

Where The Arts Belong: In Conversation

Discussion transcript from event held on 16 May 2022. Chaired by Marie-Anne McQuay and Tabitha Moses and featuring Francisco Carrasco, Suki Chan, Gav Cross, Alan Dunn, Roger Hill, Philip Jeck, Brigitte Jurack, Mary Prestidge, Jonathan Raisin.

<https://www.thebluecoat.org.uk/whatson/where-the-arts-belong-making-sense-of-it-all>

Marie-Anne McQuay: Hi everyone. Good evening and welcome to an evening with Where The Arts Belong artists. I'm Marie-Anne McQuay, Head of Programme. In a minute I'll introduce my co-host, Tabitha Moses, who is the Project Facilitator for Where The Arts Belong.

Tabitha Moses: Hi, thanks Marie-Anne.

Marie-Anne McQuay: Thank you. You're Zooming from your studio at the moment, aren't you?

Tabitha Moses: I am yes. In Liverpool.

Marie-Anne McQuay: I'm at home in Liverpool, some of our speakers are also in Liverpool and some are further afield, but they will let us know where they are. Where The Arts Belong is an ongoing project, with leading visual artists, writers, storytellers, dancers, musicians, composers who have worked creatively with people living with dementia on a wide range of artistic activities. Everyone is incredibly experienced as being a collaborator or a performer or facilitator, but it's the first time I believe everyone has worked in a dementia setting. They were helped on this journey with Tabitha as their Project Facilitator. Tabitha is going to talk a little bit to set the scene about when the project started. I'm just going to ask Sam to put up some images of the exhibition that we've got on at the moment, that is some of the work and outcomes from Where The Arts Belong.

Fantastic, so this show is on at the moment in Gallery 4, Where The Arts Belong: Making Sense Of It All, a title from one of the artists in the show. It charts all of the processes that we've mentioned. I'm just going to ask Tabitha, if she wouldn't mind, because she's been involved right from the start of this project, to just say when it started, who the partner was and a little bit about its phases, and we'll go straight to the artists after that. So I'll hand over to you, Tabitha.

Tabitha Moses: Thanks Marie–Anne. I'll try and keep it succinct because it's been quite a wide–ranging project which started in 2018. Bluecoat partnered with Belong, who are a dementia care provider, because the values really chimed with each other. Belong provide really groundbreaking person–centred care, and so they've been great partners and they still are. So we started, actually in 2019, with a pilot residency project in Crewe, Belong Care Village.

Just briefly, to give you an overview, we then worked with some people with dementia in the Atkinson Gallery in Southport with a view to working in the Birkdale Belong Village. However, Covid then happened, so all work in–person stopped. As a response to Covid we started some remote work with the domiciliary wing, or the at–home care wing of Belong, in Wigan, Warrington and Atherton, called Where The Arts Belong At Home, which paired an artist with a support worker and a customer in their own home. Then we did some more remote work which was tackling loneliness in groups of Belong apartment tenants, called We Belong Together.

That was in 2021, again, remotely, in response to the Covid situation. Then we've been gearing up again to work in a new Belong village in Chester, so in the run up to that we've been holding workshops, arts workshops with the majority of our artists in the Grosvenor museum in Chester. We'll be working in the new Belong village in Chester this Summer and Autumn and we're really looking forward to getting back in person there.

I'll just tell you who the artists were, we've got most of them here tonight. We've got Brigitte Jurack, Roger Hill, Alan Dunn, Mary Prestidge, Jonathan Raisin, Francisco Carrasco, Gav Cross. We've got all of you here tonight, such a great broad range of practices. Also working with us, we had Suki Chan and Phillip Jeck, bringing their own practices to it.

Marie–Anne McQuay: Thank you. Like so many projects over the last few years, it's had unexpected extensions due to Covid. It became even more relevant as a practice, to work with older people. We should say, Belong allows for a really person–centred approach to someone on a dementia journey, so that was why they felt it was relevant for artists to come in, because it was also about people's creativity and their own sense of being themselves in the moment, was really important. So thank you.

It was a really long–running project. We're going to ask all of the artists, and we'll have to pick someone to go first, to say hi, what their practice is, and also if they want to, what their relationship to Bluecoat is. Most people have a very long–running relationship with Bluecoat, so it's who you are, what you do and then, if you've actually worked with Bluecoat prior to this. I'm going to go for Brigitte first, Brigitte Jurack.

Brigitte Jurack: Hi. You knew I had just joined on my microphone. Hello, good evening, my name's Brigitte Jurack, and I had an exhibition in the Bluecoat in 1999, some time around then, when I first became a resident in Liverpool. As you can hear in my accent, I come originally from Germany. I'm a sculptor, and an installation artist and sometimes also performance artist. I do both, I do what I would call stand-alone sculpture in my studio and I work on core-authored or participatory projects. That's me, done.

Marie-Anne McQuay: That's perfect.

Brigitte Jurack: I pass the ball on to the next one along! Or I'll use this pen and I'll point to Mary.

Mary Prestidge: Hi, can you hear me? Yes? Super. So I'm a dance artist, I work with improvisational forms, not so much stylised dance forms, and the essence of play. Which is a part of the process of making material and working with people. I share a dance studio in the Bluecoat and have done for over ten years now.

Me and my colleagues and peers in this improvisation world, we've had a joint project with the Bluecoat which finished a few years ago, developing participation and engagement, making work of our own and developing a new dance programme within the Bluecoat.

Marie-Anne McQuay: Fantastic, Mary do you want to select someone next?

Mary Prestidge: A-ha! A-ha... Jonathan.

Jonathan Raisin: Thanks Mary.

Mary Prestidge: I was going to pick one of the audience, actually!

Jonathan Raisin: Hello, my name's Jonathan Raisin. My background and training, I'm a musician and composer but my work has evolved over the years as things do. I worked a lot with theatre and increasingly as a writer and with sound installation. So, kind of moving into a more multi-disciplinary areas. I've done a number of projects that have increasingly involved participation from early years, running community arts workshops, to larger projects that have involved a lot of talking to groups of people and finding out about their experiences and making work from that whether it be musical or something based on their practices. So that's me in a nutshell. I came to Liverpool in 1988 having completed my student days, I think I did my first bit of work at the Bluecoat not long after. Made a couple of shows back in the day as they say, the early 90s, in the old Bluecoat concert hall that's

now a restaurant. On and off, various things, a few gigs, a few workshop based projects there.

And I think I did one of the first shows in the new space when it opened, which is now a long time ago, but seems like yesterday to me. So yeah, I have a long history with the Bluecoat, as long as my time in Liverpool. It's always been a home from home, or somewhere- the artistic centre that I felt most reflects my own thoughts and practices.

Marie-Anne McQuay: Fantastic. Thank you so much, Jonathan. You can pass the baton on.

Jonathan Raisin: I don't know how your screen is but Alan is just below me.

Alan Dunn: Thanks. My name is Alan Dunn. I'd still describe myself as a visual artist even though I'm working with sound over the past 10-15 years. I think I lost a bit of faith in what an image could do and I met some people who'd been working with sound recently. First work for the Bluecoat, 1996 I think, a year after moving to Liverpool. I was involved in one of the very early engagement programmes, Bluecoat Connect. I think it's really important, Bluecoat have offered incredible critical support to me as an artist over the last 25 years. In a nutshell, I'm really interested in the work with pensioners groups since the early 90s, I worked on a project called TenantSpin at FACT, I'm really interested that creativity can start when you get to 60 or 70, changing that curve of creativity, so this project appealed to me and that was one of the main reasons. That's it, I'll pass over to Roger.

Roger Hill: Thanks Alan. I've had a lot to do with Bluecoat over about four decades now. I've been on things like the programming committee and I contributed a chapter to the recent Bluecoat 300 book. So I've had miscellaneous things, but I've probably done a lot of my performance shows in the Bluecoat. I've been an associate artist, and as well as this project which I've enjoyed greatly, I've regularly for quite a few years now been teaching parents how to read books with babies and run the storytelling group. It was as a storyteller that I came to the Belong project but it soon opened out.

I would say now if I look back on the last two years what has occupied me is the relationship between objects and memory, and a lot of the things you'll see in the exhibition are about work we've done with everything from cards to parts of the museum collections, and how that has been used to bring out people's ability to yes, tell their story, but I think it's also something to do with keeping in touch with the present. That, for me, is the thing about dementia. It is a technique for keeping in touch with the present. That has fascinated me and preoccupied me thoroughly for the last while and will continue through the residencies to come.

Marie-Anne McQuay: That's wonderful Roger, thank you. Francisco...

Roger Hill: Francisco!

Francisco Carrasco: Hello. Can you hear me? My creative practice, I'm a Chilean-born, I would say cultural activist. My background is music, composition and then very much carnival. Then onto creating large scale pieces. My first work with the Bluecoat was probably when I convinced Jayne Casey to let me work with Keith Khan when he came, late 80s I think it was. When he came and did a show about hair, a long long time ago. Then I went in and out of working in different guises with the Bluecoat, for a long time as part of a project that was about poetry and spoken word, working with people like Ley Safari, Dinesh Allirajah, people like that.

That went on for quite a while, also developing different kinds of programmes and projects. Then when I came back from South Africa in 1995, I was commissioned by Bluecoat and Black Arts Alliance to create a multidisciplinary piece, it was an installation with voice and music and all kinds of things about my journey in South Africa. Then I went on to run the Merseyside International Street Festival, which I plonked firmly in the Bluecoat for launches. Every year we would launch and develop projects and bring artists, so for me the Bluecoat is a home from home in loads of different ways. When I did my first creative practice project, for the new Bluecoat there, I did the premiere in the Bluecoat, I can't remember when that was. 2013, 14, something like that.

I was really pleased to be asked to be involved in this project because dementia for me is something quite personal. I work with a number of very close friends and family who have been through that. I have learned incredible amounts around not just getting involved in the in-depth reading but also the relationship with both artists and participants and members of the families of those groups afflicted with dementia.

Marie-Anne McQuay: Thank you so much. We'll discuss that fully-rounded journey as you go. Let's bring in Gav Cross, last but by no means least on our list.

Francisco Carrasco: I'd like to pass it to Gav!

Gav Cross: Hello, I'm Gav, I'm a storyteller currently, like many people I've been on a long journey. My previous background, I've worked in public sector services for people with additional needs, I've facilitated work in dementia care spaces previously using image and sound, but right now I'm a storyteller, vaguely family-friendly, I perform my shows at

Bluecoat. My journey has some delicious projects, working with Blue Room, both in Bluecoat and out in Norton. I bring chaos and host an alternative comedy club for children and families called Funny Looking. There you go.

Marie–Anne McQuay: Which I can personally recommend! Thanks very much, that's fantastic. If anyone's just joined us, because the artists have such amazing practices but also relationship to Bluecoat we've just had them all introduce themselves. As we go, we normally invite anyone watching at home to drop questions into the chat. If you have general questions or very specific questions for everyone.

Tabitha and I are going to start off with some questions and then see where we go in the conversation. A lot of what we want to do is reflect on the learning for practice but also for dementia care, with the project. I just wanted to ask everyone first, what your expectations were coming into the Belong setting? I know people have also had different experiences. Some people have had a long experience, some people are yet to go into the care home but they're working in museums, some people have side projects with this. What the expectations were that how your practice was going to meet someone on a dementia journey, if I can ask that to anyone who wants to start us off. Or I can select someone!

Alan Dunn: I don't mind starting, rambling and others can join in. It's a good question to start with, I was just thinking, one of the strengths of this, we've met as artists, away from the formal work, and that's been really useful to support each other. Asking those questions, what are we doing here, why are we doing this? We did the pilot in Crewe and we were struggling a little bit, because we were all going at different times and trying to get to know Belong and trying to find languages that we can speak to each other with. I think there's this pattern of apprehension to start with on both sides and then curiosity – 'oh, that looks interesting' – and then there's participation and then there's almost advocacy. In my experience you've got to go through all those four, so my expectations were apprehension to start with.

It's going to sound odd but I think Covid coming along was a kind of breakthrough moment, it started to make sense ironically going for beach walks with Roger when we couldn't meet up otherwise, reflecting on this and actually taking time as artists to reflect on it and getting to know the staff at Belong. That was not my expectation, my expectation was working with people on dementia and learning about the condition more. I've actually learned a lot more about how you deal and work with people with dementia. I don't know if others will echo or contrast that but it was a shift in my expectation, I think.

Marie–Anne McQuay: Thank you so much. Anyone else happy to share their expectations of how it might be versus how things went? Brigitte, did you...

Brigitte Jurack: Yeah, I suppose it's been, sorry if this is a cliché, it's been a really steep learning curve for everybody involved. I think artists residencies come in all shapes and sizes, from the weekly to the monthly to the year–long. From the most remote island in the Northern Hemisphere to an urban slum in Rio de Janeiro. I suppose there was a kind of difficulty to communicate at the beginning, what is actually meant by an artist residency. Even the eight artists involved in the project along the way have different ideas about what an artist residency is, and how many people in the organisation need to know the artist resident has arrived.

You know, how do you facilitate when time is always at a premium for the care workers as much as for the artists? How do you facilitate these encounters? It was very good to have an art awareness session at the beginning, it would have been even better if probably everyone could have joined who is working in an institution, or from the cook to the manager and everybody in between. When we work in our professional bubbles, like the art bubble, you sometimes forget that actually, people don't really know what an artist residency is, and it is nobody's fault that they don't know. Even my students don't know what it is. It's just this weird thing.

In terms of dementia setting, I once, funny enough, had a residency in the Netherlands years ago and passed by a very fancy care home. They had on the ground floor workshops for weaving and pottery and a cafe and all these facilities which Belong is trying to bring in. So I think it has been for me, as an artist, a learning curve to make ceramic sculptures in the dining room, or the living room, or the domestic setting. It shifted. I do remember a moment in Crewe where I was in the apartment block, food was prepared in one corner and on another table we were making these clay cabbage–leaf imprints. There were very beautiful moments but that was a weird shift from a workshop thingy, then actually doing it in your lounge.

Marie–Anne McQuay: That's true, you weren't necessarily in a studio at the care homes, were you. You must have– it depends where your setting was.

Brigitte Jurack: Yes, if you work with messy materials, of course, you know. You asked about learning, then you do have to kind of bear in mind that it needs tidying up or preparing, things like this. You know, it might not be – I don't know who is in the audience but if people from the care centre are in the audience, this is just a really practical little thing, to bear in mind.

Roger Hill: Can I add something in there?

Marie-Anne McQuay: Please do, Roger.

Roger Hill: Yeah. I was going to say, there's been a lot of areas of learning. I think we all set out thinking that we would learn a great deal from it, probably we didn't realise in some cases how much we had to learn from it. I've learnt a huge amount about dementia as a condition, if we call it that for the moment – a condition of existence. If I look back on the last two and a half years, I think it's about that now, it seems to me the one thing that really did happen, it was a journey into care. Actually this is a Belong project.

We get the word Belong from the name of the company that runs the villages that we have been working in. Apart from the concept of belonging, it is essentially about going into places where people are housed, homed and cared for. I think the dovetailing of arts work with care work, and how to do that well, is actually the thing at the end of the project, it will be most notable for having opened up. I think that's the thing we most need to report on, the dovetailing of creative activity and care is the burden we're going to be carrying on for the next decade or more amongst families, care homes, hospital, medical situations and just our personal existence in society.

So that was a big learn for me. The other thing of course is that with the residencies, until you've been there long enough to see how everything works, you don't feel quite comfortable putting your feet on the ground firmly. So it did take a while I think, for all of us, to put the best foot forward and say – as we are going to now, with the residencies – 'I know what I want to do, and I want to do it this way' and that's a research thing.

Marie-Anne McQuay: Absolutely. I think, as the project keeps evolving, the research should keep evolving too. We've got a couple questions in the chat which I'm going to get to soon, but we'll go to Francisco first and then I had a genre question.

Francisco Carrasco: I'll just be quick. One of the things that I have got a lot from is actually listening to the likes of Brigitte or Alan or Mary or Roger etc, talking about these residencies and talking about going into the homes. Myself, I never went into any of them. My arts awareness session was actually a tech awareness session. We didn't actually do any art awareness because it was all about trying to get them to be able to record stuff because it was all on Zoom. Then I went into the Grosvenor.

In relation to that, I do feel in a lot of ways that I've been on the periphery and I've not had that kind of relationship and development. One of the expectations I came in with, from my point of view, was very much about – what's the relationship in a different cultural context to ways in which dementia is looked at, worked with, developed, connected, how it connected to different families in relation to different cultures.

So, for me, I'm still, I'm not quite sure yet where that's at, with regards to– I had a really interesting and open time at the Grosvenor. Even though there was only a few people who would be classed as having the condition dementia because it was also primarily about the families. I think that's one of the things that really stuck on me, how that relationship connects. How do you work with not just the person with the condition but also the person or people that live within that context and how you connect the two?

So I'm at a place where it's looking at how to move forward from my point of view in that kind of relationship of doing that work and doing it because I'm interested in not just working with people with dementia but also the people that are part of their lives, so that they get something and also they can get tools that they can ensure what Roger was talking about. Learning to be in the present.

Marie–Anne McQuay: Absolutely, otherwise people are going off a leaflet or a website or a possible consultation with a doctor, and it's how you embed in families or society that there's still a productive and fruitful life to be had. How to support people who support them. I'm just going to ask, I would call it a genre question, to Mary, Jonathan and Gav. Then I think Tabitha might have a question and then we'll do some from the chat. I just wondered, within Mary, your artform of dance, Jonathan with composition and Gav with storytelling, where within your artform you had to adapt to work with people with dementia, or where your artform was really productive in itself, or where it was possible to be playful? I'll ask Mary first if that's possible, then Jonathan and then Gav.

Mary Prestidge: Great. Am I on? OK! I've felt lots of things came up really in this process. It was interesting, I felt like I needed to get even more space and more time and actually give over to the people who I was working with and not introducing to. It was shifting the boundaries of the space to work with people and giving people a lot more space to come forward with things. There was so much there. You open the space, you give more time and then you see a lot more potential. So my role shifted. I felt I had to take a different role, sideways, and how I offered things and then allowed things to develop and give that time for development. In a way it was relating to my own practice of dance making and working in composition and improvisation, that actually, if I provide the right framework then so much can come forward. It wasn't about damping down or anything, I just felt the richness of it and that's what I'm interested in, in my practice. I felt things were just beginning, from the

one to one in Belong at Home. We had a few workshoppy type sessions in Crewe and then the one to one, one could see much more the individual development and everybody was vastly different.

One of the things, I was talking to Tabitha the other day, about how issues and perceptions about identity are not to be, as an older person, I feel I get put in a box. As a person with certain disabilities, you're put in a box. People with dementia are put in a box. Let's try and disperse some of those things, it's looking at what people have and yeah. I'm not articulating this very clearly!

Marie-Anne McQuay: Your practice values the gesture of the everyday and the gesture of people, so you're still valuing that within a dementia setting, if it is within people's ability to move and play, it's of value.

Mary Prestidge: Absolutely. Minimal is fine. It's your sensory awareness to that, what you bring to that, providing the space to allow that to emerge. That's what is the tuning, or the refining of this work, for me.

Marie-Anne McQuay: Thank you. I'm going to go to Jonathan next, talking about composition, how you might compose and how that's played out.

Jonathan Raisin: I probably should begin by saying that I'm, like Francisco, someone that hasn't done a residency in a care home yet. I will be working in Chester Belong in the autumn. So my involvement, which could be a microcosm of what I might do on a longer scale, was two workshops in the Grosvenor museum in Chester, with a small group of three people with dementia, two with a partner one with a son. So three family groups. Also I should say, although my background is musical composition, I was never quite clear that the work that I would most usefully do would be purely about music.

Anyway, after a number of thoughts about how I might run these sessions I thought I would be interested in making a sound piece and exploring a wider idea, with people, of how you make something that uses sounds and words, found sound. We were using objects in the museum because that was the nature of the work, which was very interesting, I found the radiogram in their store room which we then used in the Bluecoat exhibition. The idea came from that work but is actually unconnected because that was a separate project with Roger. Anyway, I had the conceit that we would look at how we might, for fun, make a little radio piece, or a podcast in a way, but with a 1950s radiogram. I also had a display case, which the museum had, of butterflies. I brought a number of sounds to the party, butterfly sounds, birdsong, flight sounds. In that context I'm much more interested in talking about

ideas and then working out how we might make something that's audio, that's sonic, from that. Certainly that includes words and ideas as well as sound, to me that's interesting, that's where I am at the moment.

Anyway, so, as a snapshot of how that works in practice, and maybe that reflects an interesting process in a dementia setting, we began with this and people were interested, I played them some sounds and that was lovely. I played them the combination of music and birdsong, music and voices chattering, we spoke a bit about what the butterflies made people think of. We generated some words, and my thought was that within an hour and a half session, I can record some of these words, we can fly them all in. I had a sound processing system ready to go. We did a bit of that but actually it went off on a complete tangent. By the end of the first session everyone was making paper aeroplanes, and then butterflies, and we were hanging them up. As a slight aside in that session, we generated a list of words that had come up. We were having conversations about dreams of flying, whether flying was scary or uplifting. Another thing, which is an aside but maybe we could come back to, is that the Grosvenor sessions to me benefitted greatly by having a team of people working so effectively you could work one-to-one at any given point. And we generated a set of words and thoughts and ideas about flying, butterflies, aeroplanes, and we made paper aeroplanes and that was the end of the session.

I was very happy about it and it felt like, I was only going to do one more session in that particular block of work but at the same time, if it had been an extended project, i'd have thought – OK, that's opened up possibilities, we haven't done anything to do with sound in practice yet but I know what we could do with it. In the second session we recorded some speaking. In a way, what was most interesting to me, because it was the most exciting to the participant as far as I could tell, was the fact that we were talking. I think, I understand that with certain people with dementia, that's not always necessarily the most useful way in. With this particular group, it was, and we were participating in something very simple and playful. So in a way, sorry Marie-Anne, that's not really helped about composition and music. But I think what that tells me is that an interesting approach, in a more extended project, is to work with sound and layering and bring as many different ideas and possible sound sources as possible. I know Alan has done some of this work about field recording, but I would also spend time making sounds for people, I would get in to making vocal sounds. I'm not particularly interested in teaching people to play instruments because it's very difficult!

Marie-Anne McQuay: I think you get the sense of play and poetics and dreaming and being in the moment. Almost everyone has said on the project that although there's a lot you can

do with dementia around nostalgia or the past, it feels very much about creativity in the moment.

Jonathan Raisin: It is, but I'm also very aware that having been cautious about doing work needing conversations that dwelled on the past and directly on memory, memories come up, and are almost like, there are riffs that appear, and in this particular limited experience with this small group of people, it's as if there are key memories which are there and therefore should be respected, acknowledged and used in the work we might be doing.

Marie-Anne McQuay: That's amazing. Gav, I wanted to ask you - how much storytelling depends on memory or pattern or improvisation and how you adapt if you're working in a setting where memory itself is perhaps an issue? Or loneliness, being on your own, because yours was part of that set of the project.

Gav Cross: Yeah, I'll try to address Grace's question as well. So my project, basically I was using a Facebook portal, projected giant-size in the room. It was the first time the group had come together, it was about addressing loneliness. I could see them in their seats and they could see me wall-size, what a treat. Working in partnership with Betty who is a facilitator, what we said was, we're going in with a very, pun-intended, open book. All the sessions were planned, rough planned. I had them in front of me. I was able to jump back and forward and draw out. The aspiration with the storytelling was to both tell, and listen, and make, and share. So I was lucky enough to watch one of Alan's sessions and how he started.

We came up with a series of very simple activities, to begin with, around different themes. I'm a storyteller for families, really. We talked about stories that were important to us when we were young, and one of the first interruptions I had was a brilliant interruption from somebody who says 'oh, we will not know any of your references, because we're German' and I said well that's OK, we're going to take Bavarian Grimm stories and maybe a bit of Struwwelpeter, and suddenly I was in with them. As soon as I mentioned stories from their own childhood and those memories. They mentioned some stories from their childhoods, some particular books, and I think Betty went away and found those, so we projected those large-size and one of them was a particular cover they remembered, as well. So they were able to share and to stimulate that. I threw out exercises like one word storytelling, and what we learned, and we moved onto one sentence storytelling.

What we learned was, because we had a projector there, Betty was able to type the sentence and nobody- my short term memory is terrible, let alone a long term one. They were able to see, and read, and read back. One of our aspirations was to speak together and make

stories together, so we used story dice. They had story dice there, and notebooks. There was just this delightful connection. I was finding my way. It was about loneliness as well. There was an expectation that they wanted to be performed to, so we looked at different genres, I would read them something and we checked in with the staff and they said they were very much enjoying it. It was absolutely delightful, the feedback that we were getting was, it became a relationship where they said 'oh, we haven't done our homework for Gav. Do you think he'll tell us off?' but that became part of the relationship.

We ended up with stories written, stories told, stories shared from within the room. The big benefit there was keeping a dialogue going with the staff who were there and picking up from them what they were enjoying. It definitely challenged me, I was working with people who had far more experience with me, even in storytelling, or writing. So I was able to pick at those and turn them into something that was shared, and I was able to offer a bit of structure for them. And we laughed – there was a lot of laughter, which was great fun.

Marie–Anne McQuay: Absolutely, and not a quality or an aspect you think of in those settings. That's really beautiful. I would say, I do know that you can deal with any kind of heckler as well, from having seen you perform.

Gav Cross: Yeah, bring it on!

Marie–Anne McQuay: We're getting lots of questions coming in the chat. I think Sam's going to un–pin us and Tabitha's going to ask some of the questions that are coming in, she's been reading that while we've been talking. I'm going to turn my mic off.

Brigitte Jurack: Can I pick up on some of the questions. I mean, there was earlier on a question, what have we learned from dementia, or from working with people who have a form of dementia? I think it's a huge spectrum and there are lots and lots, as many as there are people, different expressions of the condition, so to speak. So I can only speak from my perspective, as working with clay, and I make it really short so there are really tangible outcomes include fine motor, using the hands, playing with mud. If you are in a slightly overheated environment, playing with mud is not on your agenda, normally. The first encounter, that shrieking physical encounter that the clay is cold or stiff or too hard to work.

It's actually something there which resists, it has a living element to it. I brought in seafood to model from, so again a real sensory heightening of experiences, like with Mary – Mary and I were probably the least verbal practitioners in terms of trying to solicit people making sentences. I quite like working in silence. Last week on Monday one lady in the workshop,

the concentration was palpable. Just the concentration of thinking through your hands and making this form. Then the last thing, I think it has something to do with everyone including the helpers and facilitators, I keep saying – embrace the wonky! Embrace the rustique. Don't be interested in making something that looks like something you can buy in John Lewis's or in the pound shop. The ability to make something is inert, we have it as a kid, we make sandcastles, we have it at 80 or 90. So when you give the permission to be wonky and rustic it's an incredibly empowering experience you have. Both the facilitators and the participants.

Roger Hill: Can I jump in on one of the questions?

Marie–Anne McQuay: Yeah, go for it.

Roger Hill: Both Grace and Alison have asked a question to which there is a generic answer, we were on a hiding to nothing with this session anyway because there's a lot of us with instances to give. But we are going to be producing a publication, and we are going to be running a symposium later on in the year, both of which will answer your question about specific instances. There will be things we've done, how to do them in detail, how to follow our example. But also there will be a much more rounded reflection as we come to the end of our residencies on what's been going on. So even if you don't hear lots and lots of useful tidbits about how we work now, the Bluecoat with the Belong project is going to offer those up to you as an available thing.

Tabitha Moses: Lovely, thank you Roger, that's great to say because you're right, there will be a much broader reflection at the end of the project, early next year. Some of the questions I was going to pick up on were answered by you, Brigitte. I noticed in the chat quite a lot of interest in what you literally did in the sessions with the people, the participants and the staff, the families, the people who are living with dementia.

I'm interested in how that ties in with the concept of ownership over the work. One of the words we've been using is co-creation, co-creating the work. This has an extra layer when you bring in dementia where someone's capacity to know how they're being involved in this creation and what it means for the future is impaired or variable. So I think it might be interesting to ask that question of Alan and Brigitte and Roger and Francisco, just to talk a little bit about that. Maybe tell us a little bit about what you did – Brigitte you gave us a great idea there about what you did – and then how that ties in with ownership.

Alan Dunn: I could step in – I was doing sound recordings with people including members of staff and family, we learned a lot around permissions and also associations. If you take sounds of some families, you're OK to use sound on social media but not in an artwork. So there's a process of learning, we said actually – the sound is the artwork, and social media is silent. I think that's a really good, I learned a lot about permissions but also associations and instances where one thing was fine, but if that work was shown next to another piece that the family were not happy with... how far do you go with association on work that you've got permission on?

It's a very complex idea. I think if there's a solution it's to work with Belong and we worked with Belong really closely, it wasn't us presenting the way the art world works, it was a conversation all the time with Belong. Especially during Covid. Covid was a real leveller. Nothing made sense, and we were into isolation, there was grief, etc. To go ahead and record sounds in care homes during Covid was a complete revelation, it fundamentally changed who I was as an artist, because we're not just here to deliver. I became a different artist during those sessions, I had to do different things to make it work, and the staff became different people because early on, Roger had the idea that – if we're undertaking dementia awareness training at the start, Belong staff should undertake arts awareness training, a crash course in contemporary art. So it's all about this levelling and conversation, permissions is just one part of it.

I definitely think to embed contemporary art in future Belong villages was a big aim of this project, to make art a fundamental part of any new build or care home. Roger went as far as to say, we shouldn't discuss villages, we should discuss cities. It's a societal issue. It's the whole of Manchester or Liverpool or Leeds we should be discussing in relation to dementia. I think the Belong staff I worked with were really open to these conversations, which was great.

Then we took some of those sound recordings and we discovered– I've caught myself saying 'people with dementia' but for me it was Mary, it was Anne, they had names. So Mary in Wigan, Crewe sorry, is the best tongue-twister performer possibly in Britain. We found a skill, she kept asking for harder and harder tongue-twisters as a kind of sonic instrument, she kept handling it and she became this legendary status. That's something I learned at Tenantspin, people have talent, our work breaks the ground and challenges people, we're not there to just be nice all the time. It challenges people, the staff said it revealed things about Mary that they can then work with daily, going forward, her talent, in the here and now. That was really rewarding.

Brigitte Jurack: Yeah. Thank you, Alan. That was quite a practical thing about this taxing issue of who owns the artwork, who makes the artwork and are we really, are we allowed to be that inclusive to give first and second names of those who participated? So there was a layer in relation to that. When I had to decide on how the label in the current exhibition should be read or written, it cleared it a little bit. I call myself, as the person who has developed the concept, and printed the photos, but the actual artworks were made by the people who were putting their fingers in the clay, and that was not me. I think co-authoring is probably not even the right word, because beyond preparing the ground and having the concept and maybe the faith that something good will come of it, the actual shape, the finding of the shape is in the hands of those who are shaping the clay.

So there is an ethical dimension to that, it goes beyond today's session, which needs to be needs out much more within socially engaged art. It's not good enough to say with ten participants, or something like that, on the label. Or work with 50 ladies in Tate and not mention a single one by name, just say thank you very much for the 50 ladies who worked with me. So I think there is an issue around that.

Somebody called Daniel just asked about people who are not using language, as in words and speaking, anymore. I had one session with an individual where I just had this play-doh and we were just rolling it and pushing it onto a plate, a piece of wood. That was great, as well. That was a one to one session and something may have happened, I don't know. Something was there, some kind of engagement, some joy in touching something, some soft material, squeezing it. I'm not an expert on that.

Tabitha Moses: Thanks Brigitte. Roger, were you going to say-

Roger Hill: Yeah, I was going to pick up on that. Over the middle period of that thing, I came across a list I've got here, which was called Progression Through Interaction. It was, for anyone who works with somebody who is on their dementia journey, working out what level they're at and what level you might want to encourage them to be achieving at any given time. If there's a lack of language, a difficulty with understanding, that doesn't mean there isn't something there that can be developed and improved on if you want to put it that way. There was one thing we all came into this with, was that dementia can only get worse. It might plateau, which is the nearest thing to saying it will stay as bad as it is, but it is the way it is. It is not going to get any better, was the idea. I wanted to challenge that and some of the great people who have worked in dementia, people like Tom Kitwood, have equally challenged the idea that you can't take people up a level rather than let them slide down a level.

To do that, you have to have very precise and very calibrated ways of engaging with people at the first level they're at and then taking it further. That was the instinct I got from this, that in the future, we will very much need to start thinking about how we judge the people we see. I don't think I did any co-creation. All I did was share a lot of really rather brilliant moments with people, and they're all gone.

They went into the forgettery, and neither they nor I will hold them for long. I do think, strategies for sharing brilliant moments is probably the thing, whatever dementia level they're at, will need to benefit from.

Tabitha Moses: Thank you Roger. That brings us beautifully to Francisco who also shared moments and doesn't have the solid, tangible object that Brigitte's got.

Francisco Carrasco: I actually focused very much on percussion and rhythm. But not rhythms of any particular type, just created rhythms in the moment. I really like what Roger just said, for me that was the crucial point. When I worked in the Grosvenor I brought loads of percussion instruments, talked about time, what time meant. We had different perceptions of it. I was made to play a couple of songs by the participants. One of the people with dementia told me several times that he didn't sing, and then sang, beautifully. We created loads of different moments and environments, musical environments, through different emotions. Looking at instruments, how they're made and feel, how different sounds made them feel, how different sounds could express where they were at, how they were feeling. How they arrived, and what they were thinking when they were coming, on the way, that was quite nice and created a really interesting moment.

I wanted to just come back to, Brigitte brought it up, the person who asked the question about front temporal dementia, which is the condition that my very close friend has. He is a colleague of mine. I have been dealing, working with him in different ways for over four, four and a half years now. That has been a long journey. He has had to retreat from a work situation. One of the things that has always kept him back, it's quite interesting. If we're playing or doing sound and he is not involved he becomes very agitated. But if he's part of that, or if he creates, so I have sat with him and just played with rhythms, followed their rhythm and created things and they do kind of bring him back into that moment where we can have that very strong relationship. For me it's about looking, finding, trying and making loads of mistakes. But in a good, positive way. As Roger said, finding those moments, which go and disappear but because you find them you know there are other moments coming along the way.

Tabitha Moses: That's beautiful Francisco, thank you. Yes – there are other moments coming along the way but I'm aware it's five past seven now.

Before I hand back to Marie–Anne, this has been a beautiful, bite–sized taste of our longer symposium that is going to be coming early next year. So, Marie–Anne.

Marie–Anne McQuay: Absolutely, thank you. It is a snapshot and a brief moment with some of your amazing voices. The exhibition at Bluecoat continues until 12th of June, so if you come to Bluecoat you can see some of the collaborations and co–creations and some of the not–co–creations.

On the website there's a film about the show as well. As Tabitha said, it's really not over as a journey so there will be a book, a symposium and residencies are continuing. So keep in touch with us if you'd like to see more, and more of the artists, more to the point.

Thanks to everyone and also our funders, Arts Council England, The Baring Foundation and also our partnership with Belong.

We will put this out as a recorded conversation very soon. Thank you all for watching – I wish we could see you all but hopefully at the symposium we'll see you in person. Thank you so much to the artists and we'll say goodnight. Thank you.