

Skippko

Unit D13, St Catherine's Business Complex, Broad Lane, Bramley, Leeds LS13 2TD.

What is Skippko?

Skippko is a Leeds based arts charity aiming to transform lives and empower people through exciting and innovative creative arts projects. We use a range of creative art techniques, such as textiles, mosaic, print making, glass painting and collage to create a piece of group art work that can then be exhibited publically. Using these techniques and our facilitation skills, we encourage groups to develop creativity regardless of ability. Our process builds confidence, raises self esteem and allows people to learn from each other. We hope that by participating in our group process individuals will realise their full potential and develop relationships and skills within and between communities.

We bring people together through large and small scale workshop programmes, related events, exhibitions and training. Skippko's way of working gives the ownership of the creative process and the direction of the project to the group members themselves, giving people influence over the ideas they wish to share and how they are seen by others. This method has proved to be empowering for people who may not have the same control over other aspects of their lives, enabling them to grow in confidence and gain a huge sense of achievement.

Skippko Vision

To transform lives and empower people through exciting facilitated creative art projects, training and events.

Skippko Mission

To work with and empower group members through facilitation skills and creative art techniques, bringing people together from within and between communities to create a group piece of artwork that can then be exhibited publically. Through a facilitated process of workshop programmes, events, exhibitions and training, group members learn from each other, gain confidence, increase self esteem and develop new skills. Skippko facilitates the first step to change, raising confidence to enable personal progression when desired.

Skippko Values

- Belief in potential
- Personal growth
- Empowerment
- Creativity
- Quality
- Sustainability
- Passion and energy

Skippko achievements during 2007

Tall Tales

This 2½ year project for older people launched in January 2006 was Skippko's main focus throughout 2006/07. The project aims to reduce social isolation, to increase feelings of empowerment and to increase self-esteem, confidence and motivation in older people. We are delighted that *Tall Tales* has been awarded a Fred Moore Institutional Award from NIACE (National Institute of Adult Continuing Education) for innovation and good practice.

Tall Tales involves group members sharing their experiences and telling their tales in creative and unique ways. Twelve groups of older people took part in the project during the year, each creating a piece of artwork to be displayed. From a textile banner with an anti slavery theme, to film posters with a humorous twist and a fabric padded tree - the art works reflect the ideas and creativity of each of the groups. Many participants also worked in local primary schools, creating additional artwork and sharing their ideas and experiences with the children. The groups also had a chance to meet each other at specially arranged events, where they could exhibit work, receive certificates and access information on other courses and volunteering opportunities in the city. The project will continue until spring 2008.

Each individual project within *Tall Tales* was assessed through a number of methods: arts worker evaluation and SWOT forms, participants' diaries and evaluation forms and partner organisations' evaluations. In addition one person from each project took part in a more in-depth case study (a one to one interview at the start and end of each project) so that we could make a more detailed assessment of the benefits of their taking part. It has been fantastic to see the difference the project has made to the lives of some of the people we interviewed:

"I can now speak up and am the same as anyone else. I used to even dread saying my name in the group when we started, now I speak up loudly. It makes me feel stronger in myself. The group has improved ever such a lot and you feel so much better in yourself. I would not have said that before Skippko. I can do painting, drawing and crochet. I have a lot more confidence now." (Quote from case study C)

Victoria Park Garden Mosaic

Skippko worked with local school children, parents, older people from Bramley Elderly Action and members of the local Neighbourhood Watch Group to create a mosaic for a community garden in Bramley. The theme for the mosaic was the use of the space over time (past, present and future) as a rhubarb field, a nursery and then a community garden. The group used designs by all the school children to make the finished piece. They developed mosaic techniques alongside researching, sharing stories and learning about their local area. The mosaic is now a focal point in the garden and there is a real sense of pride and ownership of the space by the local community.

Fairfield Mosaic

Skipkko was asked by Fairfield Community Partnership in Bramley to undertake a mosaic project with young people and parents to create a sign for their community centre. A large sign was created for the centre, along with additional mosaic pieces to decorate the external wall. The project involved parents working alongside their children, to learn skills together and develop parents' involvement at the centre.

Milun Centre Textile project

Arts and Regeneration at Leeds City Council involved Skipkko on this creative textile project at the Milun Women's Centre in Harehills as part of their 'Route map' project. Artists worked at the centre over 14 weeks teaching and developing different textile skills before the group designed and created a textile hanging for the centre. Using very visual textile based skills was a useful way of developing this new group where several different languages were spoken.

Breeze International Youth Festival

In April and May Skipkko worked with young people from Agnes Stewart High School in Leeds to create four different textile banners as part of the Breeze International Youth Festival. The theme for the project was transience, moving away from the old towards the new without leaving the past behind, particularly relevant as the school was about to merge with another and move into new premises.

SureStart Harehills creative writing project

Working with a group of women who had limited English language skills, Skipkko used a visual artist and a creative writer to enable group members to build their confidence in using English in a group. For some group members the experience led them to sign up for other courses with SureStart Harehills (now the Children's Centre) as well as enrolling for ESOL classes.

Asket Croft Cue

Working with staff, carers and service users experiencing dementia Skipkko facilitated training and creative sessions. All the participants were pleased with the end result and the amount of work they had created. The activities worker at Asket Croft Cue continues to use some of the techniques with small groups.

Skipkko training sessions

During the year Skipkko successfully piloted one-off training sessions in 'Mosaic', 'Batik and Silk Painting' and 'Felt Making and Appliqué', this is set to expand during 2008.

Looking forward to 2008/09

This year Skippko is looking to expand and develop certain areas of our work, we hope this will include:

- Developing our volunteering programme through innovative project working and training.
- Using arts as the tool to develop play work in the Armley and New Wortley area of West Leeds.
- Developing intergenerational heritage work, using creative arts to capture stories.

Issues for 2008

- Skippko's biggest issue is always long term development of projects to ensure sustainability. As an organisation we are moving towards a more coherent programme of artistic work, and away from a series of unconnected small projects. Whilst small projects will always play a part in our work, as we strive to reach people in isolated and disadvantaged communities, we would like this to go hand-in-hand with a series of medium and larger-scale projects that will give us a chance to try out new ways of working and be a little more experimental in our approach.
- We have been informed that St Catherine's Business Complex is going to be sold for redevelopment, so we need to research, find new premises and move, whilst continuing to deliver our services.
- Larger Funding streams continue to decline and the level of research and the depth of project outlines required prior to submitting a funding bid is high compared to the average success rates for both lottery and trust funding. Sustainability is hampered by the limited number of medium and large funding streams that fund over several years. Successful work is not able to be continued once a project comes to an end as funders require new projects with a finite length of funding.
- Currently we average 6 to 10 different funders a year requiring different levels of monitoring, differing reporting timescales, different funding years (not always linked to the financial year) and whether they pay in advance or arrears.