THE EXPERIENCE AND VALUE OF LIVE ART: WHAT CAN MAKING AND EDITING FILM TELL US?
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Executive summary

The project aimed to explore what making and editing film might add to an ethnographic study of young people’s participation in live art. We offered participants the opportunity to author an extended visual representation of their experiences and to curate an art exhibit.

The project was structured as a typical gallery education offer of two workshops - dance and film-editing. The dance workshop was conducted by Sara Wookey, and was filmed by Camilla Robinson. Fourteen young people volunteered for the workshop and the research. We participated in the dance workshop taking notes, photos and recording conversations.

Young people found the dance workshop highly engaging and physically challenging. Based in part on Yvonne Rainer’s Trio A, the workshop used everyday movements to offer a ‘choreographic palette’ of space, pace, level, gaze and pattern. Young people were challenged by exercises which required them to annotate movement sequences they had invented and to interpret other people’s annotations. They reported highly valuing the sociality of the experience, the haptic learning, and the opportunity to make the gallery a temporary ‘home’.

Eight young people chose to attend the subsequent film editing workshops which we attended as observers. They made individual films which reproduced the hypnotic movements, the social interaction and moments of reflection of the dance workshop, demonstrating the transfer of the choreographic palette to that of film.

Audiences have found the films somewhat perplexing to interpret. However we see them as artistic statements which convey the ‘feel’ and ‘learning’ of the choreographic experience. We see making and editing film as having the potential to inform gallery education, a means of demonstrating the value placed on learning in gallery contexts, and as part of a representational research repertoire. The film preserves the memory of the workshop and is thus also available for further reworking/remembering/reknowing.
THE REPORT

Our project addressed the AHRC Cultural Value programme’s interest in methodologies to investigate, document and represent cultural experience and its perceived values. It built on existing best practice in Tate in working with young people, and took advantage of the museum’s experience in supporting live- or performance- art.

This report tells the story of the project and of our initial analysis of what we have learnt. We also include in the report images from the project, and ‘breakout boxes’ to illustrate some of our emergent ideas about the processes in which we were engaged.

Background to the project

We began the project with the understanding that there is currently very little research into the experience and value for young people of directly engaging with live art (namely making, performing and watching). While there is an established gallery education practice of curating learning encounters between young people, practicing artists and art objects/records, there is very little innovative methodological investigation of its processes and effects. For example, during the Undercurrent programme - a dedicated youth component of the fifteen week Art in Action programme launching The Tanks at Tate Modern in 2013 - gallery educators were sure that the experience was significant for those young people taking part. However, the programme surfaced many of the challenges of accounting for the value of this form of cultural engagement to those taking part. Existing quantitative and qualitative research methods gave rudimentary insights into participants’ motivations for attending and their levels of satisfaction, but did not provide an in-depth understanding of the nature of their direct engagement in live art practice. What was missing was a methodology that enabled the young people to capture, reflect on, analyse and represent their experience rigorously and authentically. It was this lack of a satisfactory participatory research methodology that informed this project, which offers a study of one form of live art, involving a dance artist, film-maker and fourteen young people.

Our project offers an innovative methodological case study. Rather than seeing assessments of value (in the form of evaluation) as something external to and only valid at the conclusion of cultural production, we set out to explore how to take advantage of the inherent procedural evaluative elements of the creative process. We deliberately brought together creative
processes and tools that have critical reflection and assessments of value embedded within them - namely live art performance and film-making.

A process orientation to evaluation is relatively uncommon within the arts. We drew directly on an AHRC funded desk study of the evaluation of performing arts which suggested that ongoing visual documentation as an aid to evaluation was worthy of exploration (Thomson, Sanders, Hall, & Bloomfield, 2013). We were particularly interested in how film might be used as a medium to document activities and individual and group editing and thus as a way to create fora for discussion and reflection. Film also serves as a medium to represent the experience to others and we were keen to explore this aspect of film too.

Our specific aim was to better understand and assess the 'live art' experience of young people by:
- enabling them to participate directly in the creation of a live art performance in the gallery
- trialling a methodological approach that is collaborative and allows young people to use creative tools that embed critical and creative reflection throughout the process.

Our objectives therefore were:
1. to engage with young people in a process of collaborative creative production within the Tate Gallery
2. to experiment with film, and specifically participant-led film editing, as a means of documenting and evaluating the value of cultural experiences
3. to explore how to represent participants’ ongoing experiences of the creative process authentically using a range of ethnographic and participatory approaches
4. to investigate the potential of vimeo (a social media video channel) as a mechanism for peer review and ongoing cultural meaning making

THE PROJECT

We made some key decisions about the project before and during its conduct.

The organisation of the workshops

We had initially decided to duplicate usual gallery education practice and to offer a combination of dance and film-editing workshops over an intensive five days. Our intention was not to have the young people shoot the film of
the workshop, but rather to work with footage that a film-maker had produced. Our rationale for this was that gallery education typically invites processes of reflection on activities. This can happen using a variety of media, ranging from discussion, working with found materials and working with participants’ and other’s records. We saw the film not as a participatory ‘shooting’ process, but rather as participatory editing using supplied materials. This is not the same as, and ought not to be mistaken for participatory ethnographic film-making in which a film is jointly made - from start to finish - by researchers and participants (Pink, 2001). Nor is it the same as the making of film as an artistic representation of research results (Leavy, 2014). Our intention was to use film as both data, as a means of generating other forms of data, and as a way of representing participant experience.

We employed two artists: Sara Wookey, an internationally recognized dance artist, one of five people who are able to work with Yvonne Rainer’s seminal composition Trio A and Camilla Robinson, a film-maker with a growing international reputation.

Discussions with the two artists suggested that our initial workshop plan was unrealistic. Sara was concerned that the integrity of the dance experience would be disrupted if participants were shifting from one activity – dance – to the next – editing film- each day. The immersive experience she offered depended on a long period of physical engagement after which participants had to live with and process the experience before coming back the next day. Apart from the fact that they may have simply been too tired to engage
in film editing, the chopping and changing of focus was undesirable. Camilla, our film-maker concurred with this. She too saw the editing process and something that required a longer period of time than the couple of hours we had allowed each day. For this reason, we decided to offer the dance workshop and a film-editing workshop as two separate but linked events.

Recruitment of participants

Unlike the majority of gallery education projects with young people which involve participants being brought to the gallery by adult leaders (teachers and youth workers for example) we set out to recruit volunteer participants using the customary Tate learning media. The workshop was advertised via e-newsletters, printed materials and on the website. The Tate Collective, a group of approximately 60 young people from 16 to 25 years old, was specifically targeted, and was directly spoken to by one of the researchers and the key dance artist.

Over 30 young people applied to take part in the workshop, with fourteen eventually attending. Written consent for participation and for filming was obtained prior to the dance workshop. Details of the participants are given below, with their permission.

Participants over 18:

1. Katherine Slee - History of Art graduate, limited dance experience
2. Yunshu Tant Zhong - Fine Art student, limited dance experience
3. Amaris Dixon - school leaver, member of Tate Collective, seeking to apply to art school, limited dance experience
4. Yasemin Alkan – dance trained, seeking to apply to art school
5. Megan Whitehead – university student
6. Holly Riddle - Fine Art student, limited dance experience
7. Carmen Gonzalez – university student, limited dance experience
8. Chiedza Masiyanise – school leaver, seeking to apply to university to become a psychiatric nurse, limited dance experience
9. Moira Salt – Fine Art student, limited dance experience
10. Jade Aitchison – dance trained, university student
11. Julia Alcamo – dance trained, university student
12. Danni Smith – dance trained, university student

Participants under 18

13. Santiago Arango – school student, interested in street dance
At the beginning of the first day of the workshop, the research element of the project was explained further, and young people affirmed their consent to be involved.

**Methods: dance workshop**

Because we wanted to know what the film-making process could tell us about young people’s experiences and valuing of a cultural activity, we had to be able to assess the ‘added value’ of the film-making exercise in comparison to the results of more conventional research methods. The first stage of our analysis was therefore to generate and analyse data through:

- our own participation in the dance workshop
- observation and field notes, including records of conversations
- project artefacts – annotations and manifestos
- reflections – posters and post-its about the ‘learning journey’

The artefacts and reflections are typical of material generated in gallery education workshops, while our participation observation and field notes are less so.

We also maintained a project blog ([www.valueliveart.wordpress.com](http://www.valueliveart.wordpress.com)) where we have recorded both process and working ideas about the research.

**Methods: film-workshop**

The film making and editing process was integral to the investigation of our three research questions, each of which was interconnected:

- What are the cultural experiences of young participants in a live art workshop and performance?
- How can these be collaboratively researched and represented?
- What methodological affordances are made available through the combined use of ethnography, participatory approaches, film and social media?

The choice of film, and specifically film editing, was an important element of the overall ambition for this project to trial a methodological approach that was collaborative and allowed young people to use creative tools that embed critical and creative reflection throughout the process. In other words we chose to involve young people in creative processes (dance
choreography and film-editing) that required them to make evaluative decisions in order to explore with participants how these processes revealed the value the young people ascribed to the activities. The resultant films represent an experience of the workshops; however they also raise important questions regarding the use of film as a methodological tool for capturing and articulating cultural experiences and the relationship between film as art object and as documentation.

The form and direction of the film workshops (and hence the final films) was informed by a number of pragmatic and conceptual decisions taken by the artist, the film maker and the researchers prior to and during the project. In the first instance, as explained earlier, the decision not to involve the young people in the filming of the workshops was taken in order to maintain the integrity of the dance sessions. We all recognized the importance of participants being immersed in the activity which would not have been possible had they periodically been ‘stepping out’ to film.

Second, during the pre-project planning meetings it became apparent that the choreographic concepts that Sara was working with during the dance workshops (specifically the idea of working within a given set of constraints to create a work as Yvonne Rainer does with Trio A, using space, time, repetition, juxtaposition for example) resonated with the discipline of film editing. This perceived synergy, combined with recognition of the constraints imposed by the editing workshop schedule, prompted the decision to impose a set of restrictions, most notably that the participants would be invited to work with pre-selected samples of film footage and with a set of criteria (the footage was all black and white, no sound that was not in the room and no music, no special effects apart from changing speed or reversing footage and each film to be three minutes maximum). In this way the idea was to take the minimalism and rigour of Trio A into the film-making process and in keeping with this a ‘manifesto’ was written up for participants to refer to during the film workshops (add photo).

The three all-day film-editing workshops took place in the Taylor Digital Studio at Tate Britain in February 2014. The workshops were facilitated by Camilla Robinson (the filmmaker who had documented the choreography workshops) and Tom Thistletwaite (a film editor brought in by Camilla) and observed by the researchers.

*Workshop three: communication, exhibition and discussion*
We had initially intended to stage a live performance in the gallery space to a public audience. However, Sara counselled against this, suggesting it would put too much ‘product’ pressure on participants. The dance workshop therefore concluded with a ‘sharing’ for invited guests. We were however keen to still offer some kind of public airing of the participants’ work.

We were able to secure the small Learning gallery at Tate Britain for a week. Participants at the film workshop were then invited to show their films to the public. In keeping with the ambition to collaboratively represent the experience of the project we had agreed that decisions regarding the presentation of the final films should be made by the young people, rather than requiring them to work as a group to produce one film. Whilst each participant was very clear that they wished to make their own individual films, it was their collective decision to show the films in the exhibition space as un-authored and in sequence as one film.

The film has had two outings in public seminars. Participants have all been notified of these events and at each event, some have chosen to speak about their experiences.

THE CULTURAL VALUE OF THE DANCE WORKSHOP

We focus first on the cultural value of the dance workshop, and then what evidence we had about how this was produced.

All of the young people came to the workshop wanting to learn about dance and film. Some were interested in both, others more in one than the other. The primary attribution of cultural value in a gallery education programme is therefore whether participants feel that they have learnt something worthwhile, whilst having a positive and engaging experience.

Learning in a gallery context may be a matter of learning new skills, but it is more than this. There is also knowledge to be acquired. Less easy to see and comprehend is learning new ways of being in and thinking about the world. Contemporary art often attempts to challenge or transform the way in which people see, experience and think about their everyday world and things that they might take for granted. Learning is often thought of as a solitary, individual activity, in part because education institutions assess it in this way. However gallery education is often profoundly social, and part of the ontological learning on offer centres on different ways of being together with others. The dance workshop offered learning in all of these areas as we now explain.
What was on offer in the workshops? What did participants take up?

The young people all wanted to come to the workshop. They had expectations of what the workshop would be and do. Their reasons for coming were not all the same, but they were all open to new experiences. The workshop appeared to meet their expectations in as much as they kept coming – one dropped out due to illness and another because they needed to complete an accredited project. We also noticed high levels of focus and engagement. There was no apparent lack of willingness to do what was asked. This included doing things with which many were not familiar and where they were visibly taking risks about ‘learning’.

We have identified eight areas for learning-as-cultural-value in the dance workshop:

1. The workshop was about dance. If the young people had not participated in this art form, then this was a chance to learn about or become reacquainted with the art form per se. If they were unfamiliar with choreography then this was a chance to understand what it entailed.

There were seven participants who had no experience of dance, and a two street dancers who wanted to experience contemporary dance. One participant reported enrolling in a contemporary dance class after the workshop. The majority of the group discussed dance and choreography with increasing confidence as the workshop went on. One participant in a post workshop conversation used the notion of walking as ‘not dancing’ suggesting that further conversation might have been necessary for her to understand that any designed movement might be included as and in much contemporary ‘dance’. 
Using everyday movement

2. The workshop was based on principles drawn from the work of pioneer contemporary dance artist, Yvonne Rainer, and the work Trio A. There was some cultural knowledge about the live art canon thus made available to participants, although it was kept relatively low key.

The participants learnt a small section of Trio A and also worked with her Manifesto. We have no evidence from the workshop that this led to anything else.

3. Sarah explicitly worked with a palette of choreographic concepts – space, pace, level, gaze, pattern – and how these were manifest in group movement. She offered both a specific dance language and its embodiment as action. This might be seen as learning ‘how to dance’. However, we suggest that because this was about ‘doing’ there was also the opportunity to be and become differently through and with this movement in the group. This haptic learning was not just about ‘know-how’ but also an ontological offer.

We have a considerable body of evidence about participants working with the concepts on offer. They were applied in hours of movement activity. We also have records of conversations in which participants used the terms in context reflecting on their experiences.
The most interesting comments were however about haptic and ontological learning –
- participants discussed the focusing that occurred through warmup – where it seemed that the body and mind became one, sank into each other and where thinking and moving were the same activity
- all of the participants talked about the kind of hypnotic effect of continuous movement and how this was accentuated when the pace was slowed down
Slow motion walking – both individual and as a community

- many participants reported leaving a workshop session and then experiencing being in a London crowd in a different way – they had a strong sense of their body in relation to others in the same space, and of the various movement trajectories. They were more conscious of planning their own path through a crowd. They were aware of people’s gaze and where it was directed.

I’ve been struck this week by the utility of Erving Goffman’s notion of civil attention/inattention, in relation to the walking warm-up. Goffman suggested that in public places we get from A to B by appearing not to notice what is happening around us. We avoid making eye contact with anyone, and direct our gaze to others only in as much as is necessary to avoid bumping into them. We want to get through a crowded space as inconspicuously and neutrally as possible, with no embarrassment, no accidental encounters. Our object is to appear not to notice or be noticed. This behaviour becomes second nature to us, Goffman suggests, and we are generally not aware that or how we exercise the social code of civil inattention nor of its effects – creating an apparently private impersonal bubble for ourselves in the public sphere.

It was precisely this kind of civil inattention which Tino Sehgal set out to disrupt in the Tate Turbine Hall during the Live Art season in 2013. Gallery visitors were not only ever so politely accosted by complete strangers, but were also confronted with the kinds of private revelations that are normally accorded to close friends and family. This challenged the accustomed boundaries of acceptable public behaviour. Perhaps there is also something of a disruption to civil inattention in Marina Abramovic’s current show at the Serpentine, where the artist makes personal, often bodily contact with gallery visitors, not something that is usual between audience and artist.
Sara’s warm up also made the familiar activity of walking strange. There was no A or B to get to, no Turbine Hall to manoeuvre, no artist to make contact with. The walking itself was the point. During the warm-up Sara called our attention to the directions of our gaze, and the relationship of our bodies to others in the space. Rather than a subconscious awareness of our bodies in movement in relation to others, we became highly aware of our own trajectories, highly conscious of where we looked and highly observant of the pace and directionality of others in the same space. Bringing us to a conscious appreciation of the usual way we practice civil inattention, engaging us in an act of civil attention in fact, was profound piece of learning for many of us.

Blog post June 18, 2014

4. The group was challenged to consider the difficulties of notation and archiving through practical experience of inventing movements, recording them and then having another person interpret their text. This raised abstract and political questions about live-ness and transmission which extend beyond dance to other performance art forms.

Recording movement

All participants enjoyed and appeared to understand the implications arising from this activity – it was both intellectual and embodied. Many commented on it and the difficulties of recording and interpretation in their written learning journey posters.
5. The group itself formed another aspect of learning available to participants. Participants were asked to work with strangers in small groups, making choreography together as well as individually. They were required to communicate, negotiate, show empathy for varying levels of skill and respect for different ideas and contributions. These kinds of ‘soft skills’ are often associated with both citizenship and vocational cultural value, but they are also seen within art practice as a relational value in their own right.

![Image of group discussion]

Group discussion

This appeared to be a powerful benefit arising from the workshop. Participants often spoke about the value of the group, of being part of a community, of being alone together, of being one. They chose to each lunch together, set up a face book group during the workshop and met socially outside of the workshop as it was happening, something most of them have kept up afterwards. There was camaraderie and a sense of togetherness. Most of the group activities proceeded smoothly, but we did record one instance where three participants familiar with dance were unable to include a non-dancer in their inventing choreography exercise.

6. Some experience of ‘performance’. Although there was no expectation that there would be a polished piece at the end of the workshop, there was a sharing with invited guests on the last day. This allowed the participants to appreciate contemporary dance without artifice, one of Rainer’s principles.
Most participants reported feeling initially embarrassed but then pleased to be able to share what they had done. The approval and interest of the audience was undoubtedly important in producing this response.

7. The cultural value associated with Tate itself cannot be downplayed. All learning is a form of cultural capital, according to Bourdieu. Through this lens we can see that this was a free gallery education workshop with a high quality artist in one of the most prestigious galleries in the world. The cultural capital accrued from such a workshop cannot be ignored.

The participants had privileged access to spaces at Tate and began to think of it as ‘their place’. However, the fact that it was Tate was still important. Many of the participants referred to the utility of having an extended Tate workshop, and subsequent exhibition of their films on the cvs. This is the conversion of cultural to symbolic capital.

8. Finally, the fact that this was also a ‘youth voice’ focused research project may have offered something to the participants. They knew that their opinions were important in the research and they may have had an altruistic sense of contributing to knowledge, something greater than their own learning.

This was significant to a minority of the participants. Five participants were happy to talk at subsequent research seminars about their experiences and one of them has spoken about herself on more than one occasion as a ‘co-researcher’. Five of them have followed the project blog.

**Processes important to achieving learning-as-cultural-value**

We observed five key process aspects of the dance workshop and these were confirmed in conversation and via subsequent document analysis:

1. The ethos created by the artist. Sara created a calm, generous environment in which both gentle humour, conversation and more overt encouragement allowed participants to get things both right and wrong. The workshop was highly structured, with high levels of scaffolding to allow those who were unfamiliar with dance to learn what was expected. While there was a strict framing for the overall activities, Sara was flexible in pacing and frequently negotiated with participants about directions and emphases. She had high expectations, but was also relaxed about
the kind of ‘product’ that might be produced to mark the end of the workshop. Her own expertise was readily apparent, but she was modest in talking about it, preferring to ‘show not tell’. She took the activity very seriously and was highly respectful of the young people: this modeled the kind of behaviour she expected of them. Through these processes, she established the disciplinary norms of dance without being ‘dancy’.

2. The signature pedagogical repertoire that was used.

- the warmup game created social bonding
- the walking warm-up generated focus, bodily awareness and haptic learning of the palette of movement
- annotation exercises allowed for the recording of ‘live-ness’ to be experienced and interrogated
- the manifesto introduced the notion that contemporary art including dance, has an intellectual agenda
- invention exercises encouraged and reinforced the notion that dance is based on everyday movement and that anyone can engage with it
- structured reflective moments ‘taught’ that it was important to consider and articulate experience, that there is more than just ‘doing’.

Sara led the group through a series of activities which began simply by walking at various speeds from one end of the workshop room to the other. New gestures and patterns were progressively added to the basic walk. As the patterns became more difficult, we had to concentrate harder on making sure that we could keep in time and to the new pattern – for example, walking while pointing one foot forward, back, back then forward and repeating this until we reached the end of the room.

Reflecting on the walking warm-up, it seems to me that:

(1) Walking was a non-threatening activity. The non-dancers in the group were all able to achieve what was expected. It wasn’t ‘dance’ which required prior training, unusual postures or actions beyond the capacities of any of us. It was an ‘everyday’ movement, used differently. It was inclusive.

(2) But it was also challenging. In order to actually keep to the walking patterns we had to focus intensely. Our minds centred on the movements. We became aware of the connections between mind and body – the oneness of them. We stopped living in our heads, and lived in mind–body. As one of the participants put it “You were situating yourself in your body”. Another noted, “You were just so focused on the movement, you weren’t thinking about anything else.” Our minds, to marginally mis-quote Yvonne Rainer, were muscle.

(3) Our walking was both alone and as a group. We were doing something that was simultaneously together and by ourselves. We were
however not isolated from each other. One participant said “We relearned how to walk... we walked past someone and noticed they were there.” The me-together activity produced a sustained feeling of silent sociability that, judging by the subsequent films and the discussion about them, was something everyone experienced.

(4) The warm-up activity was rhythmic. The rhythm itself was slightly hypnotic, it seemed to assist our concentration, it had something about it that was pleasing, an affect that was somehow health-full. Talking over the rhythmic quality of the warm-up with Emily made me remember a text I had read. Henri Lefebvre’s Rhythmanalysis. I’d worked with this theory a little before, but I can now see more reason to engage with it again, and more seriously.

Henri Lefebvre offered rhythm as integral to understanding space-time. Rhythm is the way we travel through everyday life. Together, space-time-rhythm constitutes the trilectic of human experience. Lefebvre suggested that life has quotidian rhythms which are both everyday and repeated, but also different in each repetition. The conscious experience of quotidian rhythms thus inevitably raise questions of change/sameness, contrast/continuity. This was certainly true of the warm-up, which was both the same and different each day. It provided continuity of activity but also signalled changes in our capacities to manage more complex patterns each day and to make our own variations in interpretation.

Warm-up was what Lefebvre would call a eurhythmic process that brought the body and mind together in harmony — and interestingly at the time Sara did mention Eurhythmics, the early C20 routine of physical activities developed by Dalcroze that were meant to signal good health. According to Lefebvre, eurhythms are part of the polyrhythmia we experience everyday, as breathing and beating heart for example. We are often not conscious of these eurhythms until they are disrupted, and become arrhythmic. Eurythmic movement however can bring these physical cycles more directly into our wakeful awareness.

And as researchers, Emily and I were certainly working as Lefebvrian rhythm-analysts, using our own bodies, participating in the warm-up, integrating our feelings from and observations of the dance workshop in order to understand it more completely. Lefebvre says that being a rhythm-analyst is like being on a balcony — both inside and outside at the same time. Working in this way, he argues, allows researchers to bring both the present and their presence together. As they feel speed, frequency and repetition integral to rhythms, researchers also understand human activities differently.

Blog post, December 31, 2014

3. The seriousness of the project. Participants understood that they were engaging with a canonical artist in a significant international gallery. They were curious about the research project and being filmed. They had a great deal of attention from several skilled professionals including Sara, an international and highly experienced artist, with a public profile and directly connected to Yvonne Rainer. Tate itself, as noted earlier, was important. It was not their everyday space, but become so on a temporary
basis. The ‘special’ nature of the project in a cultural space was frequently affirmed by curious passers by who stopped to watch what was happening. The sense of being on show, and having privileged access was noted by participants, as well as by one passerby who loudly said “This is where they do weird shit”.

**WHAT DID THE FILM PROCESS AFFORD?**

Eight young people took up the offer to return to learn film-editing. Of these two were very familiar with the film editing software package we used whilst the rest were inexperienced. Discussions with the participants revealed that for those who attended the film workshops, a major draw was having the opportunity to learn how to use the software and make a film.

As such the film workshops in and of themselves held value for the participants. Much as the choreography workshops afforded opportunities for students to engage with specific concepts with an expert practitioner, work together and engage in individual acts of creativity within a close-knit group, the film editing sessions provided more time with skilful professionals, another opportunity to be together, time and space to reflect and create memory and the chance to create a work of their own.

Observations and field notes made by the researchers provide evidence of the participants learning new skills and language, developing their art form knowledge and, perhaps most significantly, building on key concepts learnt in the dance workshops. Themes that were addressed in relation to Trio A were revisited and reconsidered in relation to film. For example, participants had already explored issues of communication, documentation and interpretation in relation to the Trio A film and the notation exercise they undertook. They had discussed and experienced how the act of translating an action from one form (dance) into a different one (in that case writing notes) requires interpretation on their part and on the part of the person who then engages with the notation. These discussions were revisited in the film-editing workshops with the acknowledgement that the film would add an additional version of the dance movement – there was the original, the notation, the interpretation from the notation and now the film of both the ‘original’ and the ‘interpretation’, which would in turn require further interpretation. In this way the film workshops offered opportunities for learning through reflection on the complexity of recording experience.

The film-editing workshops also allowed participants to revisit the concept of freedom within structure that had been dominant within the dance
workshops. The young people worked experimentally within given constraints to edit their films continuing the exploration of how to communicate within a set of restrictions imposed by a manifesto. Informal conversations with the young people as they were editing their films indicate that each person looked at the film footage and identified the moments that stood out for them either because of their memory of the experience of the programme or because of the way it had been filmed. Participants took different approaches to representing their experience in relation to these two parameters. One, for example, was keen to convey a very personal experience and therefore avoided using more abstract footage, whereas another was more interested in exploring the ‘tools’ (e.g. juxtaposition, time, repetition) to convey an overall experience. In all cases they were conscious of using the ‘tools’ to structure their films, drawing on the manifestos and Trio A.

Issues exist with the format of the film-editing workshops, not least because they were on Sundays which was off putting for young people. Equally it was a challenge for those who were unfamiliar with the software to master it sufficiently in order to be able to express and articulate ideas in the relatively short time afforded by three days.

A further issue raised by one participant was that it was challenging to step out from the total personal immersion required within the dance workshops to take the more ‘objective’ perspective that the film-editing process invited.
This was the kind of distantiation that we imagined the editing workshops might offer. It also supported Sara’s initial contention that it would be a mistake to put the dance and film workshops together in the same time and space. The fact that the editing was separate from the dance workshop in time was clearly helpful in getting some distance, but the actual process was in itself one which required a shift from the haptic to the more cognitive.

*What does the film reveal about the cultural experience of the dance workshops?*

Our analysis of the films has taken several forms. During the film editing workshops we held informal conversations with the young people as they were making their films. Subsequently we did a conventional content analysis of the final collective film which largely confirmed the understandings we had from our analysis of the dance workshop. We also interpreted the final film as text, asking what we could see in it, and this provided other insights. We have also sought to analyse the film in collaboration with others through showing it in three separate seminar events.

Each of these analytic activities has revealed different understandings about the cultural experience of the dance workshops. To us as researchers the films reveal key aspects of the process and what the participants valued, namely:

- The importance of the depth of the experience that was brought about by returning to the same activities. In other words, a vital component of the workshop centred on routine, repetition and ritual. The workshop did not progress in a linear way, but rather took on a cyclical momentum that had a dream-like quality at times. We see the films echoing this sense of repetition and dreaminess.
- The group was invested in a process within the workshops that involved open-endedness, exploration, individual acts of creativity within a group. There are examples of this made explicit in the films.
- The workshops involved a balance between doing and thinking at certain times – moving from being in the brain (talking and/or writing) and then going back into the body (movement), with both requiring high levels of intellectual and emotional commitment and focus
- The process was highly social and relied on the group working closely together, which in turn came about through trust, humour and a commitment to a collective learning process. We see examples of behavior that manifests these qualities in the films.
More broadly we see how the movement palette that was introduced during the dance workshops is translated into visual form within the films. We think that this shows mastery of the concepts being ‘taught’ in the dance workshops and explored in the film editing sessions.

Rules for editing: freedom within constraints

Overall we can see that participants have brought their own individual memories of the workshop to the editing process and conveyed through their editing decisions, what they most wanted others to ‘see’ about the way they experienced and remembered the event. The film editing also acted as a space in which they could recreate and represent, thus further (re)producing, memories of the workshop. However, when we showed the film to others we discovered that while some aspects of the film were obvious (sociality and concentration for example), most people needed additional information about the initial dance workshop in order to make sense of what they were seeing. This has led us to consider how and to what
extent the films communicate the experience and value of the dance workshops.

What is the status of the film? What can we conclude about methodological affordances that are made available through using film?

Some seminar participants have been concerned that we have not formally individually interviewed participants during/after the dance workshop. Some have also wondered why we have not use the individual films to conduct formal ‘film-as-elicitation’ interviews. We have pragmatic, methodological and ethical reasons for not doing this.

- Pragmatically, the only times we could have undertaken individual interviews was in the middle and end of the day. However, lunch time was the time when participants ate together without workshop leaders and researchers – it was ‘their time’ and was clearly important for group bonding, as we have already noted. And at the end of each workshop day they were tired, and keen to go home. Our view was that the young people had already made a significant time contribution to the research and we were reluctant to ask for more. We did have some time for specific group conversations about experiences, and these were recorded and extensively noted.

- Methodologically, we set up the project to be the same as the usual gallery education process. Our interest is in the transferability of filmmaking as a formative evaluation medium approach to routine gallery education events. We were therefore keen to see what could be undertaken in the usual workshops on offer without unduly changing their demands or practices.

- Ethically, we set high value on the relational aspects of the project. By participating in the workshops and engaging in ongoing conversations rather than formal interviewing we wanted to establish equality of expertise with the artists, and also less power saturated relationships with participants. We were informed here, not by participatory research approaches, but rather by critical pedagogies which seek to create more democratic learning practices – this is a common stance in gallery education (Addison, 2012). We believed that to impose formal interviews on participants would create distance and separation that ran counter to this pedagogical aim. This decision was borne out in one of the public seminars in which one of the participants suggested she felt like a co-researcher, and that she would not have liked to be formally interviewed.
A further key question that arose in the discussions with the artists, young people and attendees at the seminar events was the extent to which the films function as art objects as opposed, or in addition, to documentary evidence of a specific experience. Our view is that they function as both; the films are both contemporary art, as well as research data (although they do not resemble the more usual research social realist approach to ethnographic films).

In her book about scale, the anthropologist Marilyn Strathern suggests that it is an error to assume that the small is less complex than the large. Strathern argues that the difference between small and large is not a question of complexity but rather one of fractality. Strathern draws on on the notion that in nature patterns are often replicated (albeit not necessarily exactly) at various scales; both exact likenesses and family similarities exist between the very large and the very small. It is important, she proposes, to focus on the relationships between scales and the holes that these relationships create.

The idea of fractality is important to anthropologists and other ethnographers who very often have large amounts of data, but offer detailed analysis of a small number of particular incidents. In these cases, it is the continued thinking and analysis produced by immersion in the setting that allows the researchers to select incidents that are likely to be most illuminating – the most illustrative of the complexities and incommensurabilities of the larger ‘culture’. They also seek to find the relationship between the small and the large, but perhaps do not focus as much on the absences and gaps, the holes, according to Strathern.

Our study is small. It is not part of a larger data set per se, although it is one event in our much longer-term research engagement with learning in the gallery. However, we have found, perhaps as Strathern suggests, that this small project is highly complex and not amenable to simple answers, to one-best explanations. It may also be the case that the questions we are grappling with are the same as those that might emerge in a much larger and longer project.

This hybrid art/documentation status came about because:

- Participants were tasked with making a film that made visible their experience of the workshops. They were not invited to make an art film per se.

- However, many of the participants had some kind of art experience and aspirations, they had engaged in an art workshop and were specifically told that we weren’t necessarily expecting a social realist film.
• Participants worked under similar constraints to those they engaged with in the choreography workshops and were invited to use their creative and evaluative judgements in an experimental way within the given constraints.

• Participants worked with a film-maker who brought her expertise and creativity to the project and who engaged with the making of the film and the young people from the perspective of an artist rather than a researcher. She had already made a number of aesthetic choices that shaped the raw footage that the participants worked with (for example, keeping it to black and white), for example.

• Participants were asked by the film-maker to consider how they might bring the choreographic palette of moves into the film.

We think that the film can be seen as an extended ‘qualitative’ quotation through which the participants have expressed their views of the experience, using a predetermined set of materials. The use of extended quotations of participant experience is common in narrative research and in other forms of arts based research. In this case, the participants have crafted their own quotation.

It is generally more difficult for both researchers and audience to ‘read’ visual data and representations. This is in part because we are accustomed to the ways in which words and numbers are subject to framing, foregrounding and backgrounding technical manipulation and abstracting. Researchers and research users are still less comfortable with the same selective processes when they are applied to the image (Thomson, 2008). Add to this concerns about the more apparent open-ness of the image to multiple interpretations, and it is little wonder that this kind of research almost always raises questions of validity and reliability (Pink, 2006). We stand however with those scholars who argue for different measures – trustworthiness, verisimilitude (Harper, 2013), encouragement to take a stand (Lather, 2007). Our view, confirmed by discussions with participants and audiences alike is that something of the unspoken qualities of the workshops experiences are conveyed by the films.

We think that this is because the films function as art objects in their own right. They both give insights into a particular experience whilst simultaneously provoking further questions that require additional interpretation. They move beyond documenting and explaining the event or experience and resist easy or reductive comprehension. They work at the level of affect and multi-sensory knowing (Pink, 2009). Researchers who work
at the intersections of art practice and research are often working at these kinds of blurred borders.

However, viewers can, we suggest on the basis of formal discussions with audiences, immediately see both the sociality of the dance workshop, and also emotionally experience something of its pace and rhythms, interspersed with moments of reflection. If the film conveys this ‘beyond words’ experience, then it has ‘worked’. But there is potentially more that can be extracted from the film as text.

And as with any art text, or indeed with highly complex research data used as a representation of experience, viewers need to work at understanding it and they need to have some knowledge/scaffolding in order to do so. At the same time we need to recognise the complex, multi-layered, deliberately inconclusive aspect of the creative process and ask ourselves when the experience ends. As Tant, one of the participants who spoke at the final seminar stated ‘the film gives a chance to relive the experience, but it keeps me asking questions’.

Where to now?

We intend to reshow the combined film later in 2014. We will produce an exhibition ‘catalogue’ which provides some ‘thinking tools’ through which viewers might use to make meaning of the experience and imagine themselves moving with the representations of participants. In addition to a description of the workshops and their aims, we will produce more extended versions of some of the thinking we began on our project blog, www.valueliveart.wordpress.com.

The documentation, acquisition and conservation of live art practice is of increasing interest to art museums and has been the focus of an AHRC funded research network at Tate (Collecting the Performative). During a series of discussions as part of this programme, the issue of what constitutes the ‘work’ in relation to live art was repeatedly addressed. What can be legitimately re-presented when the original practice is ephemeral, transitory, at times relational? What ‘relics’ are left behind from an original performance and what is the status of this ephemera when it is brought into an archive or collection, for example? To what extent do these objects become the ‘work’ and, if so, how much is our understanding of the meaning of the work dependent on such material and our ability to interpret it after the event? These and other questions shaped a series of rich discussions between curators, researchers, conservators and gallery educators.

As a participant in the Collecting the Performative discussions I was
struck by how easily these questions could be applied to the learning experience in the gallery (itself an ephemeral, transitory and relational practice). It made me reflect on how challenging it is to represent a live event, be it a unique performance or a moment where learning happens. And, in the case of learning, how often we rely on the object, or relic of the process (a young person’s drawing, for example, or an evaluation questionnaire) to ‘explain’, or give meaning to what happened. Specifically in the case of an artistic output such as a drawing, we can see it as embodying the learning and knowledge of whoever has created it.

In many respects the film produced by the young people in this project is a key relic. The film is expressly intended to communicate the experience of the young people who took part; it is supposed to make visible the value of being involved in this creative learning process, hence it helps us to understand what happened. Other relics from the project include participants’ evaluative drawings, emails between the artist, film makers, project organisers and researchers, researchers notes, film footage of the seminar and so on. All of this material tells a story and assists us in developing an understanding of the experience of taking part in the dance choreography workshops.

As researchers we are tasked with examining these relics (or data as they can also be described) in relation to the original research questions in order to discover and articulate research findings. This in itself is an interpretive process, in some ways not unlike that of someone attempting to construct a coherent sense of a live art event some time after it took place by looking at the documentation.

Yet as became apparent during the discussions during the Collecting the Performative programme and the Live Art and Film making seminar we held on May 12th, the relics from a live art or learning event can take on a life of their own and function as art objects in their own right. In doing so they both give insights into a particular experience whilst simultaneously provoking further questions that require additional interpretation. They move beyond documenting and explaining the event or experience and need explaining themselves.

With this in mind it seems all the more important to preserve the relics from this project and bring them together in such a way that others can interpret them with us. In doing this we hope to build a rich and detailed picture of the experience, whilst acknowledging the challenges (if not impossibility) of re-presenting it.

Blog post May 17, 2014