

THE WINSTON CHURCHILL MEMORIAL TRUST OF
AUSTRALIA

Report by - NATASHA WOODS -
2015 Churchill Fellow

THE CHURCHILL FELLOWSHIP to study best practice in arts in prisons, its capacity to reduce recidivism, and produce savings.

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Signed

Dated 05.12.2016

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...When we escape from the place we spend most of our time, the mind is suddenly made aware of all those errant ideas we'd previously suppressed. We start thinking about obscure possibilities that never would have occurred to us. Furthermore, this more relaxed sort of cognition comes with practical advantages, especially when we're trying to solve difficult problems. Jonah Lehrer



Louisiana State Penitentiary August 2016

► INTRODUCTION

My name is Natasha Woods. I am currently employed by the Department of Justice, Tasmania Prison Service as a Sport and Recreation Officer. This is a non-custodial role. I have been in this role for over 6 and half years. Prior to this I was a Correctional Officer for 13 years in NSW.

Aside from a short stint as a temporary personal assistant in a few State and Federal government agencies I have worked in a Prison environment for most of my adult working life. It was during my last temporary appointment, a position in New South Wales Corrective Services in Head Office that I caught the bug and decided that prison was the right place for me. Thank goodness it was in a working capacity. I applied to become a Correctional Officer in mid-1996. The process was long and competitive. I was afforded the opportunity to work as a civilian staff member at the new Metropolitan Remand and Reception Centre while I waited. Finally, I won a position as Probationary Correctional officer and went to the academy at Brush Farm, I was 22.

Prison work is a very eye opening experience, 'Oh the tales I could tell, the things I have seen'. I am not alone, thousands of wonderful people work in the Australian prison system, a system that most people are happy to know exists but also happy to forget about. It is hard, it is thankless and it is (at times) very dangerous.

The inmates who are placed in the custodial care of a Prison system are there for a very good reason. The State has decided by way of our judicial system that deprivation of liberty is the option for the wrong doings of that individual. My job is to provide a duty of care to that individual and to assist in the missions and values of the organization. This is usually to reduce offending behaviour through rehabilitation.

"While it is unreasonable and unrealistic to expect Arts projects in and of themselves to "produce desistance, there is evidence that they can play a vital role in enabling prisoners to imagine and embark on the desistance process. Put into the terminology of desistance theory and research, arts based interventions offer more than "just" the development of the skills of offenders; they may enable them to at least begin to think differently about themselves, their families, their relationships to the prison regime and the opportunities it offers. More generally arts participation may help prisoners to imagine different possible futures, different social networks, different identities and different lifestyles" (Arts in the Criminal Justice System "What really works? Arts Alliance 2011)

I have always taken this side of my job very seriously. I worked as a Correctional Officer in NSW for 13 years. 6 years ago I decided that Tasmania was the place for my family and I. I no longer wanted the role of custodian and the role of Sports and Recreation Officer presented itself. Since winning the role in 2010 I have enjoyed offering sporting, arts and craft programs to inmates. Programs including; airbrushing , fine arts, sewing, card making, theatre and music. I have worked alongside community members with real talent and skills to bring these programs, most who do so on a volunteer basis and gain as much from the experience as the inmates do. I believe that these types of programs enrich inmate's lives, it allows an outlet for thought and emotion, it encourages pro-social modelling and it also provides portable work skills. I have seen the benefits of Arts in a Prison Setting first hand for many years.

"The Arts are often seen as enjoyable and fluffy. But anyone who has tried to play an instrument, perform in a play, paint a watercolour, or write a poem knows that the process demands concentration, discipline co-operation and technical know how it involves an honest expression of

feelings, good communication skills working together well and commitment to finish the job. In other words the arts produce exactly the skills and the common humanity that offenders need if they are to be rehabilitated back into our community". (Arts in the Criminal Justice System "What really works? Arts Alliance 2011)

This year the Churchill Foundation afforded me the opportunity to head out on a journey of a lifetime. A fact-finding mission to discover what programs assist in this process, which ones work towards reducing offending behaviour and how can we creatively find funds to assist in this. This journey took me to New Zealand, The USA and UK. I have brought back this knowledge and will be using this information in Tasmania and the mainland. I have a passion for my work and I hope I have the capacity to infect others with this passion.

These views I have expressed are my own and may not reflect those of the agencies I work or have worked for.

Research Method

I have used semi structured interviews, with observations, documentation, and on-going dialogue coupled with research. Throughout the report, I will use the terms inmate, prisoner, offender, client and participant to describe the incarcerated people who participate in the programs.

Acknowledgments and thanks

To the Tasmania Prison Service and Department of Justice Tasmania for supporting me in my work and enabling me to travel on this trip.

To Rob McCafferty, you are inspiration, your advice has been well received and your passion for both prison work and art is well known. You are where 'Prison meets Art'. I will never forget your commitment to enriching the lives of those around you.

To Jacquie Maginnis, your knowledge on everything art and networking in the art community is legendary and your support is astonishing. You are where 'Health meets Art'. I thank you for your ongoing support in more ways than I can count.

To my passionate and forever giving volunteers whom without you the programs may very well be dull (and not artsy) indeed, they may also never have started in the first place; Anna Phillips, Jen Newton, Rebecca Brogan, Di Reynoldson, Janet Stone, Paul McIntyre and Sally Wise. You are also the reason we can provide programs in such a cost neutral way. I appreciate the endless hours you have put in at the prison and so do those inmates who benefit from the programs.

To Helen Tucker and Nerrissa O'Neill who have worked in the prison system for as long as I can remember, trying to make a difference delivering Education to the uneducated.

To some marvellous Tasmanian artists who have spent hours working with the inmates of Risdon; Yvette Watt, Dean Stevenson, Tim Jones, Fiona Stewart, Eleanor Tucker, Sally Mollison, Jennifer Compton and The Glimar Man.

To all the inmates/offenders/prisoners/clients/participants that have enriched my outlook and reinforce that things can get better.

To my wonderfully supportive husband Bradley and amazing kids, Blake and William for coming along for the ride, and being happy to do so. Thanks also to my mum, dad, brother and sister who have always championed me, no matter how wild the idea.

▶ EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

‘To study best practice in arts in prisons, its capacity to reduce recidivism, and produce savings.’

Every moment on this life changing tour was enthralling and informative. There were, however, some amazing highlights on the trip. Firstly, meeting with Ann Byford in New Zealand and soaking up her lust for life and her insistence on good quality and meaningful art programs in the prison system there. Her heartfelt understanding of the need for rehabilitation through arts was infectious. The infection continued in Ann Arbour with the Prison Creative Arts Project team headed by the brilliant Ashley Lucas. The professionalism and integrity of this program and the people in it is world-class. Ashley’s dedication to improving the wellbeing of those affected by incarceration through Theatre and creative writing is outstanding. Engaging with three different activities in Michigan as well as seeing The Empowerment Plan in action was wonderful.

Meeting Marianne in Louisiana and enjoying her southern hospitality, the gumbo and whitebait was ‘awesome’. Meeting with Dr. David Gussak, this was a vital link to connecting art as therapy in a prison setting, he was also very passionate about visual arts as a medium for change. Meeting with Amanda Wood and Fred Caulfield in Ireland and seeing the Holocaust Art install and purpose used Art studio at HMP Magilligan and enjoying the food and company at The Cabin at Hydebank Wood College.

In every organisation I visited I meet with passionate people, they all loved their work. They loved the positive impact they have seen on those with whom they work in the prison. They know this works. They know that they are making a difference.

I trust that this report will not only provoke thought about the need for Art in a Prison setting in Australia but to create a dialogue on constructive ways in which funds can be raised to support the programs in the prison and further into the community for those re-engaging and returning to society. I hope that it also provides a valuable resource for all the agencies and people I met and for everyone else with interest. International relationships have been formed by myself and other Churchill Fellows recently. There is now a need to find out what other state and territory correctional departments are doing, and consider working together.

■ CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

At a National level:

Establishment of a National Arts in Prison network the membership to include: representatives from Justice, Arts and forensic Health government services from all states and territories and Arts and Community organisations working in Prison. The role of the network would be to share experience, promote good practice and develop funding options. Some of the outcomes of the network would be:

- Symposium on Arts in Prisons – 2/3 days of workshops, training and education of justice staff, artists and program facilitators from all state and territory jurisdictions to be held in Tasmania with national and international guest speakers, facilitators and trainers by 2019.
- Continue to develop evaluation and evidence based research that show how Art in Prisons can effect positive change and reduce recidivism.
- Bi -Annual National Art Exhibition – Including Visual arts, Theatre and Music.
- A framework for arts in prisons that uses “Captive Audiences” performing Arts in Prison (Griffith University and Queensland Conservatorium) as a guide.
- A guide for Artist working in Prisons using as a guide Criminal Justice An Artist (Rideout- Chris Johnson & Saul Hewish for Arts Alliance)

At a state level:

- Craft and Art Café on site. Need for immediate funding options for this. Almost all prisons I visited had a self-funded café and meal delivery service on site. Some of these provided a place for both staff and visitors to view art and craftwork available for sale and some used profits to fund further projects such as art programs.
- The creation of a Not-for-profit organisation who’s focus is on the engagement of paid Tasmanian artists, artisans and creative people, and other Tasmanian and Australian NGO’s who have similar ethos to work in the prison system. Also to provide funded and ongoing programs inside the prison and out in the community for those who are on community probation and parole orders.
- Continued support for the Artist with Conviction Exhibition and an allocation of funding to pay teaching artist to work with inmates and staff to build the quality and content of the exhibition and improve outcomes for Tasmanian Prison service.

► PROGRAMME

New Zealand

Jacqui Moyes - Prison Arts Advisor

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Ann Byford - Visual Artist

Spring Hill Corrections Facility and Waikeria Prison for the
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Wallace Ioapo - Recreation/Corrections Officer

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The Actor's Gang

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NEW ZEALAND

Arts Access Aotearoa

Wellington

Arts Access Aotearoa receives funding from the Department of Corrections to provide an Arts in Corrections Advisory Service. Arts Access Aotearoa uses the arts to support rehabilitation and reintegration. Through this service, Jacqui Moyes, Arts in Corrections Advisor, supports:

- Corrections staff to design and implement effective arts plans for each prison
- Corrections staff and volunteers to design and deliver effective arts activities and events in prisons
- Artists and community educators to deliver effective arts programmes, workshops and residencies in prisons.

Introducing Arts in Corrections

The arts and creative expression can be a powerful tool in supporting the rehabilitation process of prisoners and helping their reintegration back into their communities on release. The Department of Corrections works to make New Zealand a better, safer place by:

- protecting the public from those who can cause harm
- reducing re-offending.

Each week Department of Corrections in New Zealand manage 8,500 people in prisons and 30,000 offenders in the communities. Their 8,000 staff are committed to supporting offenders to help them address their offending and gain skills that will help them lead a crime-free life. Taken from http://www.corrections.govt.nz/about_us.html

Corrections protects the public of New Zealand from those who can harm them, by:

- making sure prisoners, parolees and other offenders in the community comply with the sentences and orders imposed by the Courts and Parole Board
- providing offenders with rehabilitation programmes, education and job training that will turn their lives around and break the cycle of re-offending.

Corrections' goal is to reduce re-offending by 25% by 2017. They believe that turning people away from crime is an investment worth making, not just from an economic point of view, but for the good of New Zealand society. Achieving this goal will see 600 fewer people going back to prison and 4,000 fewer people being reconvicted on community offences. But more than anything else, achieving this goal will mean there are 18,500 fewer victims of crime.

Every second month, Arts Access distribute "Arts in Corrections", an e-newsletter highlighting news stories, profiles, research and resources – all illustrating that the arts can be a powerful tool supporting rehabilitation and reintegration. They also present two leadership awards to Corrections staff, community groups or volunteers at the annual Arts Access Awards at Parliament.

Case Study

Ann Byford – Facilitator and Visual Artist

Ann Byford delivers art programs and landscaping projects in two male prisons in New Zealand, Spring Hill Corrections Facility and Waikeria Prison and also has worked with At Risk youth on art projects with Beyond Violence campaigns. Her work with prisoners has been recognised for outstanding contribution to supporting the rehabilitation of prisoners through the arts with various awards presented by Arts Access Aotearoa at Parliament.

When not inside the wire Ann can be found in her studio working on paintings and sculpture for upcoming exhibitions and shows. She says that her work is not the postcard image but 'The That That It Is' and depicts iconic objects in the landscape. When I met with Ann she was currently working on projects for the Department of Corrections. 'Corrections' is such a difficult environment to financially manage, security is always a key consideration and unfortunately Art and Creative pursuits are not considered forefront on the financial agenda. Ann was at that time again seeking external funding to continue her important and successful work. These times tend to create undue stress not only on the Artist seeking well-earned pay for a hard earned job but participants who would like to continue their Artistic pursuits and new participants who have been waiting to a program are also in limbo. Consistency is the key in a prison environment and waiting for funding outcomes does not make programming easy and can undo established patterns and create distrust and scepticism with participants. Ongoing funding sources simply do not exist for this sort of work and that's a real shame because to not have to think about where the next grant money is coming from frees the artist or organisation providing the programs up to create real change in participants lives. This in turn is better for staff and the general public alike.

Case Study

Thomas - Participant

Thomas was born in New Zealand and has lived in New Zealand his whole life. His cultural heritage is Rarotongan. His parents are both Rarotongan, from islands of Atiu. Thomas has spent the past 2 and half years in prison. He is serving a total of 11 years in prison. Thomas has 2 kids but hasn't seen them for 8 years. He is currently going through the process of family court to be trusted again with kids. "Art helps with therapy a bit and I really find that it does help my mental state, just to keep busy. For the long run, get some new skills. Trying to keep momentum into doing more good stuff rather than what I used to do in my past."

Thomas uses art to help keep him focused, not to think about all the negative stuff that's happening around in gaol. "It helps me keep grounded."

Thomas worked with Ann Byford on a project called the Polynesian Garden. When I interviewed him about the project I asked what he had found beneficial from the program. He said he learnt time

Thomas in the Polynesian Garden



management, not something you think you would typically get out of an “Art” program. He also said that making commitments to an end product was important.

About the end product Thomas said “It’s cool seeing the plan come together and I found it enjoyable.” “I felt happy, I felt good”. The other inmates get to see the garden on a regular basis and an officer mentioned on our way out that since the garden has been completed, “The place just feels better, feels calmer.”

Ann Byford said “The whole place was empty to start with, it was just a lawn that you mapped out, dug out, put stuff back in. It was a massive job.” Thomas was drawn to the carving side of the project, he had never carved before. He designed the carving based on love, peace and harmony. He came up with 6 pou (poles) for the entrance way. Thomas said “The motifs are based around navigation. One, the sun and the moon, represented how back in the days the people used the stars for navigation, to find their ways around the islands. There was one with fishes and that represents the water and that is a part of survival. We came up with these ideas ourselves. There is one with land, and that represents land, shelters, food, the people. There is an ancestor one about their knowledge, you know without their knowledge passing onto their people today we would have no idea where we are. There was another one that connected into the people today, from their experiences passing it onto the people today. The tamariki (children/youth), that one is still to come. The last one is us today passing it on for future generation, which was the children still to come. We tried to make a connection, we tried to tell a story. The spaces that we worked on are outdoor education spaces and have been purpose built.”



Ann proudly standing in the Polynesia Garden Project space

Thomas and I discussed the qualities that Ann Byford has that made her a good facilitator. He said Ann ‘She communicates well, she is straightforward and tells it how it is, that’s how I started learning, without her feedback I was stuck on some things. She really knows her stuff, there is a lot of experience there. Personally, I wouldn’t mind working alongside her again. How she teaches is really easy.’ I asked Thomas what advice he would give to other art practitioners doing art in a prison. He said “Be patient, you also gotta know that we are in gaol, be aware but try to keep a balance between professionalism and job and towards the inmates. He also has some advice for inmates engaging in the prison art classes “Have a bit of patience, trust the process, trust your teacher or tutor and I guess, just know that he or she has experience to pass on this knowledge to us”.

I asked what challenges or issues he has encountered doing Art in prison environment. Thomas initially wasn’t sure, Ann and I laughed at the fact that she had encountered numerous physical

barriers when bringing such a highly skilled program into the prison and that for the most part inmates are never really aware of how much has to happen to get such programs in. Tools used were a big issue. Thomas said “At times we weren’t working with the sharpest tools in there and it was a bit frustrating. You know coming up with some real high tech design and then we ain’t got the right tools to shape them out so that was a bit frustrating. We needed to problem solve.” Ann added further to the conversation “We had good tools but it wasn’t like we had a good tool shed to use.”

Thomas said “The staff were great, trusting us to use really sharp objects and powerful tools. The feedback at the end of the project, they said it was ok that they could leave us there by ourselves, we had trust that we never had before.” The participants were eventually allowed to work on the project independently of the tutor and unsupervised on the weekend to just carry on working. This is a great case to support art in prisons. Each participant received a Certificate of Accomplishment and the Skills attained were: Time Management, Safety in the Workplace, Tool Handling, Sculpture Design and Construction, Pou Carving, Mosaic Tiling, Landscape Structural Design and Layout, Component Installation, Evaluation Processes, Maintaining Visual Diary and Commitment To Attendance.

Here we see evidence of positive changes in participants. We also see an overall improvement in the behaviour and attitudes of those who did not participate but gain the benefits from the work carried out in the art program. There is much evidence to support this. “Research has shown that the arts offer a non-judgmental and non-authoritarian model of engagement, as well as non-traditional, non-institutional social and emotional environment. Engagement in the arts assumes and requires respect, and



responsibility, cooperation and collaboration - factors which are vital in stimulating long term lasting change”. (*Doing the arts justice A review of Research Literature, Practice and theory. The unit for the Arts and Offenders and the Centre for Applied Theatre Research, P 30*)



Puna Tatari Special Treatment Unit, Spring Hill Correctional Facility

Auckland Region Women's Corrections Facility

Department of Corrections Ara Poutama Aotearoa

I was treated to a tour of the Auckland Region Women's facility just outside of Auckland. My tour guide was the charismatic Wallace Ioapo, Recreation and Corrections officer. The complex was very well thought out, catering to all classification of inmates. We walked into the high security unit where inmate movement is more controlled due to a number of factors such as length of sentence, behaviour and vulnerability to other inmates. There is a much higher level of staff presence. These inmates still have access to the gym and are able to do exercise. There is a physical barrier between the high security area and medium to low area which comprises of the Activities gym area and a number of purpose built education, programs, art rooms and the chapel. It makes not only the division of the two areas less obvious but it also allows access to these vital areas by all classification of inmates. I have visited many prisons in my lifetime, working in 6 and this is the best use of building and structure that I have seen to keep the two areas separate.

I visited the large gym area and met with 6 inmates whom all assist the staff in the development and production of sporting activities for the other inmates. Many of them also participate in art and craft activities but all mentioned that there was never enough art happening in the centre. They all agreed that Art was very helpful in passing the time and giving them something to focus on and do.

Along the way I was fortunate enough to meet with three volunteer ladies who run the very popular quilting and sewing program called the Quilt-Stitch Group. There is a room set aside with a locked storage area for the sewing machines and all the necessary equipment and supplies. The three women were all very enthusiastic as were the participants who were packing up for the day. They were all excited to show me their current projects. As each participant gave me their project to inspect their eyes shone with pride. My expectation was that they would not be of very high quality but each project was completed with care. I realised why when one of the lovely volunteer's philosophies is "You can always unpick and start again", we joked about how that can be a life lesson right there and that quilting teaches us to be better, concentrate on detail and be careful it also meant that if we strayed off the 'sewing path' we could unpick and do it again.

The program consists of completing a few small personal projects; a slinger type bag or a cushion and a 'hussif' or personal sewing kit. Once basic sewing skills have been acquired it was then moving on to making an Angel quilt for the needy babies at South Auckland Health-Middlemore Hospital. This is a wonderful giving back to the community project and allows participants to think about the lives of others for a change. The participants can then make a lap or single quilt for themselves or others. If time permits (it's a strict 12 week project as the waiting list is very long), other items decided upon with the help of the volunteers can be made. One of these items for example was to make a block that becomes part of a larger quilt. This quilt was then used to fundraise for the future of the program. They also make an additional quilt to use as a raffle item to raise funds for Arts Access Aotearoa.

All of the fabrics are donated by women from across New Zealand, shops, and some clothing designers. They also donate 'fancy stuff' like thread, buttons thimbles and cross stitch work. The Department of Corrections provides the batting and some of the notions. All teachers are volunteers to the program but their participant's information pamphlet says it the best. "We are a group of Quilters who choose to work with our "Friday and Saturday Girls" and pass on our sewing

skills and knowledge to you. We are Volunteers and not employed by the Department of Corrections. We are not paid to be here with you.” There is a certain standard of behaviour expected on the program including punctuality, attendance, security of sewing supplies and courtesy. The level of respect between the volunteers and the participants is high, both ways. On the back of the pamphlet it has the following, “We all enjoy working with you and we like to think you enjoy learning new things from us. Let us all keep up the good work”.

Finally, I was treated to a look at the Mothers and Children’s program, a 2 house accommodation that can house 8 mothers and their young children. At such a young age, it is important to allow parental bonding to occur and this space allows for this to occur in a safe and positive way. There were toys in a sandpit where one mother was playing quietly with her little boy. There was a lovely golden retriever wandering around accepting pats from everyone and the smell of freshly made biscuits was wafting from the large kitchen. This definitely felt more like home and less like a prison.



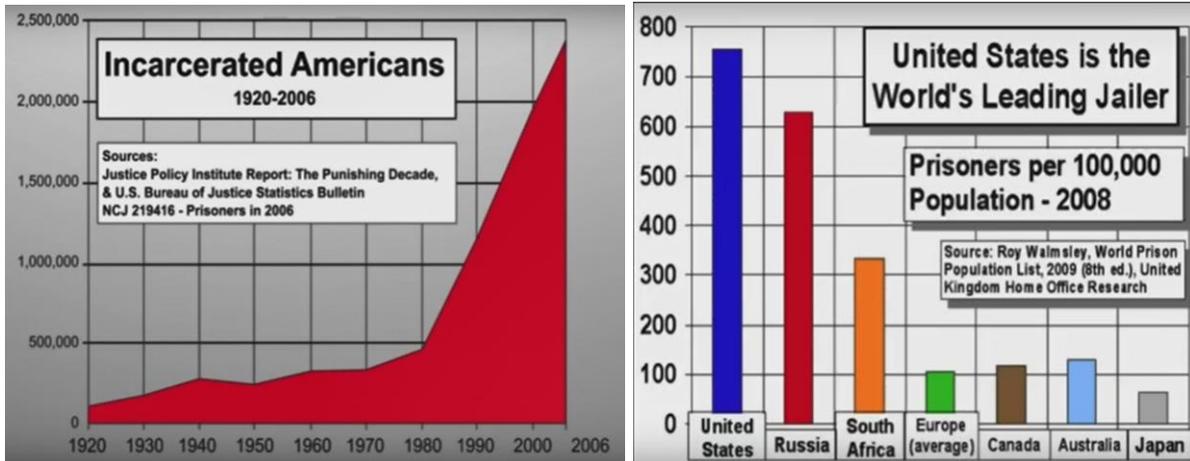
Design layout of Auckland Region Women’s Corrections Facility Photograph: courtesy of Holmes Consulting Group



Photograph: ANNA LOREN/Fairfax NZ

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

When researching the topic of incarceration in the USA, statistics are easy to find. In October 2013, the incarceration rate of the United States of America was the highest in the world, at 716 per 100,000 of the national population. While the United States represents about **4.4 percent** of the world's population, it houses around **22 percent** of the world's prisoners. Statistics taken from Wikipedia.



The rates are quite astonishing and there are many factors that contribute to this. I spent a total of 5 weeks in the USA looking at a number of organisations that perform a valuable role within some institutions.

The Actor's Gang

Culver City, California

"I am master of my mind, not a victim of my thinking" Sabra Williams



The Actor's Gang



The Actor's Gang is based in Culver City, a quaint and beautiful town known as 'the heart of screenland'. Many classic films were made in Culver City including Wizard of Oz, Gone with the Wind, Raging Bull and Grease. The office and 99 seat theatre of the Actor's Gang is situated at the Ivy Substation (also known as the Ivy Park Substation or Culver Substation). It formerly housed power equipment for the nearby electric railways and Ivy station. It was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1981.

The Actor's Gang was founded in 1981 by a group of actors, including Tim Robbins, now a member of the board and Artistic Director of the troupe. In 2006 the Prison Project was launched at The California Institution for Men in Chino. 'Sabra Williams proposed the idea of the Prison project to Tim Robbins when she became aware of the extreme overcrowding in prisons, the high recidivism rates, and the cycle of negative impact on our communities by offenders and re-offenders.' (The Actor's Gang Pamphlet 2016) After being approached by Sabra Williams, now the director of the Prison Project, about beginning an arts rehabilitation program, Robbins said he immediately realized the idea had the potential to change lives. (Variety, 2014). The Actors' Gang Prison Project provides 8-week workshops in California prisons in order to unlock human potential in the interest of effective rehabilitation. This is one of the few remaining arts programs inside California's correctional system. The Prison Project has a profound impact on inmates, their families, and prison staff. Participants develop social skills, self-esteem, tools for life beyond bars. Since the program's inception 10 years ago, the Prison Project maintains a 0% recidivism rate (California's rate exceeds 60%). (Wikipedia 2016)

My brief, yet wonderful visit to The Actor's Gang was greeted with enthusiasm and vigor by the staff. I was not the first Aussie to visit and learn from the organisation that year. Ange Leech, a visual artist with extensive experience in designing and delivering art projects had just completed a visit with The Actor's Gang. Ange is a fellow Tasmanian who is currently in Western Australia, she works collaboratively with other artists, government, not for profit organisations and industry, Ange predominately creates projects which incorporate stop-motion animation, sculpture, music and puppetry. As part of Ange's visit she has produced a Research Tour Report: Arts in Corrections: Californian Prisons. Australian Visiting Prison Arts Worker and Multi Media Artist October 2016. It is well worth the read and Ange shares my enthusiasm for Prison Art Projects. "One of the most unforeseen things to come from the Research work in Arts in Corrections in California was how much insight I would gain into the valuable work that is being done in Australia. It is an important time to connect, combine our creative knowledge, strengthening the valuable work that is being achieved within Australia while also embracing what we have learnt from inspiring international programs such as the Actors' Gang Prison Project." Ange Leech



99 Seat Theatre

As a testament to the professional reputation of The Actor's Gang and their unflagging dedication to the cause, not long after I paid my visit, The Actor's Gang was visited by yet another Australian wanting to learn about the prison offerings of the Actor's Gang. Donna Jo, Sabra and the other staff were warm, welcoming and very passionate about their roles in the organisation. To date more than 600 inmates have participated in The Prison Project. They currently have residencies in 8 prisons.



Donna Jo Thorndale and I at the doors to the beautiful Actor's Gang Space

Recently, the Prison Project was awarded state funding by the California Arts Council, a first for the program. Tim Robbins credited members of the Actors' Gang for helping the program to succeed. "We have a group of talented actors who are committed not only to their craft, but to their community." Robbins said the group began to take action after noting cuts made to arts in education and cuts in rehabilitation funding. Now, with state funding, it's looking to expand the project. "Our hope is that within five years we'll be able to train different groups throughout the state in this method," he said, "and hopefully empower other organizations, too, to go in and do this work." (August 05, 2014 issue of Variety)



Photograph: Peter Merts

Prison Creative Arts Project

Ann Arbor, Michigan

Taken from the website <http://www.lsa.umich.edu/pcap/> 'The Prison Creative Arts Project (PCAP) was founded in 1990 with the mission to collaborate with incarcerated adults, incarcerated youth, urban youth and the formerly incarcerated to strengthen our community through creative expression. Housed in the University of Michigan's Residential College, faculty and students work with community members both inside and outside prisons to engage in workshops in theatre, dance, visual art, creative writing, slam poetry, and music.'



Annually, PCAP hosts one of the largest prisoner art exhibitions in the world and publishes a literary journal of writing by incarcerated authors. With arts programming and events year round, the organization serves as a creative hub for those with links to the criminal justice system, community volunteers, faculty, students, and university staff alike.'

My time in Michigan with Ashley Lucas was invaluable. Never have I seen a more organised and volunteer rich program. The Prison Creative Arts Project is the leading light in Prison Art Organisations and I am not alone in my beliefs on this. Most other jurisdictions I visited in the US were either aware of or held the organisation in high regard. The passion and enthusiasm shown here is infectious. Ashley's personal investment in the program and her commitment to the enrichment of the lives of incarcerated people is second to none. I could easily see how a team of amazing volunteers and students would be willing to continue to work with PCAP.

I was afforded the opportunity to engage in a number of programs and meet with many groups of people invested in the interests of art program delivery in a prison system in Michigan. I met with the Children's Literacy Network (CLN). They support early childhood reading programs and their mission is to 'ensure that all children in our community have an equal opportunity to develop a love of reading and books'. In their pamphlet 'Children's Literacy Network' there is a scary statistic. Two-thirds of students who cannot read proficiently by the 4th grade will end up in jail or on welfare. CLN has a program specifically targeting the prison. The name of the program is 'Staying in Closer Touch'. This program unites incarcerated parents and their children through reading. At three correctional facilities in Washtenaw County, CLN volunteers help inmates read and record books for their children. The books and CD's are then mailed to the children's home. We have a very similar program here in Tasmania and I was able to exchange ideas and contact details with the organisers.

I met with Theadra Fleming a wonderfully talented quilter and crafter who has been running quilt making sessions in prisons for many years now. Her 'Freedom quilts' program not only results in beautifully handcrafted quilts but she delivers these classes with a no fail system, using 'crazy quilt' techniques. She prefers not to use the term 'crazy' in prison so prefers 'freedom'. I think that this is marvelous. Quilting is my passion and is my art medium of choice. Theadra's personality was infectious, she oozes compassion, love and faith and I could have spent hours picking her quilt-in-prison's brain. I loved her idea so much that I will be taking this idea into the women's prison here in Tasmania. I have also decided to work on an exchange quilt block program with Theadra and will be sending pictures of our finished products as well.

Case Study

Ashley Lucas - Director

I asked Ashley how it all started. “PCAP was started by an English professor called Buzz Alexander, He started this journey when asked by a student ‘Would you be willing to teach a class in prison because these women in Michigan prisons just won a lawsuit that allows them to receive college credit”. Prior to this, women in Michigan prisons couldn’t receive



Coffee Talk at PCAP

college credit but men could. There was a lawsuit called the Glover Case which was filled by a woman named Mary Glover who still works with PCAP, she now goes by the name Mary Heinen. The Glover Case was this landmark case that changed how women had access to services and education in Michigan. We refer to Mary as the co-founder of PCAP because without her lawsuit we could not have had the programming that PCAP now does and when Buzz started doing the theatre class in a women’s prison, Mary was one of the women in that first class. So she was there from the very beginning and made it possible for PCAP to happen.”

“Buzz realised very quickly in his first foray into doing arts work in prison that it was an amazingly powerful gift to himself and to the women in the program and he really wanted his students at the University to be a part of that and he wanted to be able to offer the programming to more people and he knew that by himself he couldn’t do as much as he wanted to do but if he developed a pedagogy that changed university’s students to do the work then they would be able to do a lot more collectively than he could do by himself so he developed the classes that I now teach along with several other people at the University of Michigan that train undergraduate students and community volunteers who are not in PCAP classes to facilitate arts workshops in prisons and we have been doing this work since 1990 and are a much larger organisation than we once were.”

“We want to use the arts to build community amongst people who are in prison. We believe that Art is a human right and that everybody should have access to it, like education, that it is necessary to a healthy and fulfilling life in which you have the ability to express yourself. We want people in Michigan prisons and kids in juvenile detention centers to have that. The really sad part is that a lot of people tell us that if they went to public schools in Michigan that they never really got arts programming until we showed up in prison because so many of the schools have stripped their arts programming.”

During the school year, from September to April each year, PCAP sends approximately 100 volunteers into Michigan prisons (Adult and juvenile facilities) and community centers where people have come home from prison to do workshops. Volunteers go out in groups of 2, 3 or 4 to the same place for 10 to 12 weeks and lead workshops in one of several art forms, primarily in theatre and creative writing but they also do workshops in visual arts, music and quilting depending upon the volunteer’s skillset.

Each year PCAP compiles and publishes a journal of creative writing by Michigan prisoners called the ‘Michigan Review of Creative Writing’. This is the 8th year of publication. Ashley’s husband Phil, who

is on faculty in the English Department, teaches a class at the university where students help to read hundreds of submissions that get mailed to PCAP of poetry, prose and essays from adults in Michigan prisons. The best selections are then published in the journal. The really extraordinary thing about the journal is that everybody who sends a submission gets a real reply to their creative writing. For those who don't make it into the journal, PCAP does not send a form rejection letters as is the case with many journals, PCAP issues qualitative feedback on their creative writing regardless of the level of ability, they want to encourage prisoners to keep writing. Due to the volume of submissions there is also a volunteer base just for the Review. "Twice a year, PCAP holds readings from the current edition of the review where we bring in the family members of the incarcerated writers to read on behalf of their loved ones. Sometimes there are folks who have submitted works while they were incarcerated and then come home so they get to read their own stuff" Ashley said.

The other giant project PCAP does is the annual art exhibition by Michigan Prisoners, now in its 21st year. In 2015 the Art show featured over 600 works of art. PCAP visits all 33 facilities in the state of Michigan to meet with artists in person, give them critique and feedback on their artwork and select the best of what they have produced to bring back to the university and hang in a gallery. During this process in 2015 PCAP saw approximately 2500 art pieces. The artwork is exhibited at the University and artwork is available for sale if the artist wishes to sell it. It costs approximately \$25,000 a year to hold the art show. This is just for transporting artwork, matting and display of artwork.

My time in Ann Arbor was well spent, each day was filled with Prison visits, workshops and meetings with amazing and interesting volunteers and students of the PCAP family. And that is how the organisation felt, as though everyone involved had a common interest in enriching and improving the lives of incarcerated folk.

AUG. 29 - OCT. 31

PRISON CREATIVE ARTS PROJECT

Prison Creative Arts Project's (PCAP) exhibits bring the artwork of incarcerated artists into the public realm in order to humanize prisoners, break stereotypes and create dialogue about mass incarceration.

PCAP's traveling exhibition includes reproductions of artwork from 20 years of the Annual Exhibition of Art by Michigan Prisoners.

The mission of PCAP is to bring those impacted by the justice system and the University of Michigan community into artistic collaboration for mutual learning and growth.



Alan Norberg, *What's Reality*, Charcoal on paper, 2008

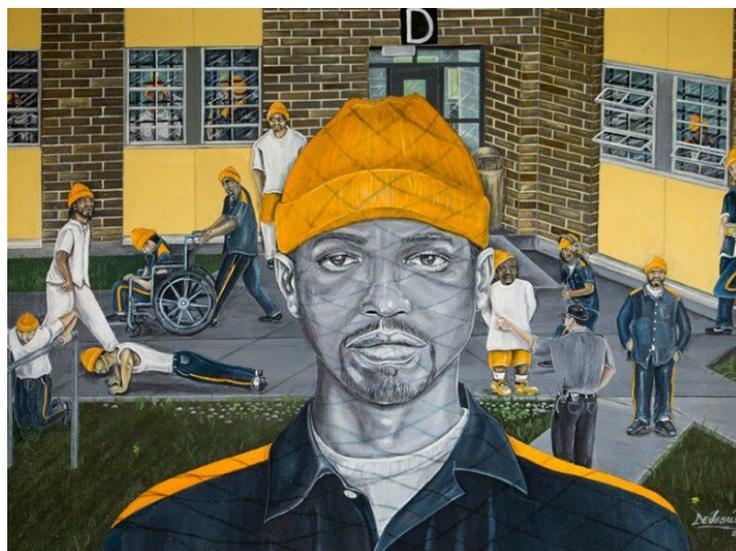
IHM MOTHERHOUSE GALLERY
610 W. Elm Ave., Monroe, Mich.

The exhibit is free and open to the public
Monday through Friday from 10:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m.
and Saturday from 10:15-11:45 a.m.

For more information about the exhibit,
contact Danielle Conroyd at
734-240-9750 or dconroyd@ihmsisters.org.



Deep Faith. Courageous Spirit. Action for Justice.



Case Study

Cooper Street Correctional Facility – Creative Writing Workshop

Day one, I spent a couple of hours immersed in a creative writing workshop at the Cooper Street Correctional facility in Jackson Michigan. Cooper Street is a Secure Level 1 prison. 1 being the lowest level much like our minimum security. Isabel and Joe, whom I think are two of the programs finest students currently undertaking the program, helped me jump all of the necessary hoops. Not knowing any of the other students at this point, if this was the standard of student partaking in the course then it was a high bar indeed. Isabel and Joe are both students at the University of Michigan partaking in PCAP's undergraduate course which trains students to facilitate creative arts workshops in state prisons, youth detention and treatment centres, and prison re-entry programs.

We were processed through the visits area and went through the obligatory id checks, metal detector scans and receipt of a personal duress alarm. I had shoes removed, searched and returned which was a new process for me. This process went surprisingly smoothly. We were then escorted through the centre and right up the middle of a prison yard full of suspicious and interested inmates. Although I had been working in a correctional environment for many years, the daunting feeling of that 200 yard walk with literally a thousand set of eyes upon me was not lost on me. Not used to the sheer numbers of inmates in one area, I was told that the prison houses over 1,600 inmates, most of whom were out in the yard that evening. Phew, we then made it to the sanctity of the Programs building. I was introduced to an enthusiastic group of 14 men.

All men had brought along with them a small exercise book and a pen. Before introductions were made, one of the inmates had asked one of the facilitators for a new exercise book proudly expressing that he had filled his third book and “because we don’t get nothin’ around here we have to get our books this way”. His 64 page exercise book was under his arm and was indeed full to the brim with writing. We all sat facing each other around student style desks. The room was purpose used and numeracy and literacy posters filled the walls. The staff who escorted us seemed pleased that the program was going ahead and mentioned that a number of the ‘students’ were looking forward to the group. Apparently, I was the guest for the evening.

There was a brief moment where the evening’s program was explained and then I was given the chance to let the fellows know why I was there. As soon as I opened my Australian mouth with my, again apparently, thick Australian accent the crowd went wild. Ok, they all had a bit of a giggle and were intrigued. I was asked to say a few ‘very’ Australian things. They were very much appreciative of my knowledge of Australian vernacular and more particularly what I like to call the Australianisms, Blimey, G’day mate, Howyagoin’ and She’ll be right flew out and had them in fits of laughter. We also discussed cursing (swearing) and those were very well received. Many questions were sent in my direction. Where is Tasmania? Do you go to the beach every day? Is it really like the show Neighbours? It’s the little island at the bottom of Australia, no it’s too cold although our beaches are lovely and definitely not like Neighbours. One participant, who was obviously well-read proceeded to give the group a little bit of geographical information about Australia and some of the history of Tasmania. I was thoroughly impressed, he was correct.

We got up from our chairs and engaged in some, university theatre style games. One of these activities ‘The Bench’ was very interesting. It starts with two chairs next to one another. The first participant starts acting in the character of his choosing. A random participant sits beside him and starts a conversation. There are no scripts or time to plan your conversation. After a short while an

audience member calls out “Switch” or “Change” and the first participant leaves the bench to have another approach. The new participant comes to the bench with a new character to interact with the other. Sometimes serious, sometimes funny but mostly enthralling. As the games progressed I noticed that the reluctance of some of the initial participants dissipated into short but brilliant acting moments. All fear and doubt dissolved into this cacophony of smiles and raucous laughter at some points. I jumped in at some point after an elderly man with dementia talked about the squirrels he was encountering. I turned up with a “Crikey, did you see the size of that squirrel”, in my best Steve Irwin impersonation. We all laughed again. The games then progress to an inmate taking the bench and the audience shouting out a character which further tests the skills of the participants.

We engaged in a good solid hour of fun activities and we regrouped to settle back around the table. It was at this point of the evening where the participants were encouraged to share what they had written. Most were willing to share but all were willing to listen. Some of the writing was deep, there were a few shorter poems and then two distinctly contrasting readings have stuck with me. The first was a polite and well-spoken African-American man, very short in stature, whom I was already impressed with due to his quick-wittedness during the theatre activities and wonderful acting abilities. He began to read his speech about the hate in this world, the need for us all to be one race, The Human Race, and to stop fighting one another. It was not even remotely goal related, the speech was delivered with such conviction and intelligent sentence formation that I sat there fixated on him and the words. There was a fire in his belly, a passion, people about the room were all nodding their heads in agreement. His powerful and poignant speech came to an end with a round of clapping. I was gobsmacked. This speech could have been written for a president or Prime Minister but I don't think it could have been delivered with as much intensity, conviction or passion.

The other writing was that of a younger, much taller and larger white guy with a shaved head. His was more of a diary type entry than a speech and it was delivered with much lower intensity. It described a person who was non-empathetic, ignorant, a racist and bigot. It described a person who spent a lifetime hating ‘black people’ because parents and other peers had told him to. This hate manifested into some ‘really heavy shit’ that ended in him being charged with some very serious offences. The diary entry was his way of saying how terribly wrong his whole ethos on such things were and how he wanted to let people know why. Again there was plenty of nodding, the ‘black people’ in the room were visibly moved, how cathartic such writing seemed to be. At the end of the reading more clapping and someone mentioned how brave and powerful those words were. I see now how the two participants, seemingly worlds apart in upbringing can sit next to one another enjoying each other's company here in this room. Coming away from this experience I am still gobsmacked at the level of skill that these participants displayed.

Isobel and Joe's skills in keeping the program moving, switching the activity at just the right moment and generally moving the program forward was fundamental in the success of the program. I can't say enough about the importance about the role that they both played in making the program dynamic, educational and interesting. The dual facilitation is key to this, the energy is kept high and each can bring slightly different values to the table. There is truth in the need for Pro-social modelling in a prison environment. Pro-social modelling is used to transform client behaviour by demonstrating and reinforcing positive social behaviours such as cooperating, sharing and helping others. According to Chris Trotter “The first and most obvious method of providing reinforcement is through body language (e.g. smiling, attentive listening, leaning forward) and the use of praise.” These skills are abundant in the theatre student's skillset. The term pro-social practice or pro-social

model is also often used by practitioners to describe a still broader approach to the supervision of offenders which includes collaborative problem solving and role clarification (Trotter C 1999, 2004).

Case Study

Women's Huron Valley Correctional Facility – Creative Writing Workshop

I met with Maryam early the following day to travel to Ypsilanti to the Women's Huron Valley Correctional Facility. We arrived with plenty of time before our scheduled start. The Officer on the gate could not immediately locate a gate pass for me to enter the facility. I was asked to wait, Maryam was positive there was paperwork submitted and started making some calls. Apparently, that day was the one day a month that they had an unusually large number of inmates leaving to return home. As we sat in the reception area of the prison waiting I watched the interaction of family and friends with their newly returned loved ones. One by one the freed inmate greeted their people. Each interaction was significantly different. One was greeted with half a dozen eager people, flowers and balloons saying welcome home. She embraced each person and lingered longer than is usual. Lots of happy tears. One was greeted by her mum and sister who fussed about the amount of 'gear' she was bringing home. Loudly complained about needing to get a trailer or something of the sort to 'haul all her shit'. The mother also complained to one of the Correctional Officers about the fact that her daughter had not got medication to go home with. There were a few quick hugs exchanged and they were off. One older lady came out in a wheelchair and had an oxygen tank that she had to surrender to the Facility. There was a bit of light banter with the partner and an officer about this but they left without much fuss. I did note that she lit up a cigarette the moment she was outside the door. There was also a younger girl in her mid-twenties that was released, she seemed a little bewildered and was looking for her, I assumed, family. Two men in their late 50's approached her and asked if she was so-and-so. She nodded, they shook hands and then he took her bag and they all left together, it was unusual.

After quite a wait, Maryam was able to work out that my pass was a higher level pass, access state-wide and apparently that was in a different folder. The staff member who knew this information started later in the day and wasn't available at the time. Maryam was very apologetic but I assured her that this is actually a typical occurrence in most of the places I had visited and worked. Communication is always an issue in large organisations and all the systems put in place still have a human element. We proceeded through the gate and our time was shortened to just 40 minutes. I took my shoes off for inspection, I worriedly apologised for the potential smell of my shoes, I had been wearing these joggers for quite some time now, at least I had clean socks on. It's funny the things you think of when you are being closely scrutinised. It then reminded me of the thousands of strip searches I had performed over the years and how invasive (but necessary) those were, and I was only taking my socks and shoes off.

We walked a short distance to the Programs area, this was a large building with many rooms off to each side of a large corridor. These were all shared spaces that were used for a multitude of art, craft and educational activities. When we arrived to the room there was a staff member and inmate assistant clearing out a cupboard and a lonely participant sitting patiently there. She greeted Maryam warmly and explained that the others had left because they weren't sure if they were going to have a class and didn't want to wait around. This again reminds me of the lack of communication in such large places. A timely placed phone call to the gate could have established that we were on our way. Maryam had in the past two weeks also been unable to attend due to family reasons, unfortunately this information could not be conveyed to the participants either and is something

that I have encountered in the past. It is easier to convey this information to the prison when you work in it but even then, there is no system in place to inform participants. They often wait in a room to discover that you did not make it. It leads to dissatisfaction, distrust of the process and a loss of reliability in the program and facilitator. It also occurs when there are lock-downs or other operational requirements of the prison. These 'gaps in the program' make it exceedingly difficult to maintain continuity, build trust and faith in your reliability and maintain program integrity. It also makes designing a program difficult. Contingencies need to be built into the program. The program needs to be flexible and able to be picked up by new participants along the way. The facilitator needs to reiterate the nature-of-the-beast in that Prisons are a very fluid environment and aside from blaming, remind the participants that there are many factors outside the facilitator's control.

Maryam's professional attitude and friendly demeanour was marvellous, she was very apologetic to the participant who was sitting there and that participant clearly appreciated that Maryam cared not only for the success of the program but for the participants on it. It was such a pity that some of the participants do not have the same level of commitment that the facilitator does. The last participant was a well-spoken woman in her mid 50's, a religious woman who was brought up with good values. Her reason for being in the prison system is not known to me nor do I care. Her poetry was very good, she used many different poetry techniques that showed a higher level of education than is expected in prison. Maryam is a graduate student in Religious Studies and is interested in serving marginalized populations through educational opportunities and creative expression. Creative writing has been her tool of healing and moving beyond past trauma, and Maryam hopes to share and develop the same tools with the workshop participants. She is a practicing Muslim, works with mentoring young adults in foster care and hospital chaplains, and is also a mother of two. I asked Maryam what qualities has worked for you as a facilitator, "As a facilitator, the most important thing for me to do was simply create a human relationship with the participants, and express to them how talented I believe they are."

"I had one very quiet participant who rarely shared her work but regularly came to the workshop. After a few months when some new people joined our group I asked if anyone wanted to facilitate and lead a workshop and she took a role in leading. It made me feel really happy. Also, I am a hijab wearing Muslim woman and at the end of one semester a workshop participant told me how happy she was to meet me and that I "shattered some of her stereotypes" about what Muslims can and cannot be and do. Listening to stories of women who feel motivated to write their stories has been inspiring. The benefits I see in this program are so great. The creative outlet and personal interaction I have with the prisoners has been valuable both ways."

The Empowerment Plan

Detroit, Michigan

The Empowerment Plan is a Detroit-based non-profit organization dedicated to serving the homeless community. Their goal is to help build a better life for those that have become trapped in the cycle of homelessness. They mostly hire homeless parents from local shelters to become full time seamstresses so that they can earn a stable income, find secure housing, and gain back their independence for themselves and for their families.

The individuals they hire are trained to manufacture a coat that transforms into a sleeping bag at night, and a bag when not in use. The coats are distributed to homeless people living on the streets

at no cost to them through partnerships that The Empowerment Plan have established with outreach organizations in communities around the nation. TEP's mission statement says. 'We believe in giving second chances to those who want it, and providing warmth to those who need it.' According to The Empowerment Plan, approximately 7% of homeless individuals die each year from hypothermia, a statistic which the EMPWR coat can reduce by over 20%. "This statistic is a few years old and we don't have a replacement number at this time." Cassie Coravos



The working floor



A work in progress by Ethel

The empowerment Plan has produced and distributed over 20,000 coats since 2011. They have employed 39 previously homeless individuals. It costs \$100 and takes 1.25 hours to make a sleeping-bag coat. They have distributed these coats in 40 US States, 7 Canadian provinces and a few countries internationally. .Being so close to Detroit in Ann Arbor, I could not pass up an opportunity to visit with The Empowerment Plan, an organisation that I feel very strongly about, one that's really making a difference and improving the lives of those who really need it. There I was fortunate enough to meet with Hailey who was more than happy to share their success story with me. Ashley Lucas from PCAP went with me and both of us were thoroughly impressed at not only the level of professionalism and skill but the level of dedication and commitment from everyone involved. The organisation has expanded from just employing homeless families making life saving coats to assisting in educational acquisition and resettlement opportunities to the women who make the coats.

There was a quiet hum of the machines whizzing along, the production line style of manufacturing allows for high level skill development and these jackets are important so careful construction and skill must go into making each of them. Each station had components of the coat, some just the hood, some the arms, some attaching the hook and loop tape. All employees had smiles on their faces and were more than happy to be there. The materials used are thick, dense and heavy at times, they need to be durable to keep the future owner warm. As someone who sews, I can appreciate the extra level of difficulty these materials place on the seamstresses, they were doing it with ease, a testament to their level of skill. Whilst we were there a parenting class was in full swing. One of the ladies was called away from her station to attend a school class as is a regular thing here. The kitchen area was urban and chic, even the toilets were trendy. Completed coats were bundled up and ready for shipping, there were hundreds of them.

I could immediately see the potential for the cold winters down here in Tasmania. I could also see the potential to produce these as part of a prison program, similar to one that had been trialled in the past few years here in Tasmania. There are documented to be 1579 homeless people in Tasmania, 31.9 per 10,000 (Census of Population and Housing: Estimating homelessness, 2011). Homelessness is not a choice. Homelessness is one of the most potent examples of disadvantage in

the community, and one of the most important markers of social exclusion (A Statistical Definition of Homelessness, 2012).

Louisiana State Penitentiary

Angola, Louisiana

Louisiana State Penitentiary is the state's oldest and only maximum security prison, also known as Angola Prison or The Farm, is set on 18,000 acres. There are currently 6300 inmates residing onsite. This is 10 times the number of inmates housed in Tasmanian prisons. Approximately 4300 of the inmates at Angola are life inmates. This is due, in part, to the severe mandatory minimum life sentences for first and second degree murder in the state of Louisiana. It is estimated that approximately 90% will never go home. 85% of the inmate population here is African-American.



I was afforded the opportunity to tour the entire 18,000 acre facility. What an incredible place filled with intense history, both good and bad. Excerpts taken from the well-researched Angola Museum website explains the purchase history of The Farm. 'Prior to 1835, inmates were housed in a vermin infested jail in New Orleans. In that year the first Louisiana State Penitentiary was built in Baton Rouge. In 1844, the penitentiary, including the inmates, was leased to the private firm of McHatton Pratt and Company. Union Troops occupied the penitentiary during the Civil War, and in 1869 the lease was awarded to a Confederate Major by the name of Samuel James. The James Family would be in charge of the Louisiana Corrections system for the next 31 years.'

In 1880, Major James purchased an 8,000-acre plantation in West Feliciana Parish called Angola (named after the area in Africa where the former slaves came from). On January 1, 1901, the State of Louisiana resumed control of all inmates after 55 years of the lease system. At around this time, Corrections, operated by a Board of control purchased the 8,000 acre Angola Plantation at \$25.00 an acre. In 1922, another flood at Angola ruined not only the crops at Angola, but also the crops of adjoining plantations. This was the third time in 20 years and the owners were ready to sell. In a series of eight purchases in a year and a half, Henry Fuqua purchased 10,000 acres of land at approximately \$13.00 per acre. This brought Angola to its present size of 18,000 acres.

Gary Young, Admin Program Director 3 Classification/Programming was my 'tour guide' for the morning. His warm, courteous, southern hospitality was very much welcomed. Each question I had (and there were many) was met with a 'Well Ma'am' or a 'yes ma'am'. We were also accompanied by a most exceptional young man. Jeremy, a fourth generation Correctional Officer who was currently completing his Masters in Criminology at 'Ole Miss' (The University of Mississippi) was very open about his lifelong experience with Angola. Firstly, I asked why he wanted to do a Masters and he said, "I want to be the best correctional officer that I can be". This had to be the best answer I could have heard. Jeremy's father, grandfather and great grandfather had all worked at Angola as

prison officers. The three of us headed in a large SUV to take a look around the vast property. Buildings for storage, staff and inmates were strategically placed. Silos and water tanks beautifully decorated with large murals. Farmland as far as the eye can see, every now and again a glint of steel and razor wire reminding us where we actually were.

I asked Gary about how many inmates work. Gary said "If you are able to work, you go to work". The Farm produces enough fresh vegetables to feed over 11,000 offenders housed in five state prisons year-round, there are around 900 inmates that work the farm. I was lucky enough to see some of the many fields being tended to by the inmates. It was as if in a movie where you see an officer sitting atop a beautiful steed watching a careful eye over the group who were tending the crops, around 20 inmates in denim jeans, white shirts and straw hats, picking and sorting. There were fields and fields of soy bean, a cash crop. Gary said "We are never going to warehouse inmates, even our lifers". In the pamphlet 'The Angola Story – Louisiana State Penitentiary' by Burl Cain it says 'Rather than a typical walled prison, LSP has six fenced housing areas. The remaining acreage is devoted to farming. To keep the offenders constructively active, the majority of offenders work eight hours per day, five days per week in the farm lines.'

The importance of keeping inmates busy should never be understated. As a correctional officer the prison day was always much calmer and more productive for all if inmates were constantly engaged, interested and occupied. The old saying 'idle hands are the devils playground' is never more true than in a correctional environment. With 6000 inmates to occupy, this is a big task at Angola.

There are a large number of programs at Angola, even some with a creative flair. KLSP, The only incarceration station in the nation, a low-watt limited broadcast musical entertainment radio station FM 91.7 is world renowned. Playing all types of music 18 hours a day, with major emphasis on religious music, it operates with state-of-the-art equipment. KLSP is the only FCC licensed radio station operated on the grounds of a maximum security prison. Research says that music has the power to heal. Music heals emotional suffering. According to Dr. Michael Friedman in his blog for Psychology Today Brick by brick, "We now know through controlled treatment outcome studies that listening to and playing music is a potent treatment for mental health issues. Research demonstrates that adding music therapy to treatment improves symptoms and social functioning among schizophrenics. Further, music therapy has demonstrated efficacy as an independent treatment for reducing depression, anxiety and chronic pain. There are several mechanisms by which music can have this effect. First of all, music has positive physical effects. It can produce direct biological changes, such as reducing heart rate, blood pressure, and cortisol levels. Also, studies suggest that exposure to prosocial lyrics increases positive thought, empathy, and helping behaviour. The message in a lyric such as "We shall overcome" may be able to reach more people than all of the psychotherapists in the world combined." KLSP, the station that kicks behind the bricks!

The Angolite, is a bi-monthly award-winning news magazine produced by offenders. There is a subscription of around 1400 at \$30 annually. There are also around 1800 prison readers. I was able to speak briefly with a number of the offender magazine writers and editor. They mentioned that they were in a very privileged yet stressful position where they write the news and report it accurately but always be mindful to neither bite the hand that feeds them nor alienate other inmates. This meant integrity was very difficult to maintain. They do always teeter on the precipice as it were. For instance March/April 2015 Vol. 40, No. 2 the big head line was "Where do they really stand? An unlikely coalition of bipartisan policymakers flirt with criminal justice reform". Ten pages dedicated to the look at criminal justice reform, a hot topic off the campaign trail in 2015. There are

always plenty of positive articles and many of these spotlight sporting achievements by the inmates including photographs and award information. There have been a number of articles that have won Pulitzer prizes as well.

I was then introduced to Francis Abbott, Classification Super. After an amazing inmate cooked lunch of Southern-fried buffalo chicken fillets we headed off to take a look at the Court Order Re-entry Programs. There are many vocational programs with certification and education on offer. These include; ASE (Automotive Service Excellence) in Automotive and collision repair, NCCER (National Center for Constructive Education and Research) in carpentry, painting, plumbing, electrical, masonry and welding and NIMS (National Institute for Metalworking Skills) in machine tool technology, to name a few.

The Automotive workshop was massive. There were at least 20 inmates working on various vehicles both non-operational ones for mock training and fully functioning vehicles for repair. State of the art diagnostic equipment was being utilised and heads were under hoods of many makes of car.

I then visited the welding and metalworking shed. There were at least 20 welding bays with their protective red plastic curtains. Completed projects such as BBQ's in some, hard-working inmates in others. It was noisy, smelly and productive.



A catalogue of Car Manuals



Repairing brakes on a Vehicle



Metalwork and welding bays

We then ventured over to the horticulture green houses, so many of them. Full grown plants being made ready for beautification of the 18,000 acres, some ready to sell at the next rodeo. There was also large scale propagation happening, strikings and cuttings everywhere. The recycling of scrap and waste food items was in full swing, there was worm farm production, permaculture, the scale of this production was also massive.

There are so many items being produced at this place. I then discovered the true essence as to art engagement and how it all works. Inmates create clubs. These are usually a gathering of like-minded individuals, for example the Jazz Club or a Hispanic Cooking Club. It is a democratic process with AGM's, minutes and voting. These inmate driven clubs started in the 1950's. The clubs raise funds for items where tax payers may question the use of state funds, big screen TV's, personal

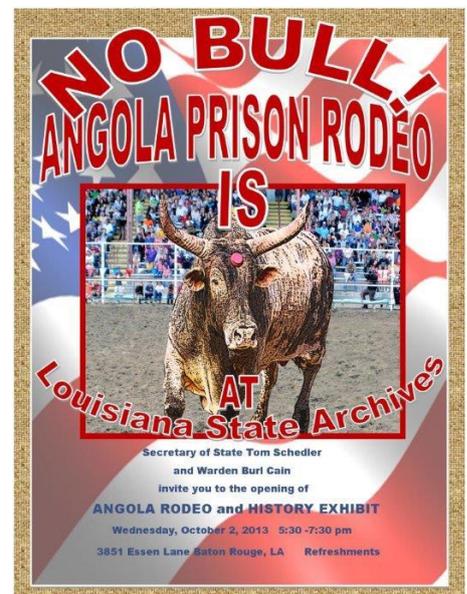
footwear, table tennis tables for example. The funds are raised through the inmate population, from staff purchases and through the rodeo. These funds are used to pay for items that are for the betterment of the gaol community and purchase club equipment and supplies. The funds also allow clubs to hold end of year club banquets and Christmas parties. There are theatre clubs, art appreciation clubs, music clubs, woodturning clubs, sewing clubs just to name a few.

All of these clubs, groups, programs, work and vocational trades create a sense of community, and why shouldn't it? The prison is considered a town in its own right and what for the 'residents'? Approximately 90% of the inmates housed at Louisiana State Penitentiary will never be released from here. Before the introduction of the new short term inmate population and the re-entry program the average sentence for an inmate here was 90 years. This is their home, this is their life.

Case Study

Angola Rodeo

World famous, the Angola Rodeo is the longest, continuously running prison rodeo in America. The rodeo arena seats approximately 11,000 people. This funds the re-entry program. The Rodeos are held one weekend in April & every Sunday in October with over 40,000 audience members each year. People turn up (and pay) for the fun and excitement of seeing inmates participate in regular rodeo activities such as barrel racing, bareback riding and Bull-Dogging. There are a few highlights of the rodeo that aren't seen at other rodeos. Convict Poker, this is where four inmate cowboys sit at a table in the middle of the arena playing a friendly game of poker. Suddenly, a wild bull is released with the sole purpose of unseating the poker players. The last man remaining seated is the winner. Guts & Glory, where a chit (poker chip) is tied to the meanest, toughest Brahma bull available. The object here is to get close enough to the bull in order to snatch the chit. This is the last event of the day, and perhaps the most exciting. Apparently the Bull Riding is the event that fans come to see. This dangerous and wide open event sees inexperienced inmates sit on top of a 2,000 pound Brahma bull. To be eligible for the coveted "All-Around Cowboy" title, a contestant must successfully complete the ride (6 seconds). The Professional Rodeo Cowboys Association rules govern this event.



From an art and craft perspective, the Hobby Craft fair that is held at each rodeo is the highlight of the year and attracts thousands. It displays the high level of creative skill of the inmates. The ticket for entry for this costs \$10. Acres of Wood-turned jars and bowls, leatherwork, rocking horses, matchstick houses, birdhouses, pot plants, wood carvings, furniture, BBQ's and fine jewellery are just a few of the items made for sale. Craft and art participants use their free time to produce items for sale at the Rodeos. Proceeds are returned to the inmate and fund the inmates for future art and craft supplies and equipment.

The Prison View Golf Course is located on the grounds of Louisiana State Penitentiary, and is operated by the Louisiana State Penitentiary Employee Recreation Committee.



The permanent rodeo grounds



Death Row



Water tower Art



Museum information about live music at Angola

Case Study

Marianne Fisher-Giolando

Marianne Fisher-Giorlando retired in 2012 as a Professor of Criminal Justice at Grambling State University, Grambling, Louisiana, where she was responsible for the department's corrections' courses for twenty-seven years. Fisher-Giorlando's interest in prisons began as a graduate student at The Ohio State University in 1981. During the summer immediately following the completion of her MA in Sociology at The Ohio State, she needed a job as she had no assistantship. Directed to the college program at Lebanon Correctional Institution, two hours south of Columbus, then a medium security prison, she received a contract to teach a Social Theory course in the Social Sciences associate degree program at the prison. As a result of that experience, she switched her emphasis from social theory to criminology with a focus on correctional institutions for her Ph. D. work and has been visiting, studying and researching prisons for the last 34 years.

Her primary research is about the history of the women in the Louisiana State Penitentiary. She has published three articles about the women in the Baton Rouge Penitentiary before the Civil War and given numerous presentations about convict women in Louisiana. With Kerry Myers she recently published a series of three articles in the *The Angolite*, *The Prison News Magazine*, about the history of women in Louisiana's penitentiary: *Bad Girls*, *Convict Women*. Fisher-Giorlando has served on the board of the Louisiana State Penitentiary at Angola Museum Foundation since it officially opened in 1998. She is currently the chair of the Education committee and in that capacity she helps plan the exhibits and writes grants. She chairs the biannual symposium and also is organizing the museum's archival collections. She was project director for the LEH sponsored Smithsonian Museums on Main

Street traveling exhibit: *The Way We Worked* in 2014 and LEH sponsored : Angola Prison Music Symposium and Exhibit in 2016. Marianne’s passion for the history of Angola is infectious and her knowledge of it is the most extensive of anyone. Her Ph.D completed in 1987 at The Ohio State University dissertation topic was Prison Culture: Using Music as Data.

I was able to spend some quality time with Marianne, enjoying a couple of southern meals including gumbo and whitefish. Marianne showed more of that famous Southern hospitality, she was warm and inviting, my family really took to her and in the brief but enjoyable time we had together, I consider her a friend. We talked for hours about the significance of Art in all its forms in a prison system. There are some amazing historically significant concerts and recording that have taken place in LRP. A number of films have been made onsite including *Dead Man Walking*, *JFK* and *Monster’s Ball*. A documentary filmed here about the prison ‘The Farm, Angola USA’ was the winner of the Grand Jury Prize at the 1998 Sundance Festival.

It is hard to fully define Marianne’s role at LSP. She is a member of the Louisiana State Penitentiary at Angola Museum Foundation board. As a board member she is chair of the Education Committee, which organizes and finds funding for the symposiums. Marianne is also a member of the Executive Committee. She is almost a full-time volunteer and is also in charge of organizing, cataloging and preserving the collections. Because of her historical knowledge Marianne also conducts tours of the museum. Finally, she is often found working in the gift shop when no-one else is available.

The Louisiana State Penitentiary at Angola Museum is a large collection of historical artefacts, craft and artwork that has been painstakingly researched, maintained and restored for the public to view. There are also a number of gift items that have been made onsite available for sale in the above mentioned gift shop. Licence plates turned into ashtrays, badges, patches, t-shirts, pens, sugar syrup and a postcard that reads Angola – A gated community are a few noteworthy mentions.

“I continue to volunteer in and around prisons because I am constantly amazed at how some people, both the “keeper and the kept,” manage to become the best of who they can be, even in the middle of such a potentially violent and cruel world.” Marianne Fisher-Giorlando



A selection of artwork reflecting the life and times of Louisiana now owned by the Museum

Florida State University

Tallahassee, Florida

It was a bright, beautiful and sunny Tallahassee morning (following torrential rain and thunderstorms that ended in the recent Baton Rouge flooding) when I met with David in his Art filled office at the William Johnston Building on the Florida State University campus. I was a little early for our meeting so I looked around a very quiet campus. Students were on their summer break. There

were a few students working on an installation of Fabric Art, a passion of mine. There was a magnificent sculpture of crumpled papers from floor to ceiling, architecturally grotesque and magnificent at the same time, definitely no shortage of artistic inspiration here. The building was beautiful inside and out.



Florida State University, Beautiful inside...And Out

Case Study

Dr. David Gussak

David Gussak Ph.D., ATR-BC., is a Professor in Art Therapy and chairperson for The Florida State University, Department of Art Education. According to David's website 'Art Therapy in Prisons: Using art to help break down the barriers', David began his work in prison as an art therapist in 1991, in California. Upon moving to Kansas, where he became director of the Graduate Art Therapy Program in the Department of Psychology and Special Education at Emporia State University in Kansas, he continued his involvement with corrections by working as an art therapist for a short-lived grant funded program that provided such services to the Juvenile Justice and Family Courts systems. He also began placing his graduate students from Emporia State program, in prison as interns. Since arriving at Florida State University in January 2002, he has created and expanded correctional placements for the art therapy students.



Dr. David Gussak

I first became interested in David Gussak's work after reading *Drawing Time: Art Therapy In Prisons and Other Correctional Settings*, where he is the co-editor and contributing author. This book has since become the standard text concerning art therapy in prisons in the United States. He also co-edited the book '*Art Education for Social Justice*' with Dr. Tom Anderson, Dr. Kara Hallmark, and Allison Paul, and author of the book *Art on Trial: Art Therapy in Capital Murder Cases*. David's latest book was the 84 chapter *Wiley Handbook of Art Therapy*, co-edited with Dr. Marcia Rosal.. He has published articles on forensics and art therapy; art therapy and computer technology; and the work of the art therapist. His studies on the benefits of art therapy in prison settings continue, and have expanded to encompass female inmates as well. For comprehensive reading on the topic of Art Therapy in a prison setting Dr. Gussak has a blog in Psychology Today called 'Art on Trial -

Confessions of a Serial Art Therapist.’ This blog is a must read for those interested in this field. There are also links to valuable research and data.

I sat down to discuss Art used as therapy in a prison setting with Dr David Gussak. “This is why art is so much more than other activities in prison because you and I both recognise that the Arts come from a person come from within, it’s an extension of them. For people who are not otherwise accepted within the institution, either by the officers or by the others, for us to accept their art we by extension valid who they are and we accept them and they see that. The story you just told was someone who was accepted through his art and how valuable that is, for without having to communicate that to him. We can say over and over and over again that we value you as an individual and they have been lied to and they lie themselves, they are not going to believe it but when we show their work and we have a sense of pride of their work then we validate their work and as an extension of them we turn them into real people and we honour who they are. And they might still be shits, but they are human shits.”

Do you see one form of Art over another that works better?

“Well that’s not a fair question, I’m visual arts – Here is what I say and now I might be wrong. I value the Arts greatly. I value the expressive arts, there is a program up and Lesley in Massachusetts that’s the Expressive Arts Therapies and I think there is something to be said about being able to get in touch with all the Arts. I’m a visual artist, that’s what I bring inside so that is my limitation. I can fool around with a bit of music, I may bring music into my sessions but I can’t honour them with being able to provide other Arts. Having said that, I still champion drama programs, I’m working with the State of Florida trying to implement other Arts programs throughout, this includes drama, this includes music. But here’s why there’s my one argument about why it’s visual arts above all else. There is a visual record that they can look to forever and so the fact that you told the story about the person who’s art was taken home, matted and framed and then he can send it out be connected with the people on the outside you can’t readily do that with music and with drama or with dance. You can express through drama and dance that’s intrinsically beneficial for the person and I think it’s extremely valuable but for an inmate who needs to see both the process, now I stress the process of making above all else in Prison. This way you don’t have to talk about anything, you don’t have to disclose any weaknesses and vulnerabilities. So the process is extremely important but for them a product is important and that’s what’s tradeable, that’s what recognises who they are. So the Art, the visual art, for me, provides a much more substantial record of who they are and who they become and they can see their own journey.”

How can we evaluate the benefits of the Visual Arts?

“In the book *Art on Trial*, I used the Art to assess a person who is on death row to determine whether or not there are mitigating circumstances that caused the murder and I’ll tell you about a case is coming up which is even more pertinent I think to what you’re talking about but I used to assess whether or not the person had a mental illness and what I argue is that there are assessable qualities, formal elements within the artwork if you can look at and determine improvement, you can see improvement of mood, you can see improvement of awareness, of groundedness, of reality orientation. All through the art process and you can also see an extension or an improvement in investment. You see a person willing to take chances, you see a person willing to experiment, and so the art can be assessed to determine chance. People say that to assess art is to label or to assess art is to diagnose – That’s BS. We assess art on a constant basis and these people that are saying it’s not

assessable still will talk about art as an extension of who they are, and if you're talking about art as an extension of who they are you are assessing the art to carry some meaning and that is why it is assessable. Whether or not you want to use formal assessment, we can see an improvement in the person through the art, that's my argument."

What are your opinions and thoughts on using incentives (prizes) for exhibitions?

"I have a bias on a number of these things, I'm an art therapist so I still understand the need to show art work particularly to educate others but I think there needs to be a lot of fail safes in place before you do that but I think the arts in corrections programs as done by artist facilitators should very much do exhibitions. I think I creates a connection between the inside and outside like I mentioned I think it validates them I think just the understanding that the art is going to be seen by others outside and allow them to be seen and remembered outside the walls I think is extremely valuable, I'm not sure how I feel about the artwork being judged and the reason I say that is a lot of these guys have already been judged and they have been found wanting. Any connection with being judged is very negative for them and it sets up competition which already exists inside, hierarchy which already exists inside and it nullifies our claim that any good art is important. Then we say all art is equal but your art is more equal than someone else's so I think what we need to do is champion exhibitions, champion the shows, champion the murals. I wouldn't necessarily put a value on the work by saying one deserves a prize over another. That's my bias."

Working with aggressive or violent clients, what's the best way to encourage or engage them initially?

"I have never had the issue of getting them in because again inherent in our systems is this recognition on the value of the art and this inherent need to create. The reason a lot of people are violent and aggressive is because they want to dominate. In an institution with those who do artwork through a nuanced fashion already dominate, they are on a relatively high placement in the prison hierarchy and so for guys to learn that they can do artwork and learn that they can capitalise on doing their artwork is already an incentive for them to want to be engaged to do it. Even if they're going to be reluctant in that first session, that's an act. Remember they are not going to want to show weakness, they are not going to want to show vulnerability and showing that they may be interested in something or excited in something is vulnerability because the minute they show excitement about something, it gets taken away. So, you have to allow them to come at their own level the same you do with anybody, you let them think it's their idea. I don't mind being manipulated by the inmates provided that I know I'm being manipulated and allow me to turn that back on them. So you allow us to allow them to feel like they got the upper hand so my ego is not at stake, believe it or not. If they want to feel like they're kind of fooling the system, by taking part in the arts and using these tools then by all means do it. Now, they are still going to be aggressive and violent at first and so we have to provide opportunities for them to vent, maybe be cathartic without necessarily sublimating and we do that carefully through a containment, through structure, rules and parameters but eventually they going to learn how to please themselves through the art making process and that's going to happen naturally. I think there is lots of ways we can get them engaged in the art making and I think as long as we let them think it's their perspective then that's going to work."

What do you see are the long term benefits and value of Art for the Prison system?

“Long term there is a pragmatic reason; it’s cheaper than medication. It gets them invested in doing something that then translates into other activities such as work. It decreases write-ups, it decreases acting out behaviour, it creates a safer environment. I think there are so many pragmatic measures that demonstrate that the Prison itself will benefit greatly and we as art therapists, we as art facilitators are cheaper. The materials we use are pastels and paper and pencils and brushes, they are so much less expensive than Adderall, Thorazine or Percoset.”

What do you see are the benefits for those (both inmates and the broader community) who don’t engage in art but watch, see or listen to the art being made, a theatre production for instance? We are looking at performing Macbeth in the future.

“There is something about just being present when the arts are happening, widens a person’s perspective. The fact that you have inmates that might be willing to learn about Macbeth instead of having to sit down and be forced to read, I’m all for reading, I love Shakespeare, I love reading it as I can imagine it all in my head. I can picture the whole act, I love Macbeth. But to allow them and their peers to do a production of Macbeth and have them watch it and connect with the people and all of a sudden they see how this play is relevant to them and they connect with it. These are the people who are then going to go to the library and say ‘Hey, can you find me any other play by this bloke and see what else we can find’, and it expands their world view which is going to be a lot more value than them sitting in their cells reading magazines.”

“I’m hoping more people are open to seeing art and art therapy as more than merely a diversion. That there is something dynamic, there is something developmental, there is something cognitive, there is something trans-personal that occurs through the art making process. I’m convinced that people are starting to recognise that. There are so many art therapists out there now that weren’t out there when I was out there, it makes me so excited. I wrote a blog article ‘It is therapeutic or is it art therapy and so what?’ There is a distinction between the therapeutic action of art and art therapy and both are equally valuable.”

UNITED KINGDOM

Synergy Theatre Project

London, England

Established in 2000 by their Artistic Director Esther Baker, Synergy Theatre Project works towards rehabilitation and resettlement with prisoners, ex-prisoners and young people at risk of offending through theatre and related activities whilst placing the wider issues surrounding criminal justice in the public arena.

Esther had been working in prisons for a while, teaching drama classes in Wandsworth and Downview Prisons and won an award called the Butler Trust award in recognition for all the work she had been doing and from there the company has grown and grown.

Synergy’s work impacts approximately 120 prisoners/ex-prisoners, 300 young people at risk of offending and audiences of 3,500 (including 2,500 young people) per year and comprises the following strands of

The logo for Synergy Theatre Project features the word "synergy" in a large, bold, black, hand-drawn font. Below it, the words "Theatre Project" are written in a smaller, black, serif font.

activity: theatre productions, new writing and an education programme. To date their work includes 26 productions with prisoners and ex-prisoners including 10 touring productions for young people, 30 projects for young people, 3 national prison script writing competitions, 40 playwriting courses, 50 rehearsed readings, 2 radio projects and a short film. Over 1,100 prisoners/ex-prisoners and 1,800 young people have participated in projects reaching audiences of over 24,000.

I was most lucky to meet with Jessica Draper, Head of Learning and Engagement where we discussed the importance of their work.

Jessica said “We provide practical opportunities to build beneficiaries resilience, and help reintegrate them back into society. Our work is with prisoners, ex-prisoners and young people at risk of offending and we think Theatre is and can be transformative not only for the participants taking part but also for the audiences who are watching those performances and together we hope to reframe attitudes both of the individual, but also public perception and the culture of the criminal justice system and try to do our part. We are not going to change the whole system, but do our part to provoke thought on how theatre and the arts might instigate some change.”

Their work is founded on the belief that theatre can be transformative and challenges perceptions of both prisoners and society, building a more positive future. Synergy is committed to artistic excellence, believing it to be an integral part of achieving this purpose.

Further to this Jessica said “We try to build opportunities that can build up skills, both ‘soft skills’ such as confidence as well as ‘hard skills’ like learning technical management, stage, lighting, sound.”

We discussed the 4 interrelated artistic strands that are at the core of every bit of their work. The Artistic Director Esther Baker, reinforces to staff that ‘The Art is at the heart’, and it has to be really high quality so they employ award winning playwrights and directors to work with them, they want top industry professionals to come and work on the programs. There is a producing arm, where they produce mainly theatre but have also produced a couple of films. These have been performed inside the prisons and outside as well. Synergy work with Prisoners, both as actors and backstage but they bring the creative professional team to help build up a professional production. Synergy also works in the community with ex-prisoners where they bring in a creative team and then take the production to the mainstream public.

Case Study

A Raisin in the Sun – A production

A Raisin in the Sun is a play by Lorraine Hansberry that debuted on Broadway in 1959. In 2016 Synergy Theatre Project worked on a collaborative production with The Irene Taylor Trust’s Music in Prison program. 19 prisoners as actors, musicians and backstage crew over a period of five weeks, culminated in performances in the sixth week to the prison, prisoners’ families and public. The prisoner participants were supported by a highly skilled professional team including director Juliet Knight, actors Estella Daniels, Suzann McLean and Danielle Vitalis and company stage manager Felix Dunning.



A production of: A Raisin in the Sun

I saw the crew as a group of talented actors and musicians, not as prisoners. Today I went to a theatre, not a prison. That is what I felt. Audience member, HMP Thameside

“Focusing on an African-American family’s struggle with poverty, racism and the temptation to engage with criminality as they strive for their dreams were relevant and engaging to both the cast and audiences, creating the opportunity for the exploration of issues crucial to rehabilitation and breaking cycles of offending. There was a great deal of discussion over the play, especially in the aftermath of the Black Lives Matter protest in Dallas which took place during rehearsals, and it was felt very much by the cast, crew and team that *A Raisin in the Sun* still resonates profoundly and is deeply, politically relevant today.”

Statistical Summary (taken from their website): The co-production of *A Raisin in the Sun*:

- Engaged 41 prisoners at HMP Thameside in creative participatory and performance activity with 19 completing the project;
- 15 of the 19 participants had no previous experience of theatre or music performance;
- Cast and crew of 8 achieved a Level 1 accreditation in ‘Building Teamwork the Arts’;
- All participants reported positive impact on their self-esteem, confidence, thinking, behaviour and future motivations as evidenced through feedback forms and with all expressing interest in engaging with further arts projects, courses and/or education;
- Impacted total prison audiences of 186 through three performances to House Blocks and 70% of those responding stated that experiencing the production had made them want to engage with arts/drama activities ;
- Reached 66 members of staff through performance as part of Director’s Hour;
- Impacted total public audiences of 170 through a further three performances, including one specifically for the participants’ families and friends attended by 25.
- 74% of responding public guests had not previously experienced a performance in a prison and 84% reported an impact on perceptions and expectations of prisoners.

<http://www.synergytheatreproject.co.uk/history/>

The second strand is their young people’s program, (14 – 25 years old) working with people at risk of offending or just starting to get into the criminal justice system. Most years Synergy commissions a play, a film or a writer to write a production about crime that is pertinent and targeted towards young people. In 2015 they produced a film called ‘The Thief’ that was about exiting gangs. 2014’s production was about cyber bullying and sexting.

They tour each production around schools in the region. The program reaches over 3,000 young people each year. The tour then finishes with a run at the Unicorn Theatre. London’s most well know theatre for young people. They have built up a relationship with some of the schools in the area. Jessica said that “The cast and crew are made up of a mixture of both professionals and ex-prisoners, so as well as having the theme and the content about some sort of criminality, Synergy also hold post show discussions where the young audience can talk directly to people who have experienced the criminal justice system. Discussions include the challenges faced both on the inside as well as disadvantages they’ve faced upon release. These frank discussions frame part of our intervention work and aim to challenge the attitudes of the young people. Alongside the production we run workshops, a typical scenario is that they will bring a performance to a school, a whole year group sees it followed by a Q and A session. Following the performance the head teacher will pick 25 – 30 young people they think might be at risk of getting involved in crime and Synergy will run a drama workshop, led by a theatre practitioner supported by a trained ex-prisoner facilitator. All of

our work with young people will follow the same pattern, a theatre practitioner running the workshop supported by trained ex-prisoner facilitator". They will feed in a personal testimony from the ex-prisoner. This allows the audience to feel that they are not being preached to, it leads to a wider conversation about the impact of crime and often the young people have similar backgrounds to the facilitators. This also has a big impact on the ex-prisoners as they often realise just how far they have come.

Synergy has been fortunate to have received multi-year funding for projects working with at risk young people with three targeted partners where they have been able to do long term projects. One is a young offenders institute, one is a pupil referral unit (where kids get sent when they have been expelled from mainstream schools) and one is with looked after children from a London Borough. They are able to run 3 projects a year with each partner. For example, they may run a scriptwriting course, a filmmaking course and an acting course. "Working with the same group so they build trust with us, they build up their skills and by the end of it they have been on a journey" said Jessica.

The results of the program can be seen clearly in their short film 'Synergy Impact' available on YouTube at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uDGi2EGtVlQ&feature=youtu.be> "The impact on those we work with can be profound. Many have long histories of offending, have struggled with addictions, have deeply rooted emotional issues and have never worked. As a result of taking part in the company's activities many break the cycle of offending, engage with other arts projects or courses, some have gained degrees, some have had their writing produced while others are working as drama facilitators, stage managers and TV extras or enter other forms of employment." The third strand is Synergy Studio. Jessica said "This studio grew out of the young people's program. In order to have ex-prisoners or prisoners who were up to the standard to take part in a Synergy professional theatre production, either as an actor or to work backstage or to become workshop facilitators, we started running courses to enable people to train and to get the skills and knowledge to be able to do things, at the required standard. We realised that the demand was really high for these courses. They became really popular with loads of unexpected outcomes like the peer networks that were forming, so just having a group of people who were going through the same challenges and supporting each other also having the space where people could be creative with each other who may be new to that environment."

Synergy Studio provides free theatre-based training for ex-prisoners which equip individuals for employment through the company's young people's projects and beyond. There are courses in Acting (introduction and acting for performance), screenwriting, stage management, introduction to film making, playwriting, set design, spoken word course and Synergy also responds to people's requests. All courses are led by brilliant artists, leading in their field. Funding has been achieved to expand this over the next five years to a ten course per year program.

Synergy is a fantastic reminder that you have a place in society; it is possible to re-evaluate your life and aim for a positive future Quince, ex-prisoner participant

'Synergy Services' is the newest strand. This has been developed over the past year. Jessica tells me this is "role playing for the probation service, working with ex-prisoners actors using real life scenarios that they have come up with and created with the artistic director. We work with the probation service on their training schemes with people who are newly qualified or sometimes with people who have been working for quite a few years but haven't received much training. We work a

couple of days with a group and we will do various scenarios about how to and how not to engage. The feedback from probation services has been excellent.”

“What is intrinsic to all the work, it’s all interrelated, the participants are at the heart of everything whether that’s coming up with using their own experience for the young people’s program or Synergy Services or writing a play that we then go on to produce, and that quality and excellence is really, really important. When we get people into the theatre we want them to be transformed by the play, or if you are in prison we want you to forget that you are in prison, we want prisoners to be taken by what theatre can do.” Jessica Draper.

Jessica and I discussed the need to be selective when recruiting for programs within the prison. “It’s about being clear about what the project is and what will be involved and how much time. You really need to have people in the groups who want to be there. You can’t have people who are resistant. You also need to have people with a certain level of commitment.” Sometimes prisoners see the program in full swing and then want to sign up to participate. They see a commitment from the facilitators once a program has commenced but they also need to show commitment for it to work.

My final question for Jessica Draper was “As facilitators working in the prison environment, what are the challenges you have faced?”

“Basic logistics, of having prisoners moved out of the prison when you have started a project. You might have a really good working group and then through no control of your own they either get moved to a different prison or a different wing or are released, which is great for them but sometimes a bit of a surprise. A lot of it is the logistics of just getting in there, the communication, it feels like every prison has its own system and trying to work out who your best point of contact is and even if they are great and recruitment is going great, is that the same contact person who will get you through the key training for instance.” We both agreed that funding is a major (and ongoing) issue. Also, we both agreed that staff in the prison vary from very good, supportive and helpful to not so much. In one prison Jessica mentioned that the prison contact person they had there was “Very supportive and immediately thought that one of the performances has to be earmarked for all of the staff to come and see. He was great at getting us in for regular meetings ahead of the project start so that we could meet with security detail or the education detail or Families First people so there was a personal connection not just email. Whereas other places I have worked in you do see a bit of a resistance and a bit of a distance between staff and prisoners or staff and delivery partners.”

During my travels I have pondered on visual arts versus theatre as a positive means for change in a prison environment as we are often focused on outcomes with a physical product to show for all of the hard work. I wondered if theatre as this vehicle works as it is sometimes difficult to capture for posterity. I asked Jessica what she thought about this.

“I think the magic of theatre is that live moment, and it’s about a dialog about what’s happening on stage and the audience. That’s even more important when that is happening in prison and you’re having an interaction that you won’t have anywhere else and you don’t get that on film so it’s really important to have that dialog. To document it, we do various things like the film or the photographs.” There are two challenges with theatre. The first is to keep up momentum once the project is finished this where Synergy follows up a production with some courses in the prison, keep

working with the guys and keep their interest. The other challenge is that the prison work remains largely hidden, with limited runs and audience capacity. You can't take the live moment to the public. How do you get that experience to as many people as possible, which pose further problems with publicity, partnerships and fundraising? Over the years, the momentum and range of the company's productions have gradually grown, presented across prisons and mainstream theatres such as the Royal Court or the Unicorn. Synergy has sought and found a mixed audience, bringing together prisoners, ex-prisoners and mainstream theatregoers, and young people from wide ranging social and economic backgrounds, in ways that depend on the varied nature of our critically acclaimed projects. "All of us at Synergy are still in awe of the magic of theatre and its importance."

Thank you Jessica Draper for having such a wonderfully motivating yet candid chat about the amazing programs Synergy offers. I will be looking forward to seeing a live show in the future.

I would like to thank Synergy for coming into prison and helping me expand my mind Gary, writing course participant, HMP Rochester

The Irene Taylor Trust

London, England



MUSIC IN PRISONS
MAKING TRACKS
SOUNDING OUT

According to The Irene Taylor Trust's website they believe that 'creating original music collaboratively can make a powerful impact on people's lives, bringing them new confidence, important transferrable social skills and raised aspirations for the future.' Evidence to support this belief comes in the form of a number of fairly robust evaluations completed over time. "Beats and Bars: Music in Prisons, An Evaluation" completed by, Institute of Criminology, University of Cambridge in 2008 looked at a series of five-day music programs undertaken in eight prison across England. The Evaluation of the Irene Taylor Trust's *Sounding Out* Programme by J. Cartwright in 2013 and "Re-imagining futures: Exploring arts interventions and the process of desistance" by C. Bilby, L. Caulfield AND L. Ridley, 2013 are other evaluations The Irene Taylor Trust has been involved in and are worth the read.

They are financially supported by more than 18 funders and currently run 3 unique programs: Making Tracks, Music in Prisons and Sounding Out. In September 2013 The Irene Taylor Trust won a RSPH (Royal Society of Public Health) award, recognising "long-standing, wide-ranging and innovative contributions to the field of arts and health in criminal justice, with the potential for public health impacts".

Sitting down with the Artistic Director of The Irene Taylor Trust, Sara Lee, was first and foremost an uplifting experience. After missing a few meetings due to delayed flights and trying to negotiate my way around the underground and above ground train systems, I was a little flustered, tired and disappointed. I then messed the times up and turned up for my scheduled appointment earlier than

expected. Sara was the hit of enthusiasm I needed. Here we have another person visibly passionate about the work that the organisation does in the prison system and her role within that. After graduating from the Guildhall School of Music and Drama, a performance by Sara at HMP Wormwood Scrubs became the start of her musical career 'inside'. From 1984-95 she was the music co-ordinator in HMP Wormwood Scrubs. She was offered the opportunity to develop all aspects of creative music in the prison, which, via a Butler Trust award in 1995, led to her being asked to form the Irene Taylor Trust 'Music in Prisons'. Sara Lee has held the role of Artistic Director since 1995, developing, supporting and delivering the organisation's work with prisoners, former prisoners and young people on the fringes of the criminal justice system.

Sara was awarded a Winston Churchill Travel Fellowship in 2015. Sara Lee's topic 'Exploring the role of music in resettlement and crime prevention' saw her visiting the US and Norway to explore the contrasts, I discovered that as part of her Fellowship, Sara Lee also wanted to find 'An alternative means of funding needs to be sought as a matter of urgency'. This fund sourcing is as complex as it is varied. Almost all of the organisations I have visited on my journey were either currently seeking or just awarded money to continue their work. The uncertainty of ongoing and continuous financial support is a constant source of concern and apprehension.

I was a little underprepared for my meeting as I had left the recording device at the hotel. Sara had just completed a trip as a Churchill Fellow so was well versed in the art of meetings. We discussed at length the importance of making music in prison.

Sara Lee's thoughts are as follows: "The opportunity to make music in prison can also assist and increase the wellbeing of individuals who find themselves in extremely challenging situations. They can learn transferable skills and it's a relief from imprisonment. It's an alternative means of learning for those for whom school is/has been difficult and it opens you up to new possibilities. It also puts you in touch with your emotions and provides a safe and supported space to explore them should you wish. Importantly, it gives you something to do in 'down time', which, both inside and outside prison, is when many people can struggle."

"The subject of music can always begin a conversation, where people come from positions of real knowledge, which possibly makes it one of the most accessible art forms. Whether in agreement that X band is better than Y band, there is now a commonality - music. This kind of socialising through shared interests carries through projects and beyond and encourages debate, understanding and communication. Over the course of a project it's not unusual to see those on the fringes at the start take centre stage at the end because of the support and encouragement they get from those they are working with. Everything people experience in a project setting is experienced outside prison too, leaving people when they are released, to draw on these positive experiences to help them make their way in the world.

"It is my opinion that not everything needs to happen for a reason or have a tangible outcome which can be checked off against a list. There should be things available for people in prison to become involved with which simply make them feel good. Because if you feel good and you occupy yourself with something enjoyable and productive which challenges you, you will behave differently, engage with people differently and most importantly, feel good inside. If a group of people feel this way

then the environment in which they live will be healthier and more positive. And in prisons, this couldn't be more important.”

The musical's a bit like the North Star shining up in the sky at night. It was summ't that looked unattainable at the start and all of a sudden we were holding that star in our hands. I realise now that the pen is mightier than the sword Participant of music program, Fairs Fair. Irene Taylor Trust

Vox Liminis

Glasgow, Scotland

I visited the lovely city of Glasgow where old and new fuse, where urban chic and industry mix. I was invited to a morning meeting followed by an afternoon Unbound singing session. I met with Alison Urie (Director) and Graeme McKerracher (Manager) of Vox Liminis at the Briggait. The Briggait, a beautiful building considered a building of national importance was completed in 1873. It was used as a fish market until the late 1970's. In the 21st century it was converted into artist's studios which opened to the public in August 2010. I had met Alison a few years before at a symposium at the University of Tasmania. She had played a song off the 'Distant Voices Live at the Briggait, Glasgow 13.06.2014' album called 'When the dark cloud descends'. What an amazing piece of writing. The song was very powerful and poignant for the criminologists, justice employees and university students alike in the room.

Alison, Graeme and I had a lively conversation about the value of music as a medium for change. They are both passionate about the whole program. They have both seen the positive effects and outcomes of the programs and they know that it works.

Vox Liminis currently has 4 key strands of work and they are working on a number of other avenues. They work with Criminologists at Scottish Centre for Crime & Justice Research at Glasgow University, the Scottish Prison Service, and with Families Outside. The work in each project area to date is described briefly below as per their website:

Distant Voices is a partnership project with Scottish Centre for Crime & Justice Research at Glasgow University (SCCJR), raising public awareness and supporting deeper deliberation on issues of punishment and reintegration through art-based dialogue. It involves song-writing with prisoners, former prisoners, criminal justice practitioners (prison officers and social workers) and academics in workshops called The Vox Sessions. The songs are then shared in public and professional forums, and through print and broadcast media, as a way of inviting people to connect with and think more about the human stories of returning citizens and others affected by punishment. Over 100 songs have been written in the last 18 months in prisons, with support from Scottish song-writers.

Distant Voices hosted a 3 day festival at CCA in November 2015, including Writing Wrongs – a discussion on Scottish penal culture as reflected in crime fiction, featuring Chris Brookmyre, Denise Mina, Helen Fitzgerald and Martin Cathcart Frödén; a Vox Session with members of the public writing songs with Kim Edgar and Louis Abbott in response to songs by prisoners; and In Song – the launch gig of Distant Voices: Silent Seconds EP. The gig attracted a 4* review in The Scotsman, and the project has been featured on BBC Scotland's Janice Forsyth Show and on Sunday Morning With Ricky Ross, as well attracting a feature in the Daily Record and numerous plays of the EP tracks on BBC's Roddy Hart Show and Another Country.

KIN is a project designed in partnership with Families Outside, working initially with 10 young people affected by parent or sibling imprisonment to share their experiences by creating work with artists.

KIN is currently developing plans to release their work to date, and invite other key actors into their creative conversation on family imprisonment.

In Tune supports family relationships while a parent is in prison through creative arts. In Tune (again with Families Outside) is a project that brings the imprisoned parent, their children and primary carer together for whole-family music making in prison.

Unbound is an evolving collective of people involved in Vox outside of the more structured projects above. This includes a growing community of former prisoners (who have taken part in Vox music projects inside), criminologists, musicians, practitioners and interested others who meet together weekly for food and song-writing. It also involves a monthly reading group and skill-sharing sessions (training and development), led by those who are part of the Vox community, as well as informal meetings and support with former prisoners.

In the afternoon I met with a few interested participants to eat and learn the many songs that had been written in the various programs. The process was casual, entertaining, interesting and fun. It was lots of fun. The lyrics were thought provoking and the music was dynamic. The participants, an ex-prisoner, a Vox Liminis manager, a criminologist, a co-worker from Australia and I all sang in our best voices or played an instrument, or both. I learned a few typically Scottish songs as well. The Briggait resonated with immense sound, what a beautiful place. What a wonderful program.

Case Study

Richard – Vox Staff Member (and ex-prisoner)

Richard was housed at HMP Edinburgh the HMP Castle Huntly for 4 years. He is a former lawyer who is still fighting the judgement in his case.

Art History and interest:

I have played guitar for some 50 years but only took it up seriously about 5 years ago. I now play regularly in bands and jams.

Why do you do art?

A love of music and the challenge of getting better at something. Also a complete diversion from the pressures of every day life.

What issues or challenges have you discovered working in a Prison environment?

A general cynicism of arts projects both from inmates and staff. A lack of numbers interested in the arts. Restrictions in taking equipment into prisons. Low esteem and motivation of prisoners. Apathy of both prisoners and staff.

How have you overcome these?

Doing training sessions for Vox with prison officers emphasising how the Vox model can only make their job easier. Appealing to the widespread appreciation of some form of music by most inmates. Making the day interesting and fun for both staff and inmates. Working closely and efficiently with prison staff to ensure that the setting up of the sessions is as easy as possible for them. Appealing to key prison staff who 'get' the projects with them persuading others to get involved.

What benefits have you seen first-hand?

Inmates having a great day where they forget they pretty well forget for that time that they are in prison. Communication among prisoners and between prisoners and staff which would have never

otherwise have happened. Prisoners renewing or finding for the first time, an interest in music. Musical achievement immediately improving attitude, mood and self esteem. Prisoners joy in having a recording to take home to their family. Staff seeing a difference in prisoner's attitude and realising it will help with rehabilitation and make their job just that little bit easier.

Do you have any success stories or anecdotes that you would like to share?

One prisoner co-wrote a song with a musician which he wanted to take home to his wife and have played at their upcoming wedding. The song has subsequently been professionally recorded and played on the radio a number of times.

One very hard-nosed muscle bound tattooed prisoner, who stated at the beginning of the session that he had only come along to get a day away from his prison job, ended up raving about the session, having written a song to his mother about how he loved her for her support during his difficult times.

Many prisoners have used the words about the Vox sessions'it is the best thing that I have done while in prison'and.....'I had to remember at times that I actually WAS in prison'.

Prisoners have kept in touch with Vox after they have come out and regularly taken part in the Vox Outside and Vox Unbound music sessions.

A weekly guitar playing and tuition group was set up in Castle Huntly as a result of the first Vox Session.

I personally strongly believe that if you treat prisoners with respect and help them to learn to respect, cooperate and interact with others, learn new skills and develop new interests, the majority of them will have a much greater chance of moving on from crime. I am convinced that the Arts have a key role to play here.



The Briggait Inside and Out



Hydebank College

Belfast, Northern Ireland

Whilst in Australia on her Churchill Fellowship travels in 2015 I was very fortunate to meet with Amanda Wood from Ireland. At the time, Amanda was a senior prison officer and her Fellowship was 'Building partnerships in a divided society to support desistance'. The Report examines ways of repairing relationships between prisoners, their families and their communities through restorative practice. Amanda's personal beliefs on the rehabilitative benefits of Art and artistic endeavour working in a Prison resonated with me. I went on a walking tour with Amanda where we first met with Heather Reid, Head of Learning. Heather is very passionate about how education is a vital part of inmate rehabilitation.

I then visited with Cathy Moore. Cathy has been working with Prison Arts Foundation (PAF) as an Artist in Residence for some time. Her use of colour is amazing. We discussed ways to make our art budgets stretch a little further with creative uses of recycling paint dyes. The quality and level of artistic abilities of her class participants is very high. The painting room was filled with bold, bright and beautiful art pieces propped against walls, easels and anywhere there was a vacant bench space. There was splashing of colour everywhere, it was a very well used room. Cathy was asked why she works in a prison? Her response was, "As I was pondering over the question "Why do I do what I do"? I came across this quote by Frank Wolf. "We can't just rail against crime. We must speak of the root problems – devastating family break-up, an insidious culture of violence that cheapens human life, skyrocketing prisoner recidivism rates that rob our communities of husbands and fathers – and recognise that there is a societal role in rehabilitation and restoration." I have always had a passion for art and also for humanity in all its guises so when it comes to planning my career it was a choice between Art and Social work. The general consensus was that I would get too personally involved in social work so I perused the art college route. After graduating in fine art and applied arts, I ran various Art Workshops within different communities and organisations. Along the way I met and had lots of interesting conversations with the inspirational Mike Moloney. He announced one day that he thought he had the perfect job for me working within the charitable company PAF – Prison Arts Foundation. He took me to Hydebank Young Offenders Centre and the rest as they say is history. I see myself as a facilitator for the marginalised, helping and encouraging them to explore creative outlets and reap the benefits of arts therapeutic effect. "As a catalyst who allows the healing art to emerge" Edward Adamson.

"PAF's aim is improving mental health and wellbeing by encouraging a therapeutic release of tensions and a reduction of stress can lead on to offenders having the confidence to engage in offending behaviour programmes. Our experienced artists deliver programmes to offenders which promote mental stimulation and personal challenge. It also helps participants to be themselves, tell their story and assists them to reduce their level of boredom. PAF have a passion for working with offenders and are aware that a depressed and confined offender with feelings of hopelessness might find a long term art project to be helpful in giving them a future outcome." Fred Caulfield, Executive Director of PAF.

I then met Andrea the art teacher and we sat down to discuss the art program she was teaching. This program formed part of a formal qualification City and Guilds Levels 1 and 2 Creative Techniques. Our discussion was during a class so I was fortunate enough to meet 7 of the participants. We discussed the need for art as personal development and as a therapy in the non-

clinical sense. She mentioned that one of the female participants, not currently present, had been struggling for a long time with mental health issues leading to self-harm. This inmate has, in the past, been unable to cope with the normal standards of society and has physically taken to herself as a means of expression and a way to expel negativity and to deal with pressure. Recently she had been attending classes and her general aggressive behaviour has toned down. She has found an outlet to express herself and she really enjoys the process of art. It was at this point the participant attended the class. I met with her and when we discussed how art and the making of it made her feel, her eyes were lit up. She showed genuine interest and really appreciated the level of skill that Andrea brings to the classes, how good she was with her and the other inmates and how professional she always seemed to be.



The Barn – Selling Art and Craft items that have been made by the inmates at Hydebank College

I then visited a ceramics class. This seemed to be very popular. There was a large kiln for firing the pieces and a table with at least 8 participants busy painting away. The participants can buy the raw materials, paint and decorate them and then give them to their family or they can sell them in The Barn. The barn is a demountable building at the entrance of the College filled with art and craft that the participants had made, the profits returning to those who had made them.

We made our way to have lunch in a demountable building converted into a café and restaurant. Known as 'The Cabin', this cosy place smelled fantastic. A number of inmates were employed in the kitchen to provide café and food services. The waiter on the day was well dressed and groomed young man with a very polite demeanour. He approached the table with confidence and asked what we would like to order. I had the soup of the day which included a freshly baked roll. I was introduced to a number of department heads; Richard Taylor - Governor Hydebank College, David Bowden - Unit Manager Training College and Churchill Fellow, Heather Reid - Head of Learning and skills Belfast Met College and Fred Caulfield – Executive Director PAF. The young lad took everyone's order and explained the menu with flair. This waiter was an inmate of the college.

The conversation around the table was very positive and all members seem to have rehabilitation of offenders and restorative justice in mind. The general prison banter was quite enthralling. There was so much positive energy it was infectious. There were many innovative ideas discussed and I felt as though I was on the precipice of positive prison change. These new thoughts and ideas seemed almost radical. Looking at the classification and type of inmates/participants/clients here at Hydebank as well as the comprehensive and intensive educational focus and the use of many artistic endeavours to raise funds, I believe these radical ideas were already proving themselves.



The Cabin – Hydebank’s café that serves as a meeting venue. Freshly baked rolls and fresh ground coffee their specialty.

Prison Arts Foundation Belfast

The Prison Arts Foundation was founded as a charitable trust in November 1996 after extensive discussions between our main stakeholders the Northern Ireland Prison Service, the Probation Board for Northern Ireland, the Arts Council of Northern Ireland, the Community Relations Council and the Community Arts Forum.

Its aims are to create, both individually and in partnership, access to the arts for all prisoners, ex-prisoners, young offenders and ex-young offenders in Northern Ireland.

The late Mike Moloney, Executive Director (1996-2013) said, “Change is at the heart of rehabilitation and participation in the arts is a powerful learning tool and catalyst for the personal and social transformation of an individual. Alongside the artistic work produced, participation in the arts engages offenders in constructive activity which assists personal development through the promotion of positive relationships, the tolerance and acceptance of others, collaborative group work and self-reflection. It supports a reduction in re-offending through the development of new skills, artistic and transferrable, which assist employment and community integration.” In the 2013 - 2016 Strategic Plan Mike Moloney also said “Art is a medium for change, prison is just a venue.”

The recent report 'Unlocking Value – the economic value of the arts in criminal justice' for the Arts Alliance, which reports to the Ministry of Justice in England and Wales, outlined the economic benefits associated to the use of the arts in criminal justice settings. Participant and stakeholder testimonials recognise the value of PAF artistic interventions, the skills learned and the change produced. With 15 years of experience in this area, PAF want to advocate the continued use of the arts within the criminal justice system and, in these uncertain times, work to capture data which can measure the benefit of PAF's work through economic analysis and other means.

Budget prioritisation is for security and safety of inmates in our care and for the general public. Funds are allocated for sport and recreation within the prison but for higher end programs like Theatre and music, we need to find creative ways to source external funding. These programs also create job opportunities for our bulging creative arts community as well. There is an expectation by the tax paying public to fund some programs but the burden of such important and vital (life changing) experiences, and exposure to Art should be sourced elsewhere. In Northern Ireland, PAF is filling this need.

According to their newsletter, "The Prison Arts Foundation's purpose is to assist the rehabilitation of offenders and ex-offenders in Northern Ireland using a range of art forms including creative writing, drama, visual art, craft and music." They engage professional artists to teach, enthuse and give inspiration to those serving custodial and community sentences. PAF works across all three prison establishments in Northern Ireland: HMP Maghaberry, HMP Magilligan, Hydebank Wood Female Prison and young offenders at Hydebank Wood College.

PAF artists adopt an innovative approach to teaching, as opposed to more formal scholastic approaches that can often alienate prisoners, many of whom have had a bad experience of traditional educational methods or are in need of therapeutic intervention. This enables PAF artists to gain the trust of prisoners, who do not regard PAF artists as part of the 'system', which is essential to the development of a good working relationship. The artists assist in rehabilitation of offenders with a range of art forms including writing, visual arts, drama, craft and music. Participation in PAF workshops can also lead towards someone engaging more widely with formal education in the presence with which PAF has close links.

PAF programs in prisons have a wide range of art forms with three main program types. Firstly, there are Ongoing Residencies. One day a week over a year this emphasizes on the creative process and developing technical, personal and social skills. Secondly they offer Short Residencies; they are designed and applied to produce specific results for a creative arts process. Finally, PAF provides Visiting Artists for ongoing education programs to be enriched and enhanced. To make contact with professional artists in various art forms visiting the prison often to be done on one to one, this contact is for inmates and isolated prisoners wings in hospital or psychiatric wings not yet at the stage of being able or allowed to engage in group activities. There is a wide range of research to support the impact that an active engagement with creativity and the arts has. Various benefits particularly in relation to offenders are: improves learning, improves personal outcomes, develops social and cultural skills and provides potential employment pathways. In addition to this, specific art forms have particular benefits, for example, drama increases awareness of body and movement, improves fitness and reduces obesity. Creative writing helps to improve literacy and communication skills and music extends active listening skills. In 2016 PAF was funded by the big lottery 3 arts

Council of Northern Ireland. I was fortunate enough to visit one of the prisons with Fred Caulfield, Executive Director of Prison Arts Foundation.

Fred Caulfield took me on the long and beautiful journey to HMP Magilligan. After discussing how far from anywhere the prison seemed and how difficult it was to get public transport out to the prison I realised just how important extra-curricular activities would be in such a remote place. Around 450 inmates live and call Magilligan their home. A makeshift army barrack converted into a prison in May 1972 only recognised as a prison in 1977, it has a Certified Normal Accommodation capacity of 568 prisoners.

Fred Caulfield said “In our approach we are building on over 19 years’ experience of working in prison environments. PAF’s role within the criminal justice system is unique. Our art interventions are a catalyst for rehabilitation and assisting in the reduction of recidivism. PAF’s work has the potential to have wide ranging effects on prisoners whose lives can be profoundly transformed; on internal relationships within prisons, between prisoners and between prisoners and staff; and externally, between prisoners and their families and communities.”

Fred is very well liked by all whom we encountered. Both staff and inmates spoke politely to Fred, all encounters were warm and friendly. Working in such an environment for 32 years has not hardened Fred, in fact, quite the opposite. “Participation in PAF workshops is often the first step towards someone engaging more widely with formal education and PAF has close links with education and vocational training services in the prisons. The ultimate aim of PAF is to help those in custody and those coming out of prison to develop new skills, aiding personal development, rehabilitation and employment prospects upon release. Prison Arts Foundation’s mission is to continue to deliver Arts and Music to offenders and ex-offenders.” Respect was to be found everywhere and everybody knew Fred.

We went into a demountable building, a makeshift classroom set up with computers. Every computer was currently being used by an inmate participant. The class was a popular one - Creative writing. I spoke with almost every participant in that room. All were happy to share their writing with me. We discussed the idea of exchanging writing with Risdon Prison. I was able to bring back a number of printed pieces to share. PAF also produce a newsletter that highlights some of the creative writing as well as other visual artworks and information on programs.



A number of artworks by Anon

We then headed over to the Art studio. My eyes lit up. I was met with a purpose Art space. Small individual studio spaces were set up, a space for each inmate participant to store, display and produce their work. The art teacher Allison Wilson was so enthusiastic. She had only recently discovered that one of her students (who was doing Art as part of his GED) had received an A grade. I was able to view his work. Well actually, I was able to view his artistic process. From feathers, to charcoal drawings of feathers to pencil drawings of facial expressions, colour pallet play and three versions of the final masterpiece, what really fascinated me was that the space allowed for the inmate work to be stored and displayed there, the art was respected and protected. As the space was only accessible by the art participants and not used for dual purpose, equipment could be left out, supplies could be left in situ to be picked up and used where they left off. Pictures in progress could be left out to dry and there was room to spread wings (homage to the wonderful art piece used in the final works for the inmate's art piece).



Individual Art Studio spaces at HMP Magilligan.

This is inspiration, this is artistic process, this is ART!



The purpose used Art Studio at HMP Magilligan.

“Creativity is allowing yourself to make mistakes. Art is knowing which ones to keep.” Scott Adams (cartoonist). We walked across to another brightly coloured round building that had been converted into a café and cafeteria called Coffee Cove. These restaurants were now becoming common during my travels on the Churchill Fellowship and for a very good reason. Not only do they allow staff to eat a decent and often healthy meal, the flow on effect for the prison community is valuable. Inmate employees gain skills, real portable skills and experience that help in job acquisition. Budgeting and other numeracy and literacy skills are another result of inmates working in this area. Dynamic security is also a consideration. This is where communication between inmates and staff aid in the safety and security of an institution through intelligence. Feeling useful and valued as an inmate should also never be underestimated. “Treating prisoners with humanity does not hinder security and order in prisons but, on the contrary, is fundamental to ensuring that prisons are secure and safe. Good practice in prison management has shown that when the human rights and dignity of prisoners are respected and they are treated fairly, they are much less likely to cause disruption and disorder and to more readily accept the authority of prison staff.” (Taken from the Handbook on Dynamic Security and Prison Intelligence – United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime).

Art in a prison environment is also a large part of this approach. Other literature also articulates a number of benefits that support the staff to have improved work environment. “Firstly the need for disciplinary control can be reduced when artistic activities are available as an outlet for emotional ventilation” in the words of a prison officer working in an Australian prison with a comprehensive art program, “prisoners are easier to manage if engaged” (Art is Prison a literature review of philosophies and impacts of visual arts programs for correctional populations by Alexandra Djurichkovic, commissioned by Arts Access Australia and published by UTS)

To humanise a person in this environment is to ensure that they act like a human, get treated like a human and come out the other side a human.

The primary focus of prison systems is the security and safety of the public but it must be said that most correctional organisations have mission statements and core values that promote rehabilitation and reintegration. It needs to be more about the End Game than just the day to day running of an institution. Safety in the community is dependent upon how those individuals re-enter the community and what kind of person they have become. It is undeniable that Art and recreational activities, the ability to learn new skills and access to education parts a very large roll in this.

Changing Tunes

Bristol, England

According to their website, Changing Tunes is a registered charity that uses music teaching, rehearsing, recording, performance, improvisation and composition to aid the rehabilitation of prisoners and ex-prisoners. They have been doing this work for over fifteen years.

Whilst visiting with Kate Harper and the team, I was fortunate enough to have a short moment of down time. Whilst waiting in the office, I was discussing the necessity for raising funds to continue the delivery of their very important services. Changing Tunes was in the middle of sending out hand written letters to all their previous donors, sponsors and supporters. It seems that even with grants and other financial sources there is always this need to secure funds for future endeavours. There is never enough money invested by prisons and the governments that run them to sufficiently pay for

Art programs. I thought the personal touch was a great idea and I felt blessed that I was able to meet with so many people in one organisation that had the care, consideration and passion for positive change in a prison environment.

Kate and I met for a long discussion about the importance of art access in prisons and the positive change that she has seen in her short time with the organisation. She was also adamant that when selecting tutors to run the programs that they be of the highest quality with very high personal standards and skills. "It is important for the participants to understand that they are valued and that we supply people who are of a very high standard. The professional behaviour of the individuals employed by Changing Tunes must reflect the professional attitudes and ethos of the organisation." This is fundamental to keep the relationship between Changing Tunes and the Prison officials a professional and positive one. This ensures that Changing Tunes will be able to continue within the prison system into the future. It is important to note that ex-prisoners who actively participate in the Changing Tunes program have a re-offending rate of less than 15%, compared to a national average of 61%.

I was able to visit HMP Bristol with musician and facilitator Rob and Fundraising Manager of Changing Tunes, Luke Boulton outside the prison entrance at 7.50am We were allowed access to a unit of the prison that was reminiscent of the three-story housing unit at long Bay gaol that I had spent a week training at some 18 years earlier. An operation capacity of just over 600 male inmates, it was built in the mid-19th century, with B and C Wings built in the 1960's. There was much interest with the three of us standing there on the bottom landing looking up into the structural void of the central stairwell. I could see all three landings with their protective caging to prevent (accidental or otherwise) falls.

Only two inmates of the usual 5 were available this day to participate. Various reasons precluded the others from participating, whether it was operational such as a legal visit or personal reasons preventing the inmate from attending. This is a very typical scenario when dealing with art in prisons. Sometimes art is seen as frivolous, often unnecessary in the scheme of rehabilitation and reintegration. It is however very necessary, there is much evidence to support this change of attitude from prisoners. 'The arts work on affective, cognitive, behavioural as well as neurological, levels. Themes that recur across all arts forms relate to the role of the arts in improving perceptual/ thinking ability and emotional insights and above all perhaps in creating the context (physical, social, emotional) to facilitate personal change.' (Doing the arts justice A review of Research Literature, Practice and theory).

We walked over to the special demountable building that we were allowed to occupy. Purpose set up with the instruments ready to go and a space to make a cup of tea. Once in the room one of the participants offered me a cup of coffee, I politely declined as I had just had a latte not 20 minutes earlier. We then went on to laughing about the quality of coffee they have in prison. This reminded me of the countless weak, dusty coffees I had consumed on many a shift as a correctional officer. No the coffee isn't great but it is warm and it is caffeinated.

Rob had a list of songs that they had been working on over time. There were a number of photocopied lyric and tablature handouts that I am very familiar with as we use these in our programs also, they are a great source available online from the multitude of websites that offer them. We usually have folders full of these as access to the internet is quite limited in prison (for good reason). We all decided to just get into it. I was happy to be the 'guest singer' as I fancy myself

as a bit of a singer and I cannot play an instrument to save myself. Of which it brings me to my next point. Rob is a master. Luke Boulton from Changing Tunes tells me that all tutors must play a minimum of 3 instruments proficiently and be able to sing. Rob could do that and more. He was able to play and conduct at the same time, he switched from guitar to keyboard and then off to the drum kit to bash out a few rhythms to show the inmate participant how it was done. A bit of Reggae, then some rock and a brazen attempt at Rage Against the Machine's, Killing in the Name of. Very raw and rough we enjoyed the fact that it was a very controlled and creative way to release a bit of energy and distress. We then ended with all learning a fantastic song from my youth that I had forgotten by a popular local band called....

“What is creativity? It's a set of skills, an attitude to life, the ability to have original, meaningful ideas that often cross over disciplines and connect previously separate information. It's a vital ingredient of being human, leading to growth, change and progress at individual and societal level. It isn't surprising then that there's increasing evidence for the importance of nourishing our natural creativity, so that it can help build and protect wellbeing and speed up recovery from illness. How would creativity achieve this?”, taken from 'The importance of Creativity for health and wellbeing'.

Bristol is also well known for its art scene. There are murals and street art everywhere. Banksy the world famous, yet anonymous street artist, graffiti artist and political activist started his art here. I was fortunate enough to see two of these whilst in Bristol, although not the Mona Lisa, you will still always remember seeing your first authentic Banksy. Aardman Animations, Ltd., also known as Aardman Studios, is a British animation studio based in Bristol. Aardman is known for films made using stop-motion clay animation. Wallace and Grommit, Shaun the sheep and Chicken Run to name a few. We were even fortunate enough to sit in the very place that it is believed to have not only inspired the “Spyglass Tavern’ featured in Robert Louis Stevenson's Treasure Island, but where he actually wrote it. Massive Attack, Propellerheads and Portishead also hail from Bristol.

Changing Tunes totally changed my life, increased my self confidence and I managed to achieve things I never thought possible. Helped me address aspects of my Post Traumatic Stress disorder. Has helped me develop an appreciation for team-work and increased confidence in my own abilities. It also taught me a lot of patience. Matt

Changing Tunes has played a big part in helping me to believe in myself. The tuition I received was clear and easy to understand. I received help and lots of positive encouragement at every step which really boosted my confidence. I never realised that so many emotions could be changed through music and the workshop gave me the opportunity to express my emotions. Stew

The tutor cultivated a very healthy climate of mutual respect, consideration and fairness, in which I felt totally comfortable and at ease in every respect in every session, to participate as much or as little as I wanted. Ella

Pros and Cons

Prose is contained and lacks structure, just like most of our lives in here.

18 Years I have been behind bars,
Fighting and defending, earning my share of scars.
It has been a long journey I have seen many things,
I should never have to bear witness to what gaol brings.

I've been scared, scared out of my mind,
I've acted tough and rough, using the strength I find.
Coming to blows... as a last resort
Shouting, so much shouting, using swear words I've been taught.

Get up! Go there! Don't do that! What are those smells?
Bearing witness to degradation and all kinds of hells.
Instructions always controlling my every move
Felt trapped, sometimes lonely, can't seem to get my groove.

Conforming to the everyday needs of prison, small cells,
Medications, strip searching, cell inspections, whistles and bells.
Some days are much better, fun things I can find,
Drawing and painting to occupy my mind.

You see, I've chosen this life, it is mine to bear,
Would do it all again? Yes I would, I swear.
I work in Corrections so I can do my part,
To give them hope and to help them with a new start.

Natasha Woods
2014

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