construction. Automaton are machines that look like they are self aware or moving by themselves but are controlled by cogs, gears and axils. Everyone was introduced to the different parts and how they make different types of movement and they we constructed a simple 'Twittering Bird'. All the parts were cut using ROAR's laser cutter and then it was a matter of following the construction instructions. Creativity followed with the design and personality of the birds. As with all automata construction the mechanics are secondary to its story but once complete the movement of the mechanism is as entrancing and interesting as the moving characters and objects. Once you understand the movements that the different mechanisms can create your imagination can truly be let free, anything is possible.

Pottery

There has been a lot of clay flying about at Friday Drop In recently. It might be connected to the TV show The Great Pottery Throwdown which has been aired over the last few months. At least every episode was a topic of conversation for the intrepid potters. The challenge of the potters wheel was a calling for some and hand building for others. Pottery and ceramics is a wonderful, creative activity which can also help with mental health. The joy of working on a potters wheel comes from the fact you can't think of anything else, you have to be in the moment, focusing on your hands the clay, the water and how everything is changing. Pottery is elemental, it brings together earth, water and fire to create useful and beautiful objects. I think this 'working with natural elements' is another factor that works well on the mind and can connect you to the world around you.

If you are interested in giving pottery a go, you are very welcome to come and get an introduction to our pottery setup at ROAR on a Friday morning. If there is enough interest we will run another pottery workshop where you can learn a few new techniques.

GLOW

As a freelance community theatre practitioner, I work with a wide-range of skills; embodied storytelling, poetry and creative writing, movement/physical theatres and play in the delivery of creative projects. I am increasingly including multi-arts approaches, visual arts, crafting, technology and sound in my facilitation.

I am passionate about arts projects which help to break down barriers that people may face. For older people issues with wealth, transport and health often prevents access to the arts; Glow aimed to not only make arts accessible but celebrate creativity in later life. It is undeniable the effect participatory arts practice has on a person's wellbeing – from inspiring feelings of hope and joy, to tackling loneliness, to improving cognitive function by engaging the brain's plasticity. There are no wrong answers in imagination, which can be empowering for people with cognitive impairment. I saw all this potential for Glow.

The brief outlined by ROAR was to gather objects of inspiration, provocation and wonder which would help to foster artistic exploration with people living with dementia. The freedom within this brief meant I could be playful with how I responded to it and to my participants. In January I started participatory workshops with people living with dementia who attend day centre provision run by AGE UK and each week I brought objects, small curiosities, which could be used as stimulus for creative exploration and artworks.

As the workshops progressed, I gathered more objects, tools and creative materials in response to individual participant's interests and abilities. The primary focus was on sensory-rich objects. In woodland themed sessions, we made small study sketches of evergreen foliage, made music with pinecones and washed our hands in hot water scented with pine essential oil. We also experimented with weaving natural materials.

Throughout the project I was very interested in how I could support participants' decision-making and facilitate creative agency. As we explored different techniques together, participants would choose which materials to use in their artworks and would then often decide on a new direction for their pieces themselves; for example, what started as a sketch of a branch transformed into a winter landscape. Actualising their choices meant participants were more invested. I also found natural materials and curiosities to be the most effective, most likely because these items were familiar but as we grow older and also as health conditions such as dementia progress, access to the outside world often diminishes. So, through my facilitation we could choose to explore nature in different and unexpected ways which was often joyous, stimulating and elicited our curiosity.

As physical distancing and other restrictions came in to place due to the Covid-19 crisis, including stopping visits to care homes, delivery of the participatory workshops has had to end; I have instead spent my time synthesising participants' artwork and creating the final kit for ROAR. The kit includes the objects, curiosities and creative tools I have found to be most effective and stimulating for people living with dementia. Each item is accompanied with tips and tricks from me and suggested activities. It is my hope that this kit will be available for ROAR members to borrow and take out to your communities to engage someone you may know who is living with dementia.

Marianne Matusz, Lead Artist: Glow.

Life Act

What we've been up to!

Despite foods and freezing cold weather, members of Life Act have shown their commitment and loyalty, turning out every Tuesday to socialise, enjoy drama and see friends. No matter what life throws at us, our sessions together provide a time each week to be creative as well as feel valued and listened to.

We have had a fabulous time over the last few months rehearsing our show 'Silent Scream', devising new scenes and incorporating more dance and singing into our sessions. It's been amazing discovering hidden talents from members of the group fabulous dancers, incredible poets, and musical maestros have wowed us all!

Building on the group's ideas we have created new scenes which have explored the ways in which we as humans interact with one another, focussing on the theme of love and what this means to us. Using improvisation and devising, Life Act have developed new work around friendship, the meaning of love, and caring for those less fortunate than ourselves. These new scenes have been included into our existing piece of drama.

Outside our usual sessions, there have been some exciting experiences for us, including the opportunity for group members to take part in creative sessions led by Eye Trust at Newman school. At these workshops, we have had the chance to work with David Stevens, Sound Artist, experiencing and interacting with his incredible sound and light installation. Members of the group also took part in workshops led by Laura Dajao, a wheelchair dancer which led to a performance at an assembly at the school. These new skills were then showcased at a performance at Meadowhall shopping centre alongside 'Silent Scream'. This public performance gave Life Act a fantastic opportunity to present their work to a wider audience. The feedback received was overwhelmingly positive, giving all our members a well deserved boost of confidence and sense of pride!

We have also performed at a conference at Magna which proved to be a fantastic opportunity to share our work with school pupils and disability organisations. As well as this, we took 'Silent Scream' to Springwell school where we performed to a large audience of children and young people. This was very well received and the Q and A that followed highlighted the interest and enthusiasm it had generated for the pupils and teachers.

Sadly, we have been unable to meet since the coronavirus lockdown, but we are still keeping in touch via zoom meetings and Facetime chats. Group members continue to show their creativity and positivity – just this morning we were all cheered by a sing song led by Andrew of 'Sweet Caroline'!

We are all looking forward to being together again at ROAR but for now, take comfort in knowing that we are still connected and will be reunited to carry on our drama sessions in the not too distant future.

Charlie Barnes.

EGG

Egg is an artist development programme, funded by Wentworth and Elsecar Great Place, where the participants were in charge of the direction and content of the course.

Over 7 months there have been 10 sessions that have covered a huge range of content. Each session involved a specialist coming in to talk about a particular topic that the artists had highlighted as an area they would like to develop or was missing from their practice. The specialist talk was followed by a session of peer support where they made sense of what they had just learnt. The artists also had ongoing support in the intermediate weeks as they put their learning into practice.

The artists also had the opportunity to keep in touch online as the course progressed using an App called Trello.

Over the months there were specialists from the areas of Social Media, E-Commerce, Digital Content and Curation as well as a talk from Richard Bartle at his latest exhibition at Millennium Gallery, Sheffield. We embarked on two trips one to Yorkshire Sculpture Park and the other to Bloc Projects in Sheffield where we continued our curation conversations with David Mcleary and Sunshine Wong.

The artists have found support and friendship within the programme and plan to continue meeting beyond the official end of EGG and are organising their first EGG group show. We are hopeful that this programme will repeat, starting in the Autumn, so do let us know at ROAR if you are interested in participating.

Artist Talks

ROAR holds an artist talk every second Wednesday of the month from 4.30pm-5.30pm. We encourage artists to explore the idea of what a talk can be which has led to holograms, listening sessions, group activities and straight forward presentations.

Recent talks include:

Sarah Jane Palmer, Richard Millard, Chinwe Russel, Liz Churton and Carol Robson.

RAW Talk Exhibition

Alongside our RAW ROAR Talks, which were part of SheFest, we held an exhibition of the artists work in the BUZZ Gallery.

BUZZ Gallery is a supportive exhibition space within ROAR Artspace. Any member can book it for a month to trial new work, share their practice or document work in progress. It is a supportive space and we can help organise crit groups, openings and private views.

Gathering 10 at Gullivers Valley Resort.

Gatherings are whole day events at various venues around South Yorkshire. They are mini residencies

where the artists have the opportunity to explore and be inspired by spaces and places.

The day offers

time to work, social/networking time over lunch, collaborative opportunities and opportunities for

artists to share their work

HEARTHIS International Exhibition.

ROAR aims to have an exhibition or project every year that has an international aspect.

This year the HEARTHIS exhibition had artists exhibiting from Germany, South Africa, Luxemburg, Italy, Newcastle and a plethora of local artists.

Pagan Members Exhibition

BUZZ gallery not only provides opportunities for members to show their work individually but also provides members the chance to respond to theme based group exhibitions.

These exhibitions usually grow over a month as more and more members respond and at the end of the month there is an exhibition that could be toured to other venues to showcase the talent of ROAR members.

Membership

If you would like to here more about the opportunities available to members of ROAR or for a copy of the ROAR Membership form please contact Matt Butt, our Creative

Development Officer at ROAR: matt@rotherhamroar.org

Information can also be found at www.rotherhamroar.com

We can be followed on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter, our handle is @rotherhamroar

ROAR

ROAR are an Arts Council funded National Portfolio Organisation. We are an infrastructure body, with an ever increasing membership of 117 artists and organisations, all of whom live and/or work in and around Rotherham. We are a volunteer led organisation with our Board of Directors representing different areas of the creative sector.

Our Vision

Rotherham as a home to thriving artistic practitioners, spaces and activities; enhancing social well-being and personal growth.

Our Mission

To develop and sustain innovative, challenging and insightful art practices in Rotherham and to place these within wider national and international creative networks.

Our Values and Ethos

ROAR recognises that creativity is fundamental to our ability to stimulate social change and so is committed to action which values creativity as an essential human right.

ROAR is committed to its vision and to using all available resources to make the vision happen.

We advocate that Art is a necessity, not a luxury, in community regeneration and life.

We are not here to do the work for our members but to help them develop the skills they need to enhance their careers.

We will seek and create opportunities for the arts to play a role in as many aspects of public life as possible.

We demonstrate the value of the arts as a tool for regeneration, through health and wellbeing, partnership working, promoting Rotherham's cultural life, sharing good practice, being flexible and responsive to our members' needs, horizon scanning for collaborative projects and funding and business investment.

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