UNLOCKING CREATIVITY

Annette Lucas in Frankley Library, Northfield

‘I have always taught – about 5 years after finishing my art degree I found that I really wanted to share my skills and enable people to participate.

I think it is essential to create work and develop my practice as an artist so I have made sure I keep that going alongside my teaching and residency work.

This is why I was drawn to the Frankley project – it allowed me to do both.’
Annette Lucas, Artist in Residence

What happened?

Annette Lucas was based at Frankley Library between January and March 2011, supported locally by Marion Chute, Manager of Frankley & West Heath Libraries. Her key aims were to develop the skills of local residents and school children and her own practice as a milliner and textile artist.

The residency was a joint initiative between Craftspace and Birmingham City Council. It is a pilot for phase II of Craftspace’s craft development initiative: Making Moves.

Annette worked with local residents, school pupils to teach millinery and craft skills through regular workshops, classes, social events and sharing activities.

She also delivered lecture presentations on careers in the arts sector to BA and HND from the Schools of Jewellery and of Textiles at Birmingham City University (BCU) and mentored a recent Textiles graduate who assisted during workshops.

The residency ended with a community sharing event and exhibition, with contributions from Bournville College hairdressing students and a mehndi artist (24-26 March 2011)
Annette’s residency was based in Frankley Community Library, part of an estate developed by Birmingham City Council in the 1970s to provide housing for residents of over-crowded inner-city areas.

The resettlement wasn’t always easy. However, Marion Chute, who has worked in Frankley for 23 years, observed:

'It’s got a very strong identity now ... because it’s a bit of an island set just off the western spiral arm of Birmingham City. It feels separate and people do feel as though they live in Frankley, so it’s quite a strong community identity’

'I go to town a lot. Northfield that is. I don’t go to the city centre.’ Local resident

Frankley is in the Longbridge ward of Northfield constituency. According to the 2001 Population Census:

- the population of Longbridge was 30,964
- 65.4% of those aged 16 to 74 were working or seeking work (60.4% for Birmingham)
- 40% of the population had no qualifications (37% for Birmingham)
- 24.6% of people were aged under 16, 57.7% were aged 16-59, while 17.6% were aged over 60
- the average age was 35.8, compared with 36 years for Birmingham

Since 2001, levels of employment and skills development in the area have since been affected by the closure of the Longbridge manufacturing plant in 2005.

**GENERIC SOCIAL OUTCOME: Strengthening public life**

**Outcome 1: Improving the responsiveness of services to the needs of the local community, including other stakeholders**

'Quite often we find that people who live here don’t always feel as though they can go on in the wider world and on to university... So a lot of what the library does is develop people’s confidence to do those things... to learn and grow and feel confident to go out ...’

'It’s very much softly softly ... in this library. We very often have to do things that we know that [residents] will come to... We introduced Annette but we did some basic craft sessions before, some family sessions. But if it looks remotely schooly, they won’t try it...

Marion Chute
The endorsement of Marion Chute, manager of Frankley and West Heath Community Libraries, lent Annette a credibility that, combined with her own experience and skills, ensured she rapidly gained the trust of local residents.

Marion Chute said ‘Actually I think the high point for me was after about 3 weeks: I came in and Annette had got a class full of kids and their parents all making and I thought this is brilliant because I really thought it would take her 3 months to get her feet under the table. I really didn’t think she’d be so dynamic about working with them and get people in.’

Outcome 2: Providing safe, inclusive and trusted public spaces

'It is great to see my work in another context. I have had my work in exhibitions, shop windows, wedding and craft fayres but not in a library setting before. It is attracting interest and gives me and the library staff opportunities to talk about my work and publicise the different events. The library staff have been great, really supportive and enthusiastic about my residency it has helped me so much.’

Annette Lucas’ blog post

The library is part of a purpose-built community hub in the heart of the estate, alongside the Children’s Centre, Frankley Community High School, City Learning Centre and a health centre.

The proximity of so many organizations is an advantage when it comes to developing community engagement, particularly family learning. To ensure that the organizations work to complement each other, Marion sits on the Children’s Centre Steering Group and maintains close links with the school and Learning Centre.
Following a successful bid to Big Lottery Fund Community Libraries in 2008, the library was refurbished to provide increased facilities for the community to socialize or study. Annette took advantage of the library’s community rooms and kitchen to bring residents and families together in neutral spaces. She noted in her blog (www.anetlucas.co.uk) that she too found the library inspiring:

**Outcome 3: Improving group and inter-group dialogue and understanding**

*’It brings everyone together and they chat with people they wouldn’t otherwise meet.’* Frankley library assistant

Marion and the library staff publicised Annette’s arrival widely, informing regular visitors, advertising on library’s information screens, in *Frankley News* and on the library-run community website www.frankleycommunity.org.uk. Word of mouth was also tremendously useful in encouraging people to join the workshops.

Extract from Annette’s blog:

*‘This week I have worked with another group from the community. Some ... already use Frankley Library; they attend adult education classes or a reading group.*

*...It did not take long for everyone to start trying on the hats and soon everyone was wearing something on their head.’*

*‘All of the work [in the library workshops] was done by hand and it was quite intricate. The great thing about it was that everyone helped each other, threading needles, starting off, adding decoration etc and all the time there was chatter about past sewing experiences, at school, at home, and the type of things that were made.’*

Annette Lucas’ blog, 7 February 2011

*‘The local Police Community Support Officer joined [3] of the sessions. She ... made a fascinator but also was able to do some of her policing work too in a new context. Very good arrangement for everyone.’*

Annette Lucas in interview, 11 April 2011
KEY FINDINGS: Library-based craft classes and coffee mornings

Annette’s workshops were deliberately informal and sociable, bringing together residents of all ages and backgrounds.

- 44% of participants were aged between 26 and 45 years; 42% were aged 46 and over; 4% were over 81 years old
- 81% of participants were female
- 15% had a long-term illness, health problem or disability which limits daily activities
- 78% were of White British ethnic origin; 4% were Asian, 4% were White other and 4% were of mixed heritage

‘I enjoyed today, very relaxing’
‘I really enjoyed ... meeting different people’
‘Brilliant, informative, fun’
‘Very enjoyable, fun friendly atmosphere’

Feedback from class participants

| No of workshops | 12 |
| No of regular Thursday Morning class members | 22 |
| No of individual engagements/repeat visits | 101 |
| % of class members from Adult Education group | 2% |
| % of class members from Toddler Group | 5% |
| % of class members from Reading Group | 1% |
| % of class members from Craft Group | 3% |
| % of class members not otherwise attending library groups | 2% |

| Asked to describe the best thing about the classes, respondents said |
| Meeting other people | 88% |
| New skills | 50% |
| The tutor | 25% |

‘Making friends and learning new skills’
‘The teacher is so good and has patience to explain things’
‘The social side and no cost involved’
‘Learning new skills and meeting new people’
‘Meeting different people...the lady who teaches us is very good and understanding and helpful’
KEY FINDINGS: Frankley Community High School classes and family sharing event

Marion Chute: ‘I introduced Annette to [Frankley Community School’s] art dept really early on and they were so enthusiastic... They were able to get the parents working with the kids within 2 weeks which was outstanding’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year 10 Art Class Groups 1&amp;2</th>
<th>26</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Year 7, 8 &amp; 9 Family Sharing Activity</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What did you think of the artist's talk?
- Great: 67%
- Good: 31%

What did you think of the work the artist asked you to do?
- Great: 60%
- Good: 33%

‘Lady is very nice and very pleasant. Explained everything to a tee’
‘She spent time helping and encouraging the children’
Feedback from classes with year 10 pupils

‘Describe something good that has happened in today’s session: Doing art with my parents’
‘The best thing is having Dad here with me’
‘The boys and their dads made corsages for their mums, wives and sisters’
Prudence, graduate intern
Feedback from the Year 7, 8 & 9 Family Sharing Activity

**GENERIC LEARNING OUTCOME: Skills**

S3. Communication skills – writing, speaking, listening...
S4. Physical skills – running, dancing, manipulation, making...

88% of participants had no millinery skills when they joined the workshops
50% of the participants in the library workshops said that the best thing about the activity was learning new skills:
‘I have never sewn anything before but I am pleased with this. I’m going to give it to my mum to wear at my wedding’. Local participant

Prudence Collins, a recent graduate from the Birmingham City University School of Textiles, applied for the residency’s graduate placement because she wanted to develop her practical technique.
‘I’ve really taken advantage of having access to Annette’s expertise, being able to practice at home and come in and say ‘what have I done wrong’. Millinery – I’d never had chance to work with a professional before and I wanted to exploit that.’
However, she found that she also developed her own teaching and communication skills. She had previously worked with a Guide company composed of young people with disabilities. This was a different matter: ‘It’s been quite interesting, having not taught adults before, standing in the room and talking to them, it was a bit daunting, especially the group that had been together for 6 weeks before I got in. But it was OK once I got the confidence together.’

Although Annette has been teaching and working as a milliner for a number of years, a major motivation was the free access she was granted to the technical resources at the City Learning Centre based above the Community High School:

‘I have had access to and training in the use of digital sewing machines, laser cutting tools and other digital design resources that I’ve not used before and which has inspired my practice, moving me to try new techniques and styles...

...’It has changed my approaches to pattern and the repetition of shape because I can reproduce pattern more easily using digital resources than I can by hand.’

Samples of experimental work completed by Annette using City Learning Centre equipment

**GENERIC LEARNING OUTCOME: Knowledge & understanding**

K&U 2.d. Learning facts or information about myself, my family, my community, the wider world

‘It’s been a real privilege and made a huge difference to the direction of my own work... I have had a platform for my work with a very varied group of people who have ... given honest and constructive feedback which has helped shape my designs for the coming season’

Annette Lucas

Annette delivered presentations to design undergraduates at Birmingham City University’s Schools of Textiles and Jewellery, which focussed on building a career in the creative sector. Students valued this insight:
How would you rate the introduction to the characteristics of an entrepreneur?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rate</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>great</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>good</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

How would you rate the information on becoming self employed?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rate</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>great</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>good</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

How would you rate the young entrepreneurs’ case studies?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rate</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>great</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>good</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Feedback from the Year 10 pupils indicated that they too were thirsty to learn how to progress as a professional maker:

[The best thing?] ‘Knowing how the artist became a hat maker’
‘The story of how she got to where she is.’
‘Finding out about how she got where she is now’

**GENERIC LEARNING OUTCOME:**
Enjoyment, inspiration & creativity

**EIC 5. Exploration, experimentation and making**

**Enjoyment levels were high, which was reflected by the high retention rate.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Enjoyment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>% of respondents rating activity as ‘Very Enjoyable’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of respondents rating activity as ‘Excellent’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of respondents rating activity as ‘Good’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

‘I really enjoyed doing different things with different materials and textures’
‘I find it is very good, very interesting, very rewarding. It is better than I expected’
‘I really enjoyed the course and learned something new each week’
‘Brilliant, really enjoyed myself’

**Repeat attendances**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Repeat attendances</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>% of class members attending 3 or more sessions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of class members attending 5 or more sessions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

‘I just worked out how to finish the end of the cotton myself. I’m really impressed with myself and I’m learning from my own mistakes. I’m not a natural sewer but this is good. I’ll be a seamstress next week’, workshop participant

Annette used humour to reach out to participants and encouraged them to do the same.

‘The Year 10 students tried on a variety of hats while I talked to them about hat making and head decorations. It is very good to see how wearing a hat makes everything more fun...’

... There is always someone in the group who wears a hat in a silly or funny way that makes everyone laugh and very quickly the ice is broken. It gives them confidence:’
"I am ready to go out now, I could wear this outside" and "I love the fascinators they make me think about the summer, I want to get dressed up."

Annette Lucas' blog, 20 February 2011

Impressed by the intricacy of the hats and fascinators, participants were delighted to find that they could quickly master the basic skills:

[The best thing was] Finding out how easy it was making the brooch, school pupil

'I have never sewn anything before but I am pleased with this. I’m going to give it to my mum to wear at my wedding' workshop participant

Feedback from Frankley High School pupils:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What did you think of the examples of work the artist showed you?</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Great</td>
<td>86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What did you think of the decoration you made?</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Great</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**GENERIC LEARNING OUTCOME: Activity, behaviour, progression**

**ABP 4. A change in the way that people manage their lives including work, study, family and community contexts**

At the Community Sharing Event on 24 March, Marion Chute announced that she had secured funding for Annette to continue the Thursday morning workshops in Frankley Library. 13 members of the existing group have signed up.

‘Some of the participants were a little wary at first but when they realised the learning was going to be fun and they were not being judged or assessed, they joined in and kept coming back’ Annette Lucas

As well as gaining practical skills, participants said that the workshops and the items they made had a positive effect on their confidence and self-esteem:

‘I was in Wilkinson’s and the woman in the till asked me where I got my brooch from. I told her I made it myself. I felt really proud being able to tell her I made it myself.’

‘Wearing this makes me feel good. I want to push my chest out, hold my head up and, you know, put my lipstick on’.

Throughout the project, participants have been inspired to progress their skills:

Participant: 'I have just sewn something for the first time'
Annette: 'How does that make you feel?'
Participant: 'Very excited. I want to do more now'

'I have never done anything like this before. I’ve done sewing but a long time ago. This has made me want to do more though' Local participant

‘We have to do a fashion show with accessories and so on, this has given us lots of inspiration because we don’t really get classes in how to make or prepare them.’ Bournville College hairdressing student
RESIDENCY FACTS & FIGURES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Artist in Residence</th>
<th>ANNETTE LUCAS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Art form</td>
<td>Millinery / Craft</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constituency</td>
<td>Northfield</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Length of residency</td>
<td>3 months (Jan-Mar 2011)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residency cost</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No of participants</td>
<td>205</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No of engagements</td>
<td>325</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No of sessions</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community partners</td>
<td>• Frankley Community Library</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Frankley Community High School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Birmingham City University Schools of Jewellery and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>of Textiles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• City Learning Centre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Bournville College</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

BIRMINGHAM ARTISTS IN RESIDENCE: project specific outcomes
The aims of these residencies are

- to locate artists within local community venues to create and develop their own work
- to develop participatory arts work with local residents in the host venue and another local partner in the Constituency
- To work with local partners to sustain and develop local infrastructure and to create new opportunities for participation through initiating new artistic activities, experiences and performance opportunities
- To raise public awareness of Birmingham City Council’s cultural offer both in the city centre and the constituencies

CRAFTSPACE: MAKING MOVES II
Craftspace initiated Making Moves in 2007 in partnership with Staffordshire Arts and Museums Service to create residencies for mid-career craft makers in non-traditional places to encourage new audiences for craft.

The makers are partnered with Local Authority Arts Development Officers and HE institutions in the locality, in order to deepen the engagement and to give the makers an opportunity to research and develop their own practice.

The makers will work with the HE institutions to encourage retention of graduates and awareness of careers in the creative sector. They will also mentor and be supported by graduate placements.

Annette’s residency in Northfield is a pilot for Making Moves II, which, in September 2011, extends the scheme to Warwickshire, Wolverhampton, Staffordshire and Birmingham.