

Arts Ability Abú

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Introduction

Text to come in

Frank and Patrick

A note from the project partners:

We have been working together supporting small arts projects in The Brothers of Charity Services Galway and watching them grow into wonderful developmental programmes.

We decided to put together a snapshot of some of the wonderful arts initiatives taking place throughout the brothers of charity services in Galway, we are developing projects on an ongoing basis and this is just a sample of some of the work we are doing.

Thanks to all the centres, artists, facilitators and service users who participated in this project, and also a big thanks to our respective organisations, who allowed us to 'work outside the box' a big thanks!

A big thanks also to the County & City VEC, who provide much needed ongoing teaching support throughout the services.

We have all enjoyed working on this and really look forward to many more truly wonderful projects, sincere thanks to Joe Murphy for his vision, he is now in Guatemala but thanks.....

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A way with words: Literature project

Carraroe, Athenry, Gort, Clarinbridge and Galway.
Facilitated by Claude Madec

The aim of this project is to offer people with an intellectual disability opportunities of engaging in a variety of creative writing workshops which are particularly adapted to their needs, writing experience and literacy levels. "You, can dream and wonder and ponder on the page, laugh or cry, celebrate your life and world with all its beauty or quirkyness... It's a poem, a song or a story... These creative writing workshops are facilitated by established writers, such as Kevin Higgins, Suzan De Mars, Mary Madec, in both public libraries and centres in Carraroe, Athenry, Gort, Clarinbridge and Galway. Participants will have opportunities to share their work with the wider public at public readings, Soundscape cabaret nights and through an upcoming publication.

Tope Centre, Visual Arts Project,

Ballinasloe, Co. Galway
Facilitated by Fergal Ryan

Tope Centre in Ballinasloe is a training centre for young adults. It provides programmes in personal

development, vocational skills and independent living. The centre offers trainees the opportunity to display their many talents through drama, music and the visual arts. This project involves supporting trainees to put on a public exhibition of their paintings in Ballinasloe. The co-ordinator is Fergal Ryan, a staff member, who has supported and developed many art exhibitions by trainees over the past few years.

Bruach na Mara, Visual Arts Project,

Casla, Connemara, Co. Galway
Facilitated by Brian Kelly & Deirdre Stephens

Bruach na Mara Centre in Casla, Connemara has a long history of involvement in the arts and produced a very successful puppet show with *Fibin* recently and was also involved in a joint music project with well know Galway Musicians, *Contempo*. They now want to give people an opportunity to experience the visual arts and aim to have their first solo Art Exhibition.

This project involves supporting 30 people who use their services to partake in an exhibition of their work in summer 2008. It will combine a range of arts including paintings, ceramics, woodwork, textiles and photography. It will be supported by staff members Brian Kelly and Deirdre Stephens and the artists will begin preparation in September 2007.



Poetry and Visual Arts

Rosedale School, Renmore, Galway City
Facilitated by Holly Mullarkey

Holly Mullarkey, a teacher in Rosedale School, Renmore, has been a strong supporter of the arts in the children's services of Galway Brothers of Charity Services for many years. Holly says that involvement in the arts leads to 'wonderful magic moments' for her students and permits them to go deep into their imagination and discover more about themselves and their world. Art offers a means of communication for people who cannot speak. Instead they use colour and movement to express their feeling and desires. Holly and Rosedale School, have exhibited their work in Galway City Library and have recently been fundraising for a new kiln which will allow students to explore with clay. She looks forward to having an exhibition of their work in clay in the future.

In the following words she summarises what the arts mean to her students.

I am an Artist

Blank page
Reflects back to me
Hand prints
Rushes splashing
Fingers smearing
Colours pouring
A mirror to my being

Costumes invite me to become someone else,
Dancing shoes free my feet,
Music frees my spirit
I express my uniqueness,
I am an artist.

Visual Arts: The Maples, John Paul Services

Ballybane, Galway
Facilitated by Sally McMahon

Eight people who attend the Maples in John Paul Service, Ballybane are getting an opportunity to partake in art classes provided by art teacher, Sally McMahon. Participants have the opportunity to engage in a variety of art forms and the programme aims to develop peoples' creativity, self-expression and interaction.

The programme began in June 2007 and already, it has generated great excitement among the group. A variety of medium and techniques are used to allow the group to explore new ways of working and developing their creative skills and abilities.

The social engagement aspect of this project cannot be underestimated. Participants love the fun and interaction which is generated during those hours when the imagination and art reign. An exhibition of the work will take place in 2008.

The wild swans of Coole

Apple Tree Centre, Orchard Services, Gort, Co. Galway
Facilitated by Mary O Dea

The beautiful poem 'The wild swans of Coole' ensured that the image of the swan would be forever associated with WB Yeats and Coole the former home of Lady Gregory, the great patroness of the arts. The swan is representative of beauty and transformation in the mythology of ancient Ireland and is an important symbol of our culture. Apple Tree Centre in Gort was drawn by this symbol to partake in an art project to capture this heritage.

Led by the programme co-ordinator, Mary O Dea, eight students, who partake in the educational programme in Apple Tree Centre set about creating a major sculptural project which will be enjoyed by all the community. The sculpture will be made from organic materials, such as turf, wooden logs and seeded with grass. This living green sculpture will appropriately rest in the historic grounds of Coole.

Apple Tree Centre hopes that the finished art piece will be a source of pleasure to the people of Gort and the many visitors to Coole Park. The swan will be on display in Coole from November 2007. The centre acknowledges the assistance of local artists and sculptors who provided guidance to the students in this project. Their work will also serve as an inspiring reminder of the valuable contribution of people with disabilities to their communities.



Name of Project: King Guairé and St. Colman and the flying dishes

Orchard Services
Gort
Co. Galway

Skylark Centre
Athenry
Co. Galway

Gort's first ever multi-cultural Arts Festival was held on May 27 2007 and proved to be a major success, thanks in no small way to the participation of two Brothers of Charity Centres, Orchard Centre, Gort and Skylark Centre, Athenry. The two centres combined to lead a parade through the town of Gort in which they depicted the legend of King Guairé and St Colman and the flying dishes. Two giant sized models of the king and St. Colman, helped to capture the attention of the large crowd who attended the festival.

As legend goes King Guairé refused food to a hungry St Colman because he required it for his banquet in Kinvara. St. Colman's requests to God for food won out, however, and as the banquet was in full swing the plates left the king's tables and flew to St. Colman at his hermitage in the Burren. Members of the Skylark Centre played the roles of St. Colman and the monks while Orchard Centre's participants played King Guairé and his soldiers.

Both centres prepared meticulously for the parade and made giant sized food and plates from paper-mache at their art and craft classes. The project engendered great excitement in both centres and 35 people got involved in the event whether in making costumes and crafts or partaking in the parade. Fortunately for all the day of the festival was dry and the parade was a riot of colour, music, salsa dancing and pageant with a wide variety of groups partaking including the local schools and community groups.

This event offered a wonderful opportunity for people

with disabilities to be part of culturally rich community event in which the diversity of Gort community was acknowledged and appreciated. Special credit goes to Dr. Niamh Clune, organizer of the event, who invited Skylark and Orchard Centres to partake in the festival. Word on the street was that it was Gort's best ever parade.

Gestual Theatre and 'Messing around' with Gombeens

Cois Sáile, Renmore, Galway City
Facilitated by Lorraine Robinson,

'We're the Gombeens, a troupe of troubadours singing with joy, storytellers up to the minute, jesters without a king but with the people, buffoons ruthlessly mocking and clowns ready to spread the message of universal laughter and festivity wherever it's needed.'

The Gombeen Theatre Troupe have long been involved in supporting drama and theatre in the Brothers of Charity Services Galway and aware of their success in working with people with disabilities Cois Sáile Service in Renmore asked them to develop a theatre project for them in autumn 2007.

Miquel Barcelo and Jonathon Gunning of Gombeens will provide a series of exploratory workshops in improvisation, theme based exercises and musical provocation culminating in a final performance in which the participants share their experience with the audience. Participants will be challenged to examine their communication methods by engaging them in a more gestual, musical and playful form of interaction. The troupe will explore rhythm, vocal and musical exercises, choral work mime and general comical play with the group.



Lorraine Robinson, VEC teacher, will co-ordinate the programme which will involve some students from Coláiste na Coiribe as well as participants at Cois Sáile's day service programme.

Self Portraits

Athenry, Co. Galway
Artist Aoife Kane

This project facilitates people attending Skylark Centre in Athenry to complete one or more multi-media portraits of themselves or a colleague and to present the work at an exhibition. The project encourages participants to explore the idea of identity, their own and others, by making images using a variety of art materials and media, an exhibition of work will take place in 2008.

St Clares, John Paul Centre,

Ballybane, Galway City
Facilitated by Francis Reynolds

This centre which is located in the John Paul Centre in Ballybane has two art projects planned over the coming months. The first is a visual arts project, exploring new media and will result in large scale paintings. The group are focusing on working with very large canvas and are really enjoying the challenge that large scale work brings to the workshop. The second project is a photographic project, again, learning new skill such as camera, angle shots, development and mounting. These will be portrait shots exploring the idea of identity, their own and others. Both projects will be exhibited in the day care building.

Deerpark Centre,

Ballinasloe, Co. Galway
Facilitated by Ann O'Donnell

This project involves people who attend the Deerpark Centre partaking in exploratory drama workshops. Ten service users are involved in this project, engaging in drama facilitation and performance based work. The workshops involve theatre games, movement, improvisation and dramatisation. This project is now in its second year, and will culminate in a final performance in which the participants share their experience with the audience

Fia Nua Centre,

Deerpark Services, Ballinasloe, Co. Galway
Students: Damien, Maureen, Mary B, William and Helena.

The involvement of the Arts Council to our Services is expressed in the following Verses.

ART, ME AND THE COMING YEAR

The first flush of Colour, It splashes the pad,
A flourish of Sunlight, A pat on the back,

Should I use my forbidden hand to raise a bridge
across a river, Or brighten the leaves of the Southside
trees.

Am I an Artist ? or have the muscles around my eyes
forgotten Colour.

Voices, Voices, Voices.

Mountains, trees, fields and faces are released from
the prison of shape and the burden of exposure.

How beautifully Art recognises the Wind, Flowers
breaking waves and Me.
Stones Rivers Animals Birds and Me.

Trusting the indirect side of Me, Respect individuality
difference and Me,
You and Me.



Soundscape Gamelan Project

County-wide Project

Facilitated by; Beverley White, Jonathan Reynolds,
Claude Madec

This Project will include people from Brothers of Charity Services in County Galway (The Skylark Center, Athenry, Kicornan Services, Clarenbridge, Deer park Services, Ballinasloe, Orchard Services, Gort, Bruach na Mara, Carraroe). The project will also seek the involvement of other community groups and schools in the Clarenbridge area .

Soundscape Music Project designs and delivers programmes that provide access to a variety of music making activities such as workshops, performances and recordings, linking people with an intellectual disability with other disability organisations, schools, community groups and experienced musicians.

Gamelan Music Project Soundscape Music project is hosting Gamelan Music Workshops lead by Beverley White, in the Kilcuan Center in Clarenbridge. Gamelan is an orchestra of percussion instruments from Indonesia that includes specially tuned metallophones (large glockenspiel type instruments), gongs and drums. The Gamelan can be played by people of all abilities and is a superb educational resource and a unique cultural experience. The workshops will be open to people with an intellectual disability and to other community groups and schools in the locality.



Guatemala-Clarinbridge Art project

Art has no boundaries and this old adage might well be applied to an Art project which is taking place between Clarinbridge and Guatemala, in Central America, in which Kilcornan Art Group, has taken an active part. Guatemala is a country of contrasts with stunning landscapes and rich cultural diversity but sadly due to extreme poverty and political instability, progress has been limited. So how did a group of people with intellectual disabilities in Kilcornan come to partake in an art project with a Spanish speaking community over 8,000 miles away?

The link was Mary Murphy, a renowned author of childrens' books, who gave her free time to teach art in Kilcornan Centre before taking up a voluntary project for two years in Santa Cruz del Quiche in Guatemala. Mary was a dedicated supporter of the Clarinbridge Arts Festival in recent years and the idea was developed with the Arts Festival in Clarinbridge of an exchange of art between and her arts project in Guatemala and Clarinbridge.

"Here, in the highlands of Guatemala, most schoolchildren, especially those from the under-resourced Mayan population, will never have an art class. They miss out on developing their manual dexterity, hand-eye coordination and fine motor skills (cutting with a scissors, stirring paint, using glue etc.). They miss out on art as a way to self-exploration, self-expression, relating in a group, developing a sense of their place in their world. And they miss out on the fun and excitement of colour, form, texture, and the challenge of new themes and materials. Their parents will not have had experience of art, so it is not introduced in the home.

In Santa Cruz del Quiche a group of children have 25 art classes every year. The classes are on Saturday morning, for about three hours. There are anything from 12 to 41 children in the class. For example many are absent when the families are planting 'milpa' (corn). The children love the classes, and develop to

varying degrees a range of creative and social abilities and awarenesses. Rather than generalising, I'll talk about one specific boy: Gaspar.

Gaspar is twelve years old, and from one of the outlying Mayan communities. He started attending art classes this year, with his best friend Ricardo, a very confident boy. Gaspar was less sure of himself, and constantly needed to check that he was 'doing it right'. Several weeks in a row he asked 'how to mix brown'. Finally I made him in charge of teaching others how to mix brown, which he did perfectly. By mid-year Gaspar was working away on his own, more persistent and concentrated than many of the other students. He was the only student in fact who attended every single class until the last two. He held his own more socially, and seemed more popular every week.

To encourage other zones to participate in the shared Clarinbridge/Guatemala exhibition, we ran a competition with the theme of 'Trees'. There were seven prizes of about 10 euros each, and Gaspar was one of the winners. I also wanted to give him another prize (a compass) for attending every class. However the second last class (which was also the prize-giving) Gaspar didn't turn up. Ricardo didn't know where he was. The next and final class Gaspar once again didn't attend. Again I asked Ricardo, who told me that Gaspar's family has moved from the community, nobody knows why or to where. It was hard for Ricardo, who has lost his best friend with no chance to say goodbye, and hard for us Europeans who expect more stability for children. I wonder how things are for Gaspar, if I will see him again, and can I get his prize to him? I hope that the confidence Gaspar gained during the year, and the sense of himself that seemed to grow, partly I think through his experiences in the art classes, will stand to him in the fairly precarious life which Guatemala offers to many of its children."

Mary Murphy, **Guatemala-Clarinbridge Art project**



Blue Teapot Theatre Company

Facilitated by Petal Pilley

Blue Teapot Theatre Company was founded in 1996 by Fiona Coffey and Claude Madec of the Brothers of Charity Services to provide a means to self expression for service users through the creative outlet of drama and the performing arts. Since then the company has created and performed many shows, namely 'Blue'; 'Cinders' and 'Lock up' and participated in community events such as the Macnas parades that have allowed and encouraged service users to tap their own creative potential and give an opportunity for social interaction within the Galway community and have as much fun as possible!

Today Blue Teapot has grown into two vibrant aspects, a community project that holds weekly drama workshops in Galway city and Outreach programmes within the county, there are 36 participants. It also produces once off performance community events. The theatre project has 6 core members who work with a director to devise and perform professional theatre which is then performed to both mainstream and learning disabled audiences alike.

December this year will see the first Arts Festival in Galway established specifically to celebrate the creative achievements of people with learning disabilities. L.A.F (Little Arts Festival) will include theatre, music, poetry and visual art, and will run from the 6th to the 8th in Nuns Island theatre, the Town hall theatre and the Ardialun House Hotel. It is our hope that this will be just a humble beginning and that L.A.F. will take on a life of its own for many years to come.

Next year will see us producing a new theatre show and developing all aspects of Blue Teapots creative output.

In my time as Artistic Director of Blue Teapot, I have observed of the Service users a huge passion and joy for drama and performance, and that it gives them a sense of achievement and valuable belonging - Valuable Indeed.