

# BEDFORD CREATIVE ARTS

## CASE STUDY

### Facing the Future 2005

#### Partners

Diana Matar, Leave to Remain.  
A Sense of Belonging, Creative Exchange, Helen Gould.  
Gill Farrington & Dawn Costello, Library Services.  
Christine Herrick, Minorities Achievement Support Services, MASS.  
Laura Pottinger, Alice Burns and Katie Walton and all BCA Team.

#### Description

The initial idea for this project started with BCA's ongoing relationship with the artist Diana Matar who documented the experience of refugees through portraits and testimonies. The exhibition, 'Leave to Remain', shown at the BCA Gallery in June & July 2005, was the culmination of 3 years' work. Matar's dedication to her work and in particular to her sitters demonstrated her sensitivity towards people's experiences. This grew because of her interest in exploring people's journeys and in her ethical stance regarding valuing her work and those who are instrumental to it. 'Leave to Remain' provided a platform on which to focus diversity and inclusion practice both locally and nationally.

Engagement with Diana Matar's work also provided an opportunity for BCA to support 'A Sense of Belonging' organised through Creative Exchange. Creative Exchange is based in the UK and is an international network specialising in public education in the role of the arts and culture in addressing social change. Their focus on educating about the importance of arts in society is a principle endorsed by BCA. 'Leave to Remain' therefore provided the

opportunity for a wider discussion based on people's experiences and their culture within an arts education context. Our aim was to visually promote the diversity of Bedford's population and raise the profile on work being done within three organisations. The intention was to celebrate the many different people who live in and around Bedford and we did this in partnership with Bedford Central Library Service, Gill Farrington and Dawn Costello, Minorities Achievement Support Services, Christine Herrick and the BCA education outreach and BCA Gallery teams. Both events were launched during Refugee Week.

BCA Gallery hosted an evening promoting 'Leave to Remain'. The aims were to promote the use of creative work as an important approach to developing understanding about inclusion and diversity agendas. It was also to promote the current work being delivered around refugee and asylum. Thirty five people attended the evening and presentations were made. Laura Pottinger BCA Director discussed 'Leave to Remain' and the work of BCA Gallery. Gill Farrington focused on the library services provided for refugees and asylum seekers. Christine Herrick provided a thoughtful reflection on current press coverage and the important role that everyone has to play in supporting newcomers.

The Facing the Future event in Bedford town centre involved raising curiosity by parking a bright pink Camera Obscura outside Bedford Central Library. This provided an interactive potted history of photography. One hundred and eighty-five people were tempted to have a peek and were greeted by BCA and library staff. One hundred

Facing the Future 2005

# BEDFORD CREATIVE ARTS CASE STUDY

## Description (continued)

and seventy-five people were encouraged to pop into the library to have their photograph taken. One copy was pinned up on a giant map of Bedford near to where they lived and a second was mounted on a small BCA Gallery 'ID' card and given to the visitor. The activities helped to showcase the library and new people joined and library tours were arranged.

## Numbers

220

## KEY POINTS

- Creative activities are about expression, communication and personal experiences
- Arts based projects connect us with identity and values
- The Arts encourage innovative approaches to working with others



# BEDFORD CREATIVE ARTS

## CASE STUDY

### Renaissance Employment Project photography sessions

#### Partners

BCA worker Joanna Clark &  
Renaissance Employment Project  
Leader Denise Davies

#### Learning

This project was the continuation of a project started in September 2004 to provide people attending Renaissance Employment Project with photography sessions so that they could progress from basic, advanced, post advanced to a volunteer course.

The advanced sessions were a mix of darkroom work and digital. The post advanced course was exclusively darkroom and the volunteer course aimed to give those who had a continuing interest in photography, skills to pass on their expertise to other people at Renaissance. During the course they explored the best conditions for learning. They also had time to learn basic Adobe PhotoShop techniques.

Three of the participants are now running small groups at Renaissance, another participant is using photography in the gardening group he runs at Renaissance and a further volunteer is helping to maintain the darkroom at BCA Gallery.

#### Reflection

The sustainability of this programme of work is still having positive repercussions. One participant continues in employment and in a short time is contributing to developments for that organisation in both customer care and technical advice. BCA is still in contact with the participant,

who is making a much valued contribution to the BCA Gallery darkroom.

In terms of developing different approaches to education and contemporary art, the BCA outreach team has developed visits to Tate Modern. Working with the Renaissance team has resulted in adopting this approach because of its potential for personal developments and continuing engagement in volunteering and in being creative. Their success has inspired all of us to continue to explore other forms of gallery education programmes.

#### Funded

NLDC (Neighbourhood Learning in Deprived Communities)

#### Numbers

18



### KEY POINTS

- Recognising positive developments and being proactive in developing these
- Valuing our partnerships and reflecting on what has worked well and why
- Sharing this good practice and approach with others

# BEDFORD CREATIVE ARTS

## CASE STUDY

### Shortstown Shorts

#### Introduction

People who live in Shortstown are affected by change as it is part of the 'growth area' and many new houses are being added to their community. Bedford Creative Arts worked with a range of groups in the existing community to produce photographic and video records of their environment and themselves. BCA Project Workers worked closely with specific groups, helping to develop their ideas and finding a way to present their views creatively. The main objective was to share with Shortstown residents what local people liked or wished to do to improve their environment.

#### Funded

Bedford & Kempston Regeneration Partnership, EEDA (via Economic Development Unit, Bedford Borough Council)

#### Description

The group of young people who used the skateboard facility as a meeting place and play area, produced large portraits of each other and worked on filming interviews.

The Chat Club mixed reminiscence with present day observations about Shortstown, on video.

Greenspace, through the use of large maps, photographs and digital imaging showed what they had achieved so far in improving the Shortstown environment and what their future plans were. Using the sheds and the Shorts Building as subjects they made panoramic images.

Shortstown Lower School pupils took part in the making of a panoramic display of the area as seen from their school building. The concentrated month's work culminated in a Sunday afternoon in Shortstown Lower School hall where all the visual work was on display. The variety of formats and

perspectives gave visitors plenty to look at and provoked long discussions about Shortstown.

Two of the young people who helped with interviews at the skatepark have become members of Bedford Creative Arts Young People's Film Club. The Greenspace group's panoramas and skateboard park portraits were exhibited in BCA Gallery Summer Re:View.

#### Partners

Greenspace group, Chat Club, young people at skatepark, Shortstown Lower School

#### Workers

Dave Deans, Paul Nicholson and Joanna Clark

#### Numbers

94+



#### KEY POINTS

- Recognising and developing local talent and interest
- Working creatively to overcome obstacles
- Working with ease across all age ranges
- Bringing local people together and sharing their vision