



Creative Directions

Professional
development
programme for the
West Kent creative
sector

Future Creative



Creative Directions Report

Creative Directions was a programme of professional development opportunities run by Future Creative on behalf of West Kent Arts Partnership. The project was designed to support and develop a sustainable, resilient and innovative arts community in the West Kent Boroughs.

The West Kent Arts Partnership (WKAP) is an action led network of Arts Development personnel from the local authorities that cover Maidstone Borough Council, Sevenoaks District Council, Tunbridge Wells Borough Council, and Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council.

Project Phases

Initial Mapping

While the project was in its planning phase, Future Creative conducted an initial 'mapping' process, to find out the specific needs of the arts community in West Kent. The survey was designed to discover the geographical spread of where they lived and worked, the art forms that were represented, current arts networks they were involved in, how established they considered themselves to be in the creative industry, and where they felt their creative practice was most lacking. 38 people took part in the survey:

- 72% work independently from home.
- 52.8% carry out paid work in Kent as an artist or practitioner.
- 94% list visual arts as a primary art form. The remaining 6% represent music, literature, dance, theatre/drama and combined arts.
- 32% would consider themselves to be 'emerging' in terms of their current career position. The remaining 68% consider themselves to be either mid career or established.
- 77% consider themselves to be part of an existing arts or creative network. Of those, 30% said that being a member of the network was extremely important to their arts practice

The mapping process allowed Future Creative to discern what subjects needed to be covered in workshops, start to secure professionals who could facilitate them, and decide where the workshops should be held to allow easy access for as many as possible across the four boroughs.

Launch event

Creative Direction's launch event took place on 23rd June 2011 at the Camden Centre in Tunbridge Wells, with about thirty artists, local authority representatives and project managers in attendance. The event allowed Future Creative to introduce their and WKAP's aims and objectives for the programme, introduce the online social network intended to run alongside the workshop programme, and gain a better understanding of the creative community's needs and desires. The artists input their hopes for the programme, signed up for seminars they wished to attend, and networked with each other (for some the start of friendships that formed over the course of the programme).



Workshop programme

Between July and November 2011, Future Creative hosted a series of 5 free evening workshops focussing on the areas of development most requested by the members of Creative Directions. The workshops ran for approximately two hours and were held as twilight sessions; the time most artists indicated they would be available in the survey. Sessions were facilitated by business professionals and practitioners who are highly experienced in the subjects. As well being marketed to the members of Creative Directions, the workshops were promoted via local further and higher education facilities, Future Creative's website, and local arts networks such as Meeja Hub and the Maidstone Visual Arts Network. The workshops delivered were:



- **Project Management** by Alison Young (Maidstone Town Hall)
- **Negotiating, Influencing & Self Confidence** by Cathi Baker (Maidstone Town Hall)
- **Fundraising** by Duncan Brannan (Sevenoaks Kaleidoscope Gallery)
- **National Arts Policy & Strategy** by Dany Louise (Camden Centre, Tunbridge Wells)
- **Marketing and Promotion** by Mark Zaretti (Angel Centre, Tonbridge)

The workshop series was well received. Take-up increased as the series progressed, and there were 43 attendees overall across the 5 workshops. There was also high demand for further/longer sessions in the future. See Appendix 1 for charts mapping attendee's feedback of the workshops series.

Feedback forms collected at each session show that:

- 100% of attendees found the workshops enjoyable
- 91% felt the workshop has met their expectations, some adding "above and beyond"
- 84% gave the workshop facilitators 5/5. The remaining 16% gave them 4/5
- 79% felt that the subjects covered in their workshop would benefit them in their progression within the creative industries

"Just to let you know I thought the marketing workshop you organised was brilliant and that I am still doing the homework!" - Ellen Montelius, Fine Art Photographer

"Thank you for all the info for Creative Directions. I have found the two workshops I attended very well run and very helpful to me as an artist. Creative Directions has helped me to focus on priorities and the way forward for me for next year." - Margaret Barrett, Fine Artist

"I feel supported, whereas I didn't before" - Printmaker Niki Campbell, following the Fundraising workshop.

"Enjoyed the marketing workshop and am getting results from things that I learnt already."
- Portrait Artist Gilly Lovegrove

"[The facilitator was] very well prepared and generous with advice" - Printmaker Lindsay Connors at Fundraising workshop.

"I don't think you could have [planned the workshop series better]" - Joanne Weaver, Visual Artist.



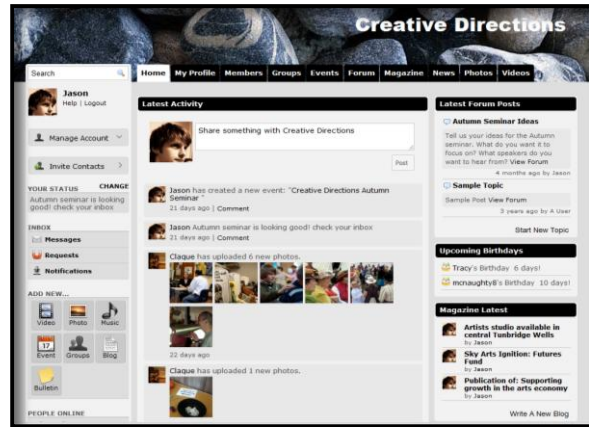
Online Social Network

As a companion tool to the workshop series, Future Creative created and hosted the online networking site -

www.creative-directions.socialgo.com.

Artists were able to create profiles, network, upload their work, view upcoming workshops, and advertise galleries and shows featuring their own work. As of this report being published:

- 27 members joined
- 78 images have been uploaded
- 17 events have been added



Final seminar

The programme culminated in a full day seminar on the 9th November 2011 which focused on understanding the commissioning process currently in place for public art. Workshops were lead by sculptor and Dragons’ Den winner Guy Portelli, published scriptwriter and consultant Claudia Leaf, and Maidstone Borough Council Community Development Manager Jim Boot. Each workshop focused on the commissioning process from a different perspective – that of the artist, the arts organisation, and the local authority. This allowed the attendees to form a more complete picture of what is expected of them when applying for a commission, and how to improve their submissions.

Following lunch, the artists had the chance to pitch their pre-prepared idea for an Olympics 2012 public art project to a panel of ‘dragons’. The judging panel consisted of Tunbridge Wells’s museum manager Jo Wiltcher, sculptor Guy Portelli, and Tunbridge Wells Councillor John Cunningham. The artist who presented the idea showing most promise received a £100 development fee, and was awarded a place in the final interview process for the £5000 project. Fine art photographer Ellen Montelius was awarded the development fee.

Feedback from the day

“Thanks for a good event.... I found the morning an interesting one with a range of different views from the variety of speakers. There was also great engagement from the delegates and it was interesting to meet some of the local artists. It highlighted the gaps there are in people’s knowledge and the importance of sharing information.”

- Tony Whitton, Kent Arts Development Unit



“Thank you for the time and effort you gave to us for the informative workshop yesterday at the Trinity. It was a productive day and I am glad for the experience. I even made new friends. It was a surprise to me to be shortlisted, but it has encouraged me to pursue my idea and work on refining it.”

- Ellen Montelius, fine art photographer and winner of development fee.

“Thank you so much for organising the workshop at The Trinity and the Dragon's Den style pitching session, which was a brilliant experience. I learnt a lot from the workshops and found each of the workshop leaders very knowledgeable in their particular fields, and helpful. I feel encouraged by the experience and although I didn't win the pitch, I am working on my proposal for the 2012 Public Arts Project which I still intend to enter, as I feel with further development it has some merit/worth.”

- Melissa Cochrane, graphic design and animation

“[I was] informed beyond expectations about Kent funding and Arts Council England. Well researched, informed, know where to go next and where to get support. Cannot praise higher.”

- Tracy Jones, visual artist

Seminar Feedback

Do you feel your expectations of this seminar were met?	Yes 79%	Partially 21%	No 0
Do you think the subjects covered in today's seminar will benefit you in your progression within the creative industries?	Yes 67%	To some extent 33%	No 0
Was today's seminar enjoyable?	Yes 86%	To some extent 14%	No 0
Do you now have an idea of where to go next in order to progress in this area?	Yes 58%	To some extent 42%	No 0

Creative Directions film

Future Creative has created a short film documenting the Creative Directions seminar, using footage captured during the day. The film will act as a legacy for the event, the wider programme, and can also be used as a marketing tool with a view to expanding the Creative Directions model as an offer to other local authority districts.

Watch the film at <http://vimeo.com/futurecreative>



Creative Directions: the wider context

The Creative Directions model was designed at a time when Arts Council England launched its new ten year strategic framework for the arts. The model supports numerous ACE goals, ultimately ensuring that more members of our communities experience high quality arts. In particular Creative Directions supports goals 3 and 4:

- 3: The arts are sustainable, resilient and innovative
- 4: The arts workforce is diverse and highly skilled

From the outset, Creative Directions aimed to support artists, creative practitioners and arts organisations in West Kent to value their own professional development and recognise that their skills are essential to the growth and health of the local arts sector.

Creative Directions offered a valuable opportunity to pilot a much needed programme during a year of change among local authority arts development departments. It allowed the local arts workforce to form a network, explore new collaborations and assess and develop their business skills. For the commissioning partners, it offered the chance to consider a longer term approach to artist development and to scope the expansion of the model in wider Kent.

Projection for future/project legacy

Developments in Ellen Montelius' 2012 project (seminar pitch winner)

"My idea is a photo essay on contemporary literary observers from Kent who are inspired by the ordinary and extraordinary of time, place and the human condition."

"I have been shortlisted for the second phase of interviews for the Diamond Jubilee, Olympics and Paralympic Public Art Project Commission. It is important to have a completed submission by the 9th January."

"I have already secured a venue to showcase the exhibition but still there is quite a bit of more work to complete to fulfil the criteria of the brief."

Desire for further sessions

Throughout the workshop series there were numerous requests from attendees for further sessions to:

- Take a practical approach, using what they had learnt in the previous session.
- Look in-depth at a sub-topic touched upon in a session
- Cover the same subjects at more length

Feedback also revealed the need and desire for:

- A workshop focused purely on using social media to further creative practice
- A further workshop on public speaking and presentation skills
- Collaborative work space and studios in the West Kent area
- The need for longer sessions, "at least a day" etc
- A CRB service for the self employed
- A child safety seminar.



Facilitator Feedback

Some of the facilitators also acknowledged the need for more time to share the knowledge they had. Facilitator Dany Louise reported back following her workshop on National Arts policy and strategy:

“Feedback suggests that the participants found it informative, understandable and helpful. There was a lot of discussion and 'buzz' in the room, which I take as a good sign of enjoying sharing knowledge with peers. It was a very full session - which over-ran in fact - which indicates that there was a real need for it, and plenty more to discuss! The questions consistently turned towards the mechanics of how to write a strong funding application, and how applications are assessed. Although I was able to give some information, time didn't allow me to go into detail. I had a strong impression that an entire session on this (or even two sessions, one theoretical and one a practical surgery) would be appreciated by the participants. There were also questions about how to evaluate a project and your arts practice; how to present your arts practice and approach arts professionals; and how to make the most of social media, twitter in particular.”





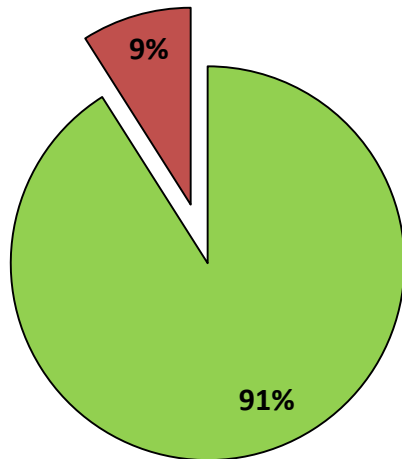
what if?



Appendix - Statistics

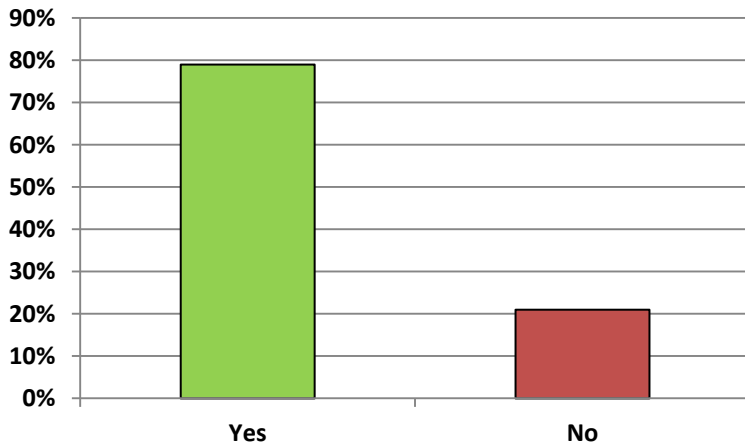
Workshop series feedback statistics

(Results represent combined answers from the entire workshop series)



Were your expectations for this workshop met?

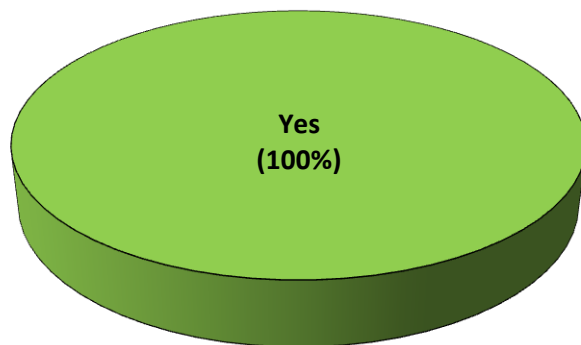
- Yes
- No



Will the subjects covered in today's workshop benefit your progression within the creative industry?

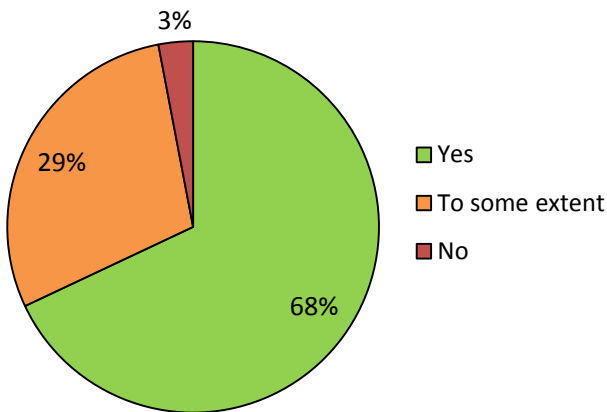
% of attendees

Was today's workshop enjoyable?



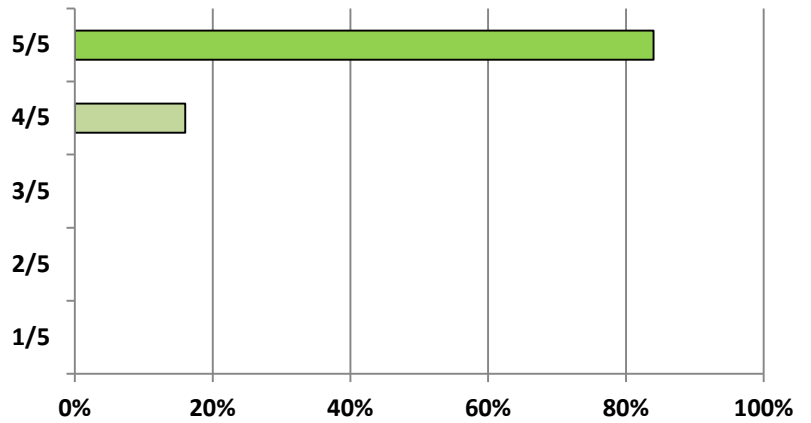


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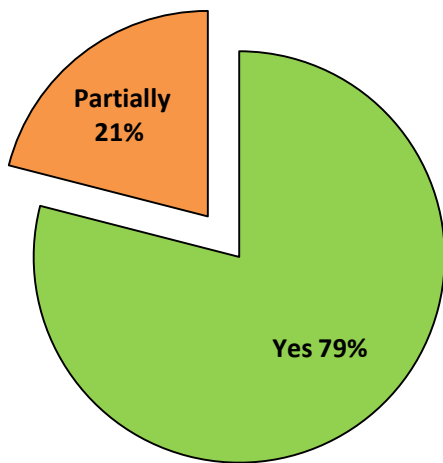
Do you now have an idea where to go next in order to progress in this area?

What would you rate today's facilitator out of 5?



(% of attendees rating)

Seminar Feedback Statistics



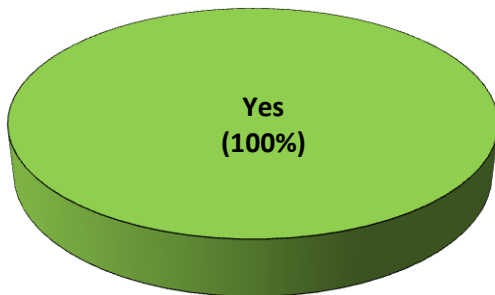
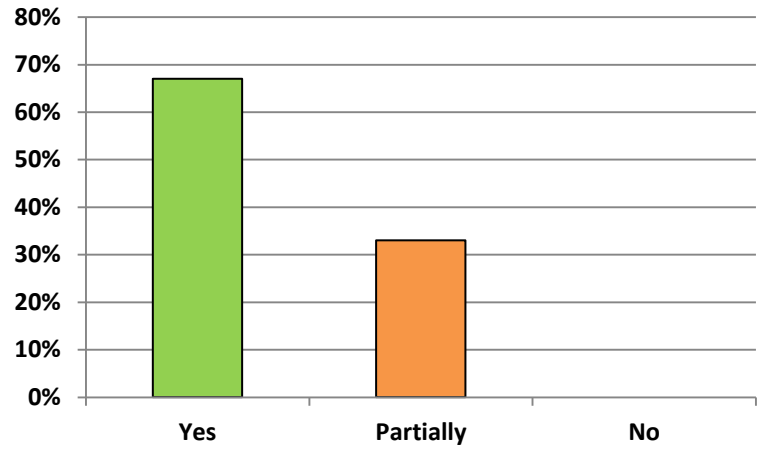
Were your expectations for this seminar met?



what if?

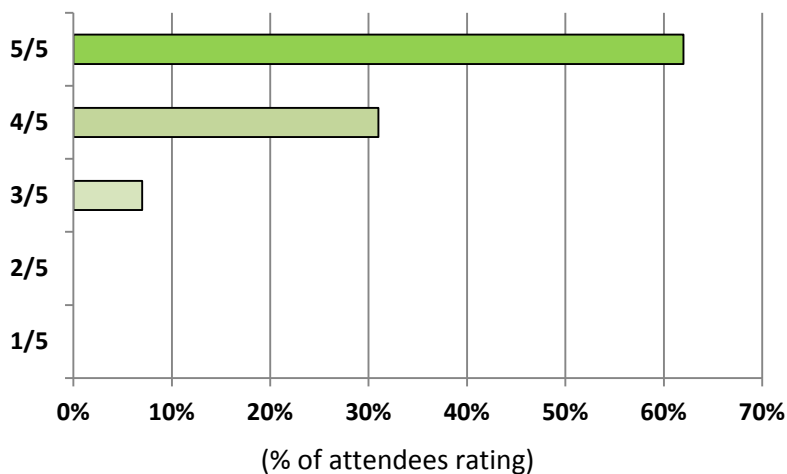
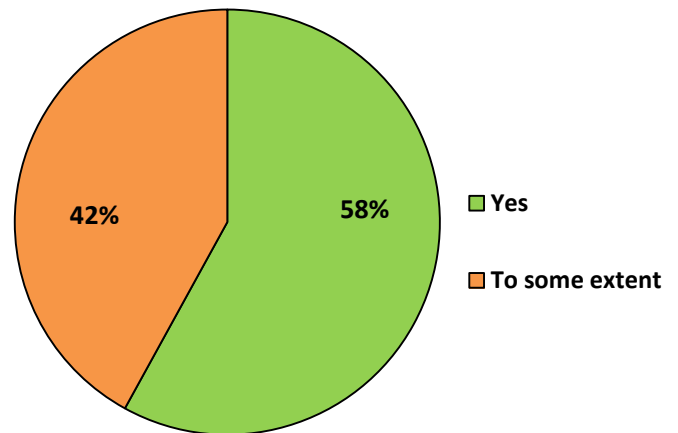


Will the subjects covered in today's seminar benefit your progression within the creative industry?



Was today's seminar enjoyable?

Do you now have an idea where to go next in order to progress in this area?



What would you rate today's facilitators out of 5?