



# Arrival

## Evaluation report

### Summary

An external evaluation was carried out by Dr Paul Swift, Visiting Fellow at the Norah Fry Research Centre, University of Bristol. The evaluation captured outcomes achieved from the different perspectives, and provided a commentary upon the delivery of the programme. The main outcomes were:

- Achievement of main artistic aims (exhibits and performance);
- Pride amongst all concerned at the variety and high quality of materials produced;
- The sense of ownership by participants of their work;
- Improved concentration, engagement and expressiveness by participants;
- A strong sense of satisfaction amongst contributing artists and curators;
- A successful demonstration of how a group of people with high support needs can be assisted to use a wide range of public museums and galleries at relatively low cost.

The main factors influencing the delivery of the programme were:

- The commitment of artists and curators who were well briefed about the aims of the programme;
- The use of skilled, flexible and motivated support staff;
- The importance of consistency and routine in reaching artistic milestones;
- Good coordination, planning and communication between support agencies (and families), project staff and host institutions;
- The need for greater administrative capacity to relieve pressure upon, and maximise the contribution of, artistic and directorial resources.

### Introduction

An external evaluation of Arrival was carried out by Dr Paul Swift, Visiting Fellow at the Norah Fry Research Centre, University of Bristol and Associate of the Mental Health Foundation. The purpose of the evaluation was to capture outcomes achieved by the programme from the different perspectives of those directly involved – participants, their supporters, artists and curators, and

Outside In Pathways staff - and to provide a commentary upon the delivery of the programme. The evaluation was informed by an understanding of the aims and objectives of the project, prior knowledge of the group undertaking the work, direct observation of activities and events over the lifetime of the project and interviews carried out with people with an interest in it. The main outcomes are summarised under the headings below, along with some illustrative testimony from those who contributed to the evaluation.

### **Achievement of main artistic aims**

A feature of Arrival was the production of art in a range of media. During the first year the focus was upon visual representations of the river (drawing, collage, photography and filming), alongside songs and writing about the Thames, leading to an exhibition at the Sackler Centre in the V&A and the production of a book of the groups work. The second year saw a further accumulation of materials and development of skills in preparation for live performances of an opera at the V&A. Different contributors and participants expressed their pride amongst all concerned at the variety and high quality of materials produced:

*"This group like performance and they wanted to build another performance. It is very important that people have knowledge about what is their heritage and how important rivers are in terms of trade and growing of heritage, the growing of civilisation perhaps."  
(Programme Coordinator)*

*"She doesn't say much, but she really lit up when she showed us what she'd done".  
(Supporter)*

*"I'm amazed at how good they are. It's such a change from what they usually do at [day centre]."  
(Family friend attending performance of the opera)*

### **The sense of ownership by participants of their work**

The programme staff, artists and curators and supporters all noted how the group's ownership of the programme intensified as it progressed. This was witnessed in the improved concentration, engagement and expressiveness by participants reported by supporters and observed directly during sessions at the host venues.

*In the ceramics section. Study room locked so used public area. Half group drawing, half the group watching video footage of songs ("Boats on the river", "Roberto Calvi", "Birds")... Intense concentration on the films. Noticeable that the group featured on the film are much more engaged and participative in singing compared to [previous project]. Most involved are T, A and C. The opening beats of "Boats on the river" prompts several of those watching the film to join in with the singing. (From evaluator's notes, V&A Museum, Thursday 28/11/13)*

Participants also indicated a sense of shared ownership through repeated references to "our work" and a willingness to help one another; an important outcome for a group some of whom find working collaboratively unfamiliar and uncomfortable.

*"During the morning session the group have worked on some song lyrics for the opera score; these have been put together from lines the group had previously written and we are now deciding on the music they want to accompany it. This section of the opera is supposed to be*

*dark, so we've come up with 3 pieces of music to accompany the lyrics: Carmina Burana, Ride of the Valkyrie and one other." (Programme staff)*

*"I've known [him] for a long time and I've never seen him so engrossed in something for that length of time". (Supporter)*

### **The commitment of artists and curators**

There was a consensus among the artists and curators contributing to the evaluation that Arrival had been fulfilling and enjoyable. Many of those providing the artistic leadership were already well-known to the participants from previous OIP projects. The trust bred by familiarity undoubtedly helped participants to feel comfortable with the activities they were asked to engage with, notably the sung performances towards the end of the programme. Some of the artists and curators were new to working with Outside In Pathways and people with learning disabilities. One struggled at first to understand the overall objective of the programme, but quickly came to appreciate how his contribution fitted with the theme of the river.

*"I was brought into the project to try and bring some insight and experience into some of the days out on the river and on the various excursions that examined and looked into the river's history and traditions. Possibly the most interesting challenge arose when I was asked to address the group in some of London's most famous art galleries and attempt to explain what was going on in the Thames related paintings... It was always a pleasure to see how the group obviously enjoyed their days out in London and I consider it a privilege to have been able provide some small measure of help and assistance to the group and to the other helpers." (Curator)*

### **The importance of consistency and routine in reaching artistic milestones**

Asked to identify key factors in the achievement of the artistic goals of the programme, many of those contributing to Arrival identified the consistency of the approach as aiding and encouraging the participants. Supporters and family members noted that participants looked forward to Thursdays and the pattern that the sessions followed, from meeting up, visiting galleries and using the facilities such as shops and restaurants.

*"He gets really excited about Thursdays. When [supporter] arrives he flies down the stairs. His whole life revolves around his art and his music; he spends all his time in his bedroom drawing what's going on outside his window. [Performing] is wonderful, it's so stimulating for him, and you could see that from the way he was smiling." (Brother attending performance of the opera)*

The use of artists over period of weeks helped build trust and confidence, while the production of art in situ (drawing, cutting up, lyric writing etc) helped participants retain and develop the central idea around representations of the Thames.

*"We can spend a lot of time in one place, doing a single thing and sometimes it feels like you've not done much at the end of the day. But that's what you have to understand about working with these guys – as I have done for many years – you have to be consistent, have patience and you get there. Like [the collage]: at first we were just cutting up and you've got lots of interesting things – shapes and colours – but it's not until you begin to see the shape of*

*the river that the whole thing makes sense. Some of [the group] really looked forward to that.”  
(Programme staff)*

### **Exposure to new experiences**

A feature of OIP programmes has been the exposure of participants to new experiences in a way that meets the sometimes complex needs of people with learning disabilities. In this sense, Arrival differed from some previous programmes by both involving people with complex needs and in delivering the work in a wider range of settings. Approximately 60% of the participants have some form of autism which means that the combination of group settings, working with abstract concepts and exposure to new environments could be potentially unsettling. The few incidents of (mild) challenging behaviour were well managed and the programme design reflected the accumulated experience of Outside In Pathways staff in working with such groups in public settings: so, the routine and consistency of the groups’ “residencies” at Tate Britain and the V&A was choreographed with exposure to new venues (including the Guildhall and Bank of England that were not on the original itinerary for the project), new experiences, such as boat trips, and new environments, such as Westminster Abbey.

*“I’m so pleased because this [project] has brought her out of herself... So many different things... I’m a bit overwhelmed!” (Sister of a member of the group)*

*“I tell you, it would not have been possible for him to come to somewhere like this in the past and do some of the things they do.” (Supporter)*

### **The use of skilled, flexible and motivated support staff**

In previous programmes run by Outside In Pathways a significant amount of time was taken up with managing support staff often supplied by other agencies. Problems were experienced in getting staff with the right skills to meet the needs of the participants, who were reliable and who would engage in the life of the programme, which often entailed them working in new ways. Arrival has been able to draw upon a core of support staff skilled in working with people with complex needs, including those on the autistic spectrum. Support staff also displayed a willingness to work flexibly and to engage actively in artistic programme. Several of them spoke about the impact of Arrival upon their working lives more generally.

*“I find [coming to the gallery] really inspiring – I learn something new every time I come here... It’s interesting having the artists here, telling us about the paintings. Now I go and find out more for myself.” (Supporter)*

*“This is a positive group; there are a lot of really good ideas around. [Today’s activity] is not just about colouring, it’s about the individual’s being listened to, and it’s about what they see and what the painting means to them. I really do get engaged with that, but when I first started I wasn’t too sure if I was doing the right thing.” (Supporter)*

*“It’s challenging and different, very different from what I do during the week – working in day centres and people’s homes. I really have enjoyed it; it’s a lot of fun and I get a lot from it. It has motivated me to do things in a different way because I’m surrounded by negativity in my other jobs. This gives me a lot of energy for the rest of the week.” (Supporter)*

### **The welcoming attitude of staff at the host institutions**

One of the aims of the project was to forge new working relationships with museums and galleries that had not previously worked with Outside In Pathways and, in some instances, had little experience of working with people with complex needs, including autism. The Programme Coordinator commented that the acid test of success in this respect – one learned from previous programmes – was to be found less in the support of curatorial staff charged with promoting access for people with disabilities (welcome as this was), and more in the day-to-day responses and attitudes of frontline staff.

*“I was speaking to one of the members of front-of-house staff who asked me how often we come, and said it was wonderful to see [the group] enjoying themselves”.*

*“Food and drink have always been high on the list of things [the group] enjoy most about these projects. We’ve been using the new restaurants since December (the tented one has closed) and had a Christmas meal in the main, posh, restaurant. It was donated free by Tate, the staff there was fantastic, very attentive, and the group really enjoyed it. During lunch the restaurant manager came over to check everything was OK and said that the group could have cake with their afternoon tea.”*

### **Good coordination, planning and communication between support agencies (and families), project staff and host institutions**

The evaluation identified a key process factor in the delivery of the programme as good project planning and management. This entailed aligning the elements of transport, social care support, artistic input, catering and access to host venues. Schedules and work plans could be subject to change as opportunities arose and these needed to be managed sensitively to accommodate the needs of the group. In previous programmes run by Outside In Pathways, communication with the providers of participants’ residential support had sometimes been problematic, leading to non-attendance perhaps because the service had not understood the significance of the activity to the participant. Good clear information about the programme with detailed instructions about weekly activities reduced this type of disruption during Arrival.

*“I reckon it takes a hell of a lot of work simply to get them here – making sure everyone knows where we are going to be this week and can get there transport. Still, everyone knows what they are doing and considering the sort of help some of them need it’s amazing it goes so smoothly. We’ve had a few people like [group member] who’ve kicked off but everyone chips in to calm things down even the others [in the group]. I was worried that some would drop out because, you know, parents or carers don’t know how much they get from it. I know that has been a problem in the past, but the message seems to be getting through to home that they really like coming here”. (Supporter)*

**Paul Swift**  
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