



MAGIC ME'S ARTISTS RESIDENCIES IN CARE HOMES PROGRAMME

Learning from Phase One, April 2015 – March 2016

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Our partner organisations are:



About this report

Arts charity Magic Me is running a two year programme of *Artists Residencies in Care Homes*, in partnership with Anchor, England's largest not-for-profit care home provider and four arts partners, all leaders in their field: Punchdrunk Enrichment, Lois Weaver, Duckie and Upswing.

Starting in April 2015 the project aims:

- To show that artists can create excellent work with older people in a care home environment, bringing multiple benefits to residents and to the wider care home community.
- To develop new tools and techniques to support artists in such activity and to open the door on new possibilities for care homes, as places where inspiring and important art is created.

Punchdrunk Enrichment were in residence at Greenhive and Lois Weaver at Rose Court, two Anchor homes in Southwark, South London from January to March 2016. Residencies with Duckie and Upswing are in development with two further homes, to start in summer 2016.

This report documents the story so far: the motivations for the work; the planning and preparation to set up the residencies; the roles of each partner; the activity and work made during the first two residencies; the challenges and learning to date and the many questions raised. We have a year to go and much still to do, and will report in more depth in Spring 2017.

Thank you to everyone who has participated in and supported the residencies so far.

We are particularly grateful for the honest feedback and discussions we have had with our care home and arts partners, and people's willingness to share their stories and questions.

Susan Langford MBE, Director, Magic Me

May 2016

This project is funded by:



THE WAKEFIELD & TETLEY TRUST

Magic Me

www.magicme.co.uk

Magic Me is one of the UK's leading providers of intergenerational arts practice. Based in Tower Hamlets, east London we run an annual programme of projects and events bringing together younger and older people for mutual benefit, learning and enjoyment. Projects are all run in partnership with older people's groups, schools, community, care and cultural organisations, and with individual young and older people living locally.

Our proven track record and expertise over 26 years working with care homes for older people includes three distinct models of intergenerational arts practice:

- Arts Projects led by our own pool of skilled professional artists, bringing school students (junior or secondary) into care homes to work creatively with residents. For example *Songlines* (2013) with video artist Ellie Rees and musician/composer Julian West led to the presentation/performance of new songs and video at Hoxton Hall as part of Spitalfields Music Summer Festival.
- *This is My Life* (2007-08) Photographer Marysia Lachowicz worked with residents of Silk Court Care Home, their families, visitors and care staff, to creatively document individual older people's lives and choices to date. Using archives, family albums and new photographs, each resident created a life story book or poster, informing staff about residents' interests, thus enhancing care. The work used an intergenerational dynamic, engaging families and staff.
- *Cocktails in Care Homes* (2010-ongoing) Older people asked Magic Me for evening activity to combat loneliness and boredom after dinner at 5pm. We designed *Cocktails* bringing young adult volunteers to socialise with residents over a drink in a creative environment. We now run monthly parties 6-7pm in 9 care homes in five London boroughs. 370 residents and 271 volunteers participated in 2015/16.

In addition, from November 2016 Magic Me is running *Action on Loneliness*, a one year pilot project to recruit and link 60 adult volunteers with 60 older people living in 6 care homes, combating isolation and loneliness. Volunteers visit weekly for conversation or one-to-one activities chosen by the older people. *Action on Loneliness* was commissioned by the Public Health Department of the London Borough Tower Hamlets.

The Magic Me team on Artists' Residencies were:

Project management: Susan Langford, Director

Project management: Ellie Watmough, Project Manager

Project management: Sarah Dean, General Manager

Artist Mentors: Julian West, Surya Turner

Observer/Evaluation: Marine Begault, Victoria Hogg

Storify and Press: Erin Morris

Consultant Trainer: Sally Knocker, Dementia Care Matters

Our Care Partner Anchor

www.anchor.org.uk

With almost 40,000 customers in 1,000 locations, Anchor is a charity and England's largest not-for-profit provider of housing and care for older people. Anchor provides a range of services from rented and leasehold retirement properties to residential care homes, specialist dementia care homes and retirement villages. With nearly 50 years of experience providing quality forward thinking care, Happy Living is not only Anchor's strapline, but it's reason for being. Anchor was the winner of Best Care Home category in the National Care Awards 2015.

Anchor believes that active participation in the arts can offer tremendous benefits to isolated older people, improving health and well-being while bringing new meaning, friendships and enjoyment. The "no right or wrong" dynamic of the arts means there are many ways to respond or participate, embedding individual expression and offering an inclusive approach.

Arts engagement enables staff and families to see older people in a new light, learn more about them, building better relationships and improving care. Anchor recognises these benefits from current and previous arts residencies and projects with amongst others Arts in the Park, the British Museum, Manchester Age Friendly with Manchester City Council and Radio AllFm. Anchor also know that to deliver these benefits, and have lasting impact within homes, arts activities needs to be carefully designed, run and evaluated, in collaboration with older people, staff and families.

Greenhive Care Home in Peckham and **Rose Court Care Home** in Surrey Quays are purpose built residences with en-suite rooms, providing residential care and specialist care for residents with dementia. In 2014 Greenhive was London's first care home to be rated 'outstanding' by the Care Quality Commission. **Silk Court** in Bethnal Green and **Waterside** in Peckham will host artists residencies with Duckie and Upswing in Autumn 2016.

Staff who worked with Punchdrunk Enrichment included:

Connie Oppong MBE: Manager

Edna Rafferty: Deputy Manager

Activities Coordinators: Marie Bogui, Leila Fitzpatrick

Administrator: Ashford Mensah

Staff who worked with Lois Weaver included:

Manager: Patrick Umerah

Activities Coordinator: Shawl Shewarkabish

Debbie Sharples Kirkbride MBE, Customer Engagement Advisor was project manager for Anchor from the conception of the project.



PunchDrunk Enrichments' Greenhive Green - photo - Stephen Dobbie



PunchDrunk Enrichments' Greenhive Green - photo - Stephen Dobbie

The Arts Partners

PunchDrunk Enrichment

www.punchdrunk.org.uk/enrichment

Since its formation in 2000, Punchdrunk has established an international reputation as a ground-breaking theatre company, creating epic worlds and immersive theatrical experiences that have won the company awards and a popular following - their London production *The Drowned Man: A Hollywood Fable* (2013/14) was seen by over 200,000 people.

Since 2008, Punchdrunk's Enrichment team has taken this immersive practice into communities, creating performances with and for children, young people and the wider community. Punchdrunk Enrichment has enjoyed widespread success, working with over 80,000 young people and community members since its inception. Punchdrunk Enrichment has worked with over 200 schools, creating groundbreaking educational projects which place pupils and teachers at the heart of the experience and provide a real catalyst for learning.

Against Captain's Orders, their biggest production to date in partnership with the National Maritime Museum, was experienced by family audiences of over 33,000 and was nominated for the Museum and Heritage Awards 2016.

Other recent highlights include *Beneath the Streets - Lost & Found* (2015), the sequel to the 2014 collaboration between Punchdrunk Enrichment and Hijinx Theatre featuring students from Hijinx's Academy training course for actors with learning disabilities among the cast. *Beneath the Streets* (2014) was nominated for Best Production in the English Language at the Wales Theatre Awards.

Over Halloween 2015, Creative Barking & Dagenham commissioned Punchdrunk Enrichment to work with local residents on *St Ethelburga's Hallowtide Fair*, a magical reimagining of local traditions and legends at Eastbury Manor House. *Prospero's Island*, Punchdrunk Enrichment's first secondary school project was a ground-breaking collaboration with Hackney Learning Trust and Hackney's Petchey Academy where the world of *The Tempest* was brought to life for pupils to deepen their understanding of the play.

The Punchdrunk Enrichment team on Artists' Residencies:

Director: Matthew Blake

Designer: Julie Landau

Sound & Graphic Design: Stephen Dobbie

Production Manager: Ben Hosford

Enrichment Director: Peter Higgin

Enrichment Producer: Alex Rowse

Enrichment Officer: Elin Moore Williams



Lois Weavers' Tammy WhyNot - Photo - Christa Holka

Lois Weaver

www.split-britches.com/tammywhynot

Tammy WhyNot was created for a Spiderwoman Theater performance in 1979, and has been through many incarnations in the intervening years. In her iconic blonde wig and pink boots she has hosted discussions, held workshops, and starred in her own shows, exploring myriad social and political issues. As part of her most recent work on ageing and wellbeing, Tammy has collaborated with elders across the world, including during a week-long residency in Zagreb, and throughout the ongoing tour of **What Tammy Needs To Know About Getting Old And Having Sex** in New York, Poland, and throughout the UK.

She is also the creation of Lois Weaver: artist, activist and part time professor of Contemporary Performance at Queen Mary, University of London. Lois was co-founder of Spiderwoman Theater, WOW and Artistic Director of Gay Sweatshop in London. She has been a writer, director and performer with Peggy Shaw and **Split Britches** since 1980. Lois was named a Senior Fellow by the Hemispheric Institute of Performance and Politics in 2014 and is a 2014 Guggenheim Fellow. Her collection of performance texts, methodologies and biography *The Only Way Home Is Through The Show: Performance Work of Lois Weaver*, eds. Weaver and Jen Harvie, was published by Intellect in 2015.

Lois's Artist Residency at Rose Court was especially informed by her work with performance as a means for public engagement, not only as Tammy, her facilitating persona, but also with the use of the *Long Table* format for public discussion.

Lois's work at Rose Court is contributing to her surrounding research of a new project in development *Unexploded Ordnances* about the risks of unexplored potential in elders. Lois and Peggy conducted R&D in residence at the Barbican Centre in April 2016, straight after the Artist Residency at Rose Court as well as inviting contributions from an international family of elders and experts from New York, London, Glasgow, Tasmania, Alaska and Poland.

Follow Tammy's on Twitter [@whynottammy](https://twitter.com/whynottammy) or friend her on [Facebook](#)

Lois Weaver's team on Artists' Residencies were:

Artist: Lois Weaver

Artists' Assistant: Hannah Maxwell

Filmmaker: Claire Nolan

Observer: Melissa Bliss, PhD candidate at Queen Mary, University of London

Duckie

www.duckie.co.uk

Duckie are a London events collective that create “good nights out”. From their legendary two decades long weekly residency at the Royal Vauxhall Tavern to winning Olivier awards at the Barbican, they are ‘purveyors of progressive working class entertainment’ who mix live art and light entertainment. They coined the term ‘event culture’ to describe their audience interactive experiences that blur the boundaries between theatre, nightclubs and arty show business.

Duckie combine big shows with a triptych of small socially engaged arts clubs such as **The Posh Club** (a weekly glamorous cabaret for older working class folk), D.H.S.S (LGBT youth theatre) and The Slaughterhouse Club (arts project for homeless & vulnerable Londoners struggling with booze and addiction issues). Duckie have long-term relationships with several major venues including Barbican Centre, Southbank Centre and the Brighton Dome.

Duckie’s Artists’ Residencies team so far are:

Director: Simon Casson

Producer: Dickie Eton

Visual Artist: Robin Whitmore

Upswing

www.upswing.org.uk/

Upswing is one of the UK’s leading circus and aerial theatre companies creating innovative, culturally resonating work, with a deeply embedded commitment to participation that connects with audiences beyond traditional theatre goers. Upswing aspires to produce exceptional work that transforms the perception of contemporary circus into an art form that is diverse in its audience, ideology and practice.

This project fully resonates with Upswing’s inclusive vision: to create Circus that goes beyond spectacle and stretches participant’s self image, encouraging trust in themselves and others. With this project Upswing will create a playful environment where creative boundaries are pushed and they can turn the space upside-down, if only metaphorically.

Upswing’s Artists’ Residencies team so far are:

Artistic Director: Vicki Amedume

General Manager: Camille Bensoussan

Context and rationale for the project

Inviting artists to make artworks or facilitate arts activity with communities in care homes for older people is not new. Individual artists and arts organisations have been doing this in partnership with care providers across the country for many decades. However, whilst artists in residence became common in schools in the 1990's the real growth in arts activity by and with older people is more recent. Support from key funders including the Baring Foundation and the Arts Council across England, Scotland and Wales and the search for fresh approaches in the care of people with dementia have generated increased interest and many new initiatives in recent years. At the same time “arts and crafts afternoons” and “entertainers” still tick the arts box in too many places.

Magic Me's own pool of freelance artists have been designing and leading intergenerational arts projects with care home residents and staff for over 26 years. We decided we wanted to do something different. Magic Me has partnered with Anchor since 1992 and we appreciated their track record of innovative arts projects with us and in other regions. *Artists' Residencies in Care Homes* was co-designed with Debbie Sharples Kirkbride MBE, then Customer Engagement Advisor at Anchor and sought to bring unlikely and perhaps more challenging arts practitioners to Anchor homes.

In summer 2014 we approached different leading arts companies in London to join us. We were thrilled by the positive response from nearly everyone we spoke to and with Anchor and these arts partners we made a successful bid for funding to Paul Hamlyn Foundation. Our partners were invited to take part for their artistic track record, their commitment to socially engaged practice and their desire to extend their practice into care homes.

During the process of securing funding and setting up the project two initial partners chose not to go ahead with the project. Although very keen on the idea, ultimately the match was not quite right. As we explored how the residencies would actually work we found that the project timing, the fit with the strategic focus of the company or the details of the artists practice did not dovetail with the needs and situations of the care homes. Our first key insight was therefore fundamental. An artist's practice may rely on participation from the public, but remain very much in the hands and the control of the artist. Work with people with dementia needs to be person-centred, with each resident setting the pace and constantly choosing and negotiating how and when to participate.

The eventual arts partners for the project were all prepared to take on the challenge of making work with and for a very different audience, in a very particular environment, whilst keeping the integrity of their own practice and its unique aesthetic.

Objectives

Bringing together the expertise of the care homes, the arts partners and Magic Me we aimed to:

- Provide residents with access to top level arts experience, even if they are physically or mentally frail and unable to visit galleries or performance venues.
- Challenge the ageist attitudes that being old residents would not wish to enjoy up-to-date work, and would focus on reminiscing not imaginative themes.
- Challenge and support the arts partners to bring their practice into a completely new setting, working with the care home dynamics as they would with any new context or host, but not 'dumbing down' their practice in any way.
- Challenge and develop Magic Me's own practice, learning new techniques and methods from our arts partners, and their practice in the care homes, and developing our model of intergenerational practice with adults of different ages.
- Challenge the wider care home community, its neighbours, and the arts audiences who already follow each arts partner, showing that care homes can be exciting, forward thinking places, where amazing things happen.



Lois Weavers' Tammy WhyNot - Rose Court - Photo - Claire Nolan

The Story So Far

Building partnerships

Anchor has six care homes in London and four were selected to host residencies. Matching of the arts partners and homes was difficult, and eventually based mainly on practicalities for all involved: timing and existing commitments, geography, spaces within the homes which would work for the different art forms. Managers and homes were not always matched with their first choice of partner, and it was a long wait for homes chosen to host artists in the second phase.

In phase one Punchdrunk Enrichment were partnered with Greenhive in Peckham, who could offer a room in which to build an immersive environment. Lois Weaver was matched with Rose Court in Surrey Quays. The arts partners invited care homes to view their work, to better understand their practice. Greenhive staff attended Punchdrunk's *Against Captain's Orders* at the National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, a show designed for children, which never the less demonstrated the kind of total world which the company is known for. Silk Court staff and residents attended Upswing's *Bedtime Stories*, at Stratford Circus, another family show, which raised many questions about how to introduce aerobatics, magic and aerial work into a care home. Upswing's residency is planned for phase two to give a good lead time to engage staff, plan appropriate activities and undertake risk assessments.

Magic Me was already running *Cocktails in Care Homes* monthly parties at two of the host homes, and started parties at the other two during 2016, so that we, and the arts partners could get to know the residents and staff, and become familiar with how the homes operate. We also joined Residents meetings and met with Activities Coordinators. Although all are part of Anchor, each home has its own personality.

Contracts and agreements

During Autumn 2015 a three way agreement was drafted and re-drafted until all were happy with the roles, rights and responsibilities of each partner as we worked together. Contracts between Magic Me and each arts partner were also signed.

Preparation and support for the artists

On 1st July 2014 the arts partners met with Magic Me project leaders and Debbie Sharples Kirkbride from Anchor to agree together the scope of the project, discuss our hopes and fears, and agree a framework for how we would measure success. Sally Knocker of Dementia Care Matters co-facilitated the day enabling us to examine care home dynamics, building partnerships with staff, the role of meaningful activity and how to design and present activities to groups which may include people with dementia, those who have sensory impairments or low energy or confidence levels.

We had envisaged an arts partners follow up session in early 2016, to share experiences and questions from the first weeks of the phase one residencies, however the schedules of the arts partners were hectic and no matter how in advance we started, we could not get everyone in the same room. Sally therefore visited Greenhive to observe a group session, and offered verbal and written feedback to the Punchdrunk team and the Activities Co-ordinators who supported each activity. Susan Langford and Ellie Watmough visited and observed sessions, gave feedback and reflected with the artists on the details of activity design and how to engage particular individuals.

In addition Magic Me offered to each arts partner an Artist Mentor. Magic Me artists Julian West and Surya Turner were available to support planning, reflection and problem-solving, to observe sessions or talk on the phone, for a total of 21 hours per residency. Lois Weaver chose not to work with a mentor. Punchdrunk Enrichment valued Julian's input and experience with people with dementia.

Evaluation process

Part of the scheduling process was agreeing how to capture what happened during the activities and its impact on individual older people, the staff's understanding of them and life at the care home more generally. We did not want to add to staff's paperwork. Activities Coordinators already note the engagement and reactions of each resident in any activity they lead, and the Artists kept a project diary or wrote weekly Show Reports noting the activities, people's responses and any questions raised for them.

Marine Begault led the gathering of data to evaluate the work; she interviewed key care home staff at the beginning, middle and end of the residencies, observed sessions and collected quotes from artists, residents and staff. Victoria Hogg, an MA student at Goldsmiths, University of London, observed weekly Punchdrunk Enrichment sessions. Marine then reviewed all the data to pull out key themes, which were used as a basis for the end of project evaluation meetings with the arts partners, and the writing of this report.

The Residencies

The activities took place between January and March 2016. The descriptions that follow were written by the arts partners.

Punchdrunk Enrichment & Greenhive Care Home

Punchdrunk Enrichment transformed a room in Greenhive Care Home, with the company's trademark design-led attention to detail. Over 8 weeks residents came together as the village committee of 'Greenhive Green' participated in activities and enjoyed magical theatrical moments as the story of two villages unfolded. We began describing the project as part game and part soap-opera.

Design

Punchdrunk's work is immersive in design – space is totally transformed visually, with atmospheric soundtracks, smells, textures and lighting. The ambition was to create a beautiful space for residents that would enhance their environment and provide a point of interest in the home, but also transport residents to a different environment that was part of our storyworld.

The world of Greenhive Green was an English village square, pretty and calm. Each wall featured a part of village life – the castle wall, post box, police telephone box, pub, village noticeboard, hedgerows, a park bench, and a florist's called ButterCUPS (which was never open). Paving circled a grassy centre, on which a large long white table with inviting seats was placed. Overhead was a colourful canopy with festoon lighting strung across. We were excited by placing a Punchdrunk environment in a context where participants would benefit from the multi-sensory design.

Narrative

Each one hour session would begin with the ritual of 'waking up' the room. The head speaker of the committee (our lead facilitator) would slowly circle the room, drawing attention to the lights in the houses as they brightened, the police telephone box as it lit up, opening the pub door and hearing the patrons inside. This was accompanied by a classical soundtrack that crescendo-ed with all the lights in the room, and the arrival of the (toy) train from a neighbouring village.

The activity each week grew from the unfolding story of life in Greenhive Green. The discovery of another local town called Blarford in Week 1, led to the arrival of a letter in Week 2 challenging the Committee to participate in a Villages in Bloom competition. A phone call from our Mayor then alerted us to plants, soil and tools left in the potting shed.

The planned narrative about the history of the two villages was made simpler shortly after we began the 8 week project, as we realised that it was unnecessary and hard for many residents to retain from week to week. The story became about two neighbouring villages becoming friends through exchanges – from sending Diplomacy Cakes to choosing a village anthem.

The recurring motifs of the absent Greenhive Green Mayor and the abandoned ButterCUPS culminated in the finale week where a party was thrown to celebrate the achievements of our Committee. The party was attended by 89 residents, staff, family and friends. The Mayor finally appeared in person to congratulate the Committee, coincidentally at the same time as the window of ButterCUPS was transformed into a beautiful display. In the following days, each member of the Committee was invited to a personalised performance in Greenhive Green. Residents had a cup of tea with the Punchdrunk Enrichment team they reflected on their time together, enjoyed some theatrical surprises, and the Mayor told a lovestory that led to the opening of ButterCUPS to retrieve a gift for the committee member.

The practicalities

Greenhive Green was built off-site as much as possible and installed at Greenhive over 6 days, in such a way that it could be removed later with scarcely a trace. The Punchdrunk Enrichment team of five hosted the weekly workshop every Tuesday morning for up to 8 residents, and then repeated it in the afternoon with another group. They also experimented with engaging one to one residents in their bedrooms - people who would not be able to join the sessions due to poor health, but given the time and energy required to find a new way of working to do this properly, it was decided to focus on the activity within Greenhive Green itself. A total of 21 residents participated, with an average of 8 residents at each session. The two Activities Co-ordinators supported older people throughout, often joined by the Manager, and other staff as necessary.

Reaching a wider audience

The room itself also provided a calm, welcoming and stimulating space, and an ongoing project presence and resource between activities. Residents, visitors and staff used it to relax or hold meetings. 38 external Anchor staff and suppliers visited at least once.

Punchdrunk Enrichment created a weekly Greenhive Green newsletter, reporting on the Committee's activities, and sharing other news from the village. This was printed by Greenhive staff and used to stimulate conversations with people who had attended the activities, and to engage with other residents and staff.

A twitter account [**@GreenhiveGreen**](#) attracted 1,193 followers, bringing weekly news from the Committee to a public audience, and inviting interaction. Visit to view the full story, read all the newsletters and see project photos.

Devising the story

The project was devised collectively by the project team and Enrichment team and was in response to the room and Greenhive Care Home. The home is like a mini community and world, so it felt logical to re-lense the home as a village and all residents as members of this community. We felt like we wanted to explore a rural village setting as taking them out of the everyday.

In terms of design this also offered us a bright colourful and natural palette to respond to and use, meaning we could bring in natural plant materials. We wanted to find a way to bring residents together, to make sense of this and within the world of Greenhive Green: Why would they meet, what would they talk about, who would they be in relation to the world? Importantly how could we build on the experience week by week, making it familiar but yet new and different? Once we had an idea of a village, the village committee followed quickly. It was easy to make sense of this in our world, where participants were required to make decisions and also allowed for greater agency and character to be developed if the appetite to do so existed. A committee table became vital and this set-up allowed for a sense of community and a democratic approach to flourish. This 'feeling part of something', being on an equal footing and having a space where your voice (as a participant) was important helped to build group and community. Importantly for us it was all through the narrative lens of the world of Greenhive Green.

Bringing Punchdrunk's aesthetic and experience to the home

The most exciting and challenging thing about this project was moulding our practice to fit into this setting. Although we spoke early on about not creating an installation, we very soon decided that an installation was vital. As always, we strive to keep the quality and integrity and complexity of the worlds we create at the same level as any work the company approaches. One challenge was to create something which would physically allow us all to fit into the space and to embody a much bigger world than the footprint of the space suggested. In terms of activities and narrative we wanted to remain flexible and responsive, avoiding dumbing down based on unfounded levels of expectation.

This became a participant led conversation involving the care home and other stakeholders and ultimately our responses to how work was received by residents. The key to unlocking this project for us was creating a set-up where participants could be themselves, but had the potential to take on character. A space that was friendly and unthreatening, a place where you want to spend time. There needed to be an unfolding narrative that could be impacted and changed and challenged by participants, but that didn't rely on them doing this or even understanding it to be successful.

At its simplest the project was a nice space which we could meet in each week and share a cup of tea and do a fulfilling activity. On a more complex level it was a place where a narrative was unfolding, a narrative of which residents are at the centre and are the protagonists, a world of mystery and detail. The key was to create a sliding scale of engagement that allowed for residents to enter into the project at a point appropriate to their abilities. Importantly we always tried to put the group and where possible individuals at the heart of any decision that was made.



PunchDrunk Enrichments' Greenhive Green - photo - Stephen Dobbie



PunchDrunk Enrichments' Greenhive Green - photo - Paul Cochrane

Lois Weaver & Rose Court Care Home

Lois Weaver aka country-western singer turned performance artist Tammy WhyNot was in residence for 10 full days of activity at Rose Court, designing and hosting weekly 'Tammy in the House' workshops with the assistance of PhD candidate Melissa Bliss (researching digital technologies and ageing at Queen Mary, University of London), project assistant Hannah Maxwell and filmmaker Claire Nolan.

Impulse

Lois's performance practice employs a variety of workshop techniques focused on 'impulse' as a means to reveal desires and create persona and fantasy. For the residents of Rose Court, these methodologies were transmuted into gentle prompts for creative expression, agency and storytelling. The environment and materials were curated to encourage spontaneous acts of imagination and articulation of forgotten desires, ambitions and idiosyncrasy.

Space

On each activity day of the residency Lois and her team occupied a downstairs lounge, leading just off reception, opening on to the garden, and used primarily for group activities. The workshop room was set up around the idea of the Long Table, drawn from Lois's performance research project "Public Address Systems" (a series of open-source experimental formats for public discussion).

Rose Court staff would bring 8-12 residents down to the lounge to sit around a narrow table, allowing them to hear and interact with one another. The table was covered in a white paper tablecloth, with pens and crayons within reaching distance; participants were encouraged to write and draw on the table, as prompted and spontaneously. The table would also feature the materials to be used in the session, adding to a sense of anticipation, as well as materials created in previous weeks – pictures, photos, objects etc.

For each session, Tammy's 'fantasy wardrobe' – an array of bright and glitzy dressing up clothes, hats and jewellery – was on display in the room, and participants were welcome to interact with the items whenever and however they pleased. Participants would be welcomed into the room from 11am in the morning, by Lois as Tammy, Melissa, Hannah, and on three occasions videographer Claire.

Activity

Sessions began with a round of 'Body Hoo-Hah', a call-and-respond impulse game which even the more passive residents were able to engage with. This was followed by 'Tammy's Tiny Yoga', a series of gentle and positive movements and gestures repeated by the group. This activity encouraged interaction and collaboration between the participants and focused them on Tammy as a group.

The main body of each session followed a different theme and featured a different creative stimulus, but all of them were designed to encourage storytelling, imagination/fantasy and personal revelation.

Round the Houses

Using a pre-cut stencil, participants drew a house on the table cloth and were encouraged to illustrate it however they liked using the pens, stickers, stamps and pasting materials available. Tammy prompted stories with questions about particular memories, drawing from creative decisions they had made in making their houses. These were included in individual scrapbooks created for each resident and photos of the artworks were displayed at the final showing. Later sessions followed up on the houses, providing fold-out card versions which could be personalised and include a photo of the participant 'inside' the house.

Sending a letter

Participants were handed a blank envelope and asked to imagine who they would send a letter to if they could send one to anyone at all. Deceased family, long-lost friends and celebrities provided the majority of responses, followed up on by Tammy asking what they would say and why.

Hidden treasures

Tammy set up a tray of 'kinetic sand', a satisfyingly tactile substance, which concealed a selection of miniature objects (including a broom, a sewing machine, a newspaper, a piece of cake and a toy soldier). Participants passed the tray around the table and dug around in the sand – the actions of their hands was captured as video portrait by Claire. Upon 'discovering' an object, Tammy asked the finder what the object reminded them of and encouraged a memory or story inspired by the object; though after a few examples, participants no longer required prompting.

Porch Sitting

Afternoons at Rose Court were usually spent in the lounge, with the doors open, working on participant's scrapbooks and writing up their contributions of the day. Residents were welcome to come and go and engage with the creative materials at the Table, chat to Tammy and each other. Within and alongside these sessions, Tammy employed some of the techniques of 'Porch Sitting' to encourage contributions from the residents; the act of simply sitting together, musing on a particular subject, commenting on what you notice or wonder. This provided a more genteel, less results-focused conversational style, which allowed residents to relax into the workshop environment and each other's company.



Lois Weavers' Tammy WhyNot - Rose Court - Photos - Claire Nolan

Challenges

The personal nature of Lois's practice required the collaboration of a consistent, small group of about 10 residents. The staff at Rose Court understandably wanted as many of their residents to enjoy the workshops as possible and the need for continuity within the group had to be negotiated and renegotiated carefully. Additionally, and inevitably, illness, practicalities and moods precluded most members of the group from making it to every session.

Residents exhibited vastly varying physical and mental abilities, so it was particularly complicated to tailor workshops that would engage everyone all the time. It was necessary to involve much more one-on-one work than was expected before the residency and the completion of activities required constant individual supervision from all members of the team and Rose Court staff in attendance.

It was challenging for the artists to sufficiently articulate the purpose of the artistic activities as routes to storytelling and sharing of self. Rose Court staff were keen to encourage residents and there was sometimes a degree of pressure placed upon participants by care home staff to 'do it right'.

Further Research

The exercises developed with the residents of Rose Court have greatly informed Lois's research on ageing and desire, feeding into her latest project as one half of Split Britches Company – *Unexploded Ordnances*. During a research and development residency at the Barbican Centre in April 2016, Lois redeployed the methodology of the *Hidden treasures* workshop with a group of elders from London and New York – in this instance burying slips of paper with anonymous 'desires' written upon them.

Learning and questions raised

Learning documented in the artists' and observers' diaries is at a very detailed level, demonstrating the attention to the quality of interaction, materials, spaces and activities which all the artists brought to each workshop or meeting.

Reading through all the data and discussing it in our end of project evaluation sessions, we identified many 11 recurring themes which are listed below, together with examples. In this interim report there is space only for one or two examples of each.

The initials PDE Punchdrunk Enrichment or LW Lois Weaver identify the project from which each quote or example came, when this is not obvious in the text.

Finding a balance between ritual and change, the habitual and the special.

Introducing the Tammy persona was helpful. She created an exceptional moment or intervention into a usual afternoon of sitting in the lounge. (LW, Diary, Week 1)

...as Matthew wakes up the room, we get some proper "oohs" and "ahs" with the ritual of the change in lighting and the music – more than previously. (PDE, Observer, Week 6)

Communication with 'the outside world'

It is a unique project for Greenhive because we've never worked with a theatre company before and it's something very different for residents and staff that we'll be looking forward to. (Interview with Greenhive Manager 18/01/16)

The use of letters, invitations, thank you cards, photos from Blarford, phone calls from the Mayor, newsletter is a very effective way to bring elements of the outside world into the care home (even if these are imaginary). The residents felt special receiving invitations and cards - some residents framed theirs. (PDE Observer)

Leaving something behind/ presence beyond the moment

The newsletter, people love reading it. I go deliver it to the residents and many of them insist I stay while they read it. Peggy took it, and we read it together. She saw her photograph. They read and they remember. (Greenhive Manager, Interview week 4)

One member of staff was given a pink cowboy hat to wear around the home and through that let residents know that Tammy was there. (LW, Observer)

Bringing in pictures from the previous session is a good tangible way to remind people what they made. They all seemed to enjoy seeing what they had made. Residents sometimes felt proud and surprised at their creations. (LW, Observer)

The 8 panelled notice board (with photos and posters from each week's activity) showed: Where we had come from, Where we were heading. It served as a physical reminder of the narrative and the activities.
(PDE, Artist, Evaluation session)

Care staff relationships with residents

One of the carers was included in this exercise and she spoke about her son being her hero. It was moving because you could tell she enjoyed sharing this aspect of her life with the residents. All the residents also listened carefully. It spurred some interest from residents who then went on to ask about her son.
(LW, Observer, Hero's session)

We're looking at all sorts of opportunities that this might bring.... sometimes it's something small that you see in a person, which can actually help you to have a full picture of that person and provide adequate care to that person. You always find something new about a resident: something that they might tell you, something that they might do, that you never knew."

(PDE, Care Home Manager, Interview)

The one-to-one we don't have the luxury to do, but I think that was something Punchdrunk did have: a lot of staff around to help and support the residents one-to-one, and that is something we don't have when we do activities. It's quite difficult to spend time with one person. We have to think about everyone and make sure that everyone gets served. (PDE, Activity Coordinator, Interview)

Interaction between residents

Most participants came last week as well, so a better continuity. I felt there was a distinctly higher level of camaraderie, trust and engagement. People came in more open, and talked over each other less. (LW, Diary Week 5)

It was great to hear the poem read by a resident. Grace eagerly volunteered to read it out and did it beautifully. Residents listened carefully. This was a great moment as residents attention shifted from their own personal activity to somebody-else around the table. (PDE Observer Week 4)

Accessing fantasy/the imaginary

"Close your hands together and imagine there is something inside them"... most (people) were able to respond to this well. I think that having their hands cupped together and the physical element of it made it easier for them to access the imaginary. There was nothing tangible about the "imagine you had a different name" (previous exercise) and so some people had a harder time accessing this part of the exercise. (LW Observer Week 8)

In the first session Punchdrunk brought a map of Greenhive and Blarford. Each resident was given a copy of the image whilst they discussed the villages. Dixie entered the narrative as he said 'just got my feet wet' when discussing the river on the map. Similarly, Peter said 'that's a Blarford lady right here' – to one of the Punchdrunk facilitators showing he is buying into the fantasy.
(PDE, Observer, Week 1)

Recognition

Tammy remembers the residents' preferences and makes aesthetic choices as to what goes well with their outfits. It's the same outfits every week but she adds little different bits to it each week. Tammy is very careful to respond to their particular desires and tastes. She pays a lot of attention to things matching and to things being put on properly. There is care and value to these aesthetic choices. (LW Observer, Week 8)

Matthew began the session by introducing everyone. As he did this, he not only said their name and pointed at them, but also described where they were sitting "and welcome to Anne sitting between Lilian and Mike" for example) saying the name of the residents each time. This was useful, not only for the more visually impaired people but seemed to affirm the presence of each and everyone, over and over again. (PDE Observer, Week 7)

Validation

I was very impressed by this morning. They have a very good approach. Tammy didn't impose her idea. She wants to get the ideas from them.
(LW, Interview with Activities Co-ordinator, 18/01/16)

In week 4 there were some discussions about consent in the dressing up and photography activity. The facilitators were very specific on making it clear to the residents that they do not need to dress up and that they do not have to have their portrait taken. Even if they've all had photography and consent forms signed by family members Punchdrunk were very sensitive to receiving consent from them in that moment. (PDE Observer Week 4)

Controlled / uncontrolled space, formal / informal interactions

Porch sitting gave us an opportunity to be mindful in the project, to practice sitting with residents without a goal or agenda. It also provided opportunity to get to know them. Important to see them in their space and continue the Tammy character/session beyond the space itself. (LW, Week 1)

As Matthew wheeled Edna around the space to her spot on the table he named everyone else that was in the room that he passed - this seemed like a good way to give Edna a sense of the space and the people in it.
(PDE, Observer Week 4)

Matthew had his stool shortened to be more level with the group when sitting at the table. (PDE, Observer)

Like in all Punchdrunk shows there were many layers of narrative. Some participants connected and saw it. It was great to have the flexibility and to drop narratives that the Committee weren't connecting with.

Feelings! Emotional attachment. How do you deal with the hard things of life in a care home. Need to remind yourself of the context. Joyful moments are great – but you won't always get them. (PDE, Final Evaluation discussions)

The artist can be pulled between: making their own work, entertaining the people who have come, or facilitating the older people to make something. When there is silence the artist can feel obliged to entertain or make something happen. (LW, Evaluation discussions)

What could homes do to carry the work forward?

Lilian drank her tea and said how much she appreciated the delicate china. I think this is something Punchdrunk have particularly paid attention to throughout the project: the aesthetic quality of all the materials and objects used and presented in the space. It sometimes might have felt like it went unnoticed but I think that this rigour really paid off, as suggested by Lilian's comment regarding the china. (PDE, Observer)

Both residencies attempted to build on what was done in the previous session – whilst the activity was different and it wasn't crucial for the residents' to remember what had happened before, there was a general "journey", "arc" to the residency which worked towards something bigger and larger and built on themes and stories explored in previous weeks. Perhaps there is something about challenging residents and giving context. Some residents did remember and were able to access the different layers of the stories and themes explored in the residencies. Activities coordinators said they would try this approach of ongoing rather than one-off activities.

Residents in both care homes were given a "treasure box" or "scrapbook" with memories from the project. There is a physical legacy to the project. Lois also left materials she used in the activities, for instance the sand with hidden objects. Marie in Greenhive spoke about 'stealing' some of the exercises for her activities. At Greenhive, a committee of residents continue to meet on Tuesdays, around a large table, using the Greenhive Green chairs. The Activities Coordinators and other staff have used exercises from the project to stimulate new activities. The Committee notice board is still in use.

The role of the artists and their response to the care home

Key questions raised by the artists included: How much do you need to pin down? How much can you keep open and responsive to participants? How long does it take for the artist to feel comfortable?

The next phase

The practical experiences and learning from phase one of the Artists' Residencies is already informing our planning for phase two with Duckie and Upswing.

Follow their experiences on www.magicme.co.uk or [@MagicMeArts](https://twitter.com/MagicMeArts) on twitter

Further Reading

For information about Magic Me's other projects with care homes for older people please visit www.magicme.co.uk/downloads/reports and download reports: *Getting Everybody Included & Our Generations*

To learn more about arts projects within care homes run by other organisations and artists visit: www.ageofcreativity.co.uk

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