Crafts Council
Make:Shift:Do Case Study
Colonnade House

Make:Shift:Do is a Crafts Council programme that works with makerspaces to co-create work with communities. In co-creation projects, people and partners work together to jointly develop and create, as opposed to conventional participation models which invite people to join in with the work of organisations or artists.[1] We recognise that true co-creation takes time to achieve; Make:Shift:Do projects are at different stages on this journey but aim to share their learning about the process.

The Space to Make project was initiated by Adur & Worthing Councils to explore the potential for developing a permanent makerspace at Colonnade House. A process of collaborative consultation was developed in partnership with community organisations Tech Resort (who provided equipment and expertise) and Community Works (who established relationships with community groups). Community members were then invited into the space to use equipment for their own projects, providing feedback and insight into how the permanent makerspace might develop.

The development of the makerspace is dependent on further funding, but the first phase has established collaborative relationships that could be developed into a deeper co-creation approach. Here Clare Halstead, Creative Hub Manager for Adur & Worthing Councils shares key learning from the project.

INTRODUCTION

Colonnade House is a creative hub in the centre of Worthing, West Sussex, which was set up by Worthing Borough Council with funding from the government's Coastal Communities Fund. Since 2016 the Council has worked in partnership with local charity Adur & Worthing Trust to manage the building and activities.

Colonnade House provides ten studio spaces for people working in the creative industries and two gallery spaces for exhibitions, projects and professional development activity. Initially a two-year project, the success of Colonnade House has led the Council to develop plans to expand by converting two adjoining buildings.

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[1] This definition is borrowed from Battersea Arts Centre's Co-Creating Change programme

This means has offered an opportunity to think about how we can design new spaces and facilities that will support collaboration and innovation for the future of the creative industries in Worthing. One proposal has been the creation of a community makerspace; the Space to Make project aimed to develop and test this idea in partnership with community organisations, artists and local people.

The *Space to Make* collaborative partners were Tech Resort, a Community Interest Company based in Eastbourne specialising in promoting and sharing digital skills, and Community Works, who provide support, networking and training to community and voluntary organisations across Adur and Worthing.

As well as Crafts Council funding, the project was also supported financially by West Sussex County Council and Adur & Worthing Councils as part of their on-going commitment to the development of creative industries.

Project aims

Makerspaces are often a feature in 'creative hub' projects in the UK and worldwide. The Space to Make project was an opportunity to test the idea of a makerspace as a pilot for the planned expansion of Colonnade House. The project was an opportunity to work with partners and the local community to trial activity and equipment and build knowledge and ideas about how a potential makerspace might function.

Who led the project? How was co-creation part of the project's design?

The project was initiated by Colonnade House which has a resident community of creatives and works more widely with artists and makers in the town. Initial scoping with the tenants at Colonnade House highlighted areas

that they were interested in exploring—including 3D printing, laser cutting and learning about coding and the Internet of Things.

Inviting Tech Resort and Community Works to join the project meant that we could do much more than would otherwise have been possible. Tech Resort brought digital technology knowledge and resources that we didn't have, and Community Works gave us links into the wider community so that we could investigate how a maker space might be made accessible to all.

Co-creation in the project began with finding out more about each partner organisation and what the idea of a makerspace in the context of Colonnade House might mean, asking questions like: Who is the project for? What do people want to make? What resources have we got? These questions opened up each partners' area of knowledge and what they could contribute and this quickly helped to establish each partners' role in the project. There were constraints too—limits on finance, staff time, space available and timescale, so the activities we designed had to fit within these.

What was planned?

We had space for 'live' project sessions to happen in the gallery space in January, so there was limited time to develop ideas, skills and a programme. An early November planning day at the Crafts Council in London was the first opportunity for a full discussion between Colonnade House, Tech Resort and Community Works—as well as with the other Make:Shift:Do projects—and this is where we really got to grips with co-creating the project.

The project evolved into three clear strands of activity which were aimed at investigating three groups of people who we thought might benefit from a makerspace in the future:

- **Public:** free weekend sessions for families: we decided to offer coding with Scratch, programming Lego robots, building scribbling bugs and 3D printing sessions – all run by Tech Resort
- **Professional**: Colonnade House tenants would have workshop sessions with Tech Resort to develop skills in areas of digital technology that they were interested in and they would then share what they were doing and making through 'work in progress' sessions in January
- **Community:** Community Works would recruit local groups to take part in the project. They would also have workshop sessions with Tech Resort and share their projects through 'work in progress' sessions.

With the project funds we would buy three 3D printers and a laser cutter, as these pieces of equipment were the ones that seemed to be of most interest to people. Colonnade House staff would learn how to use these, including a workshop at Tech Resort to build the 3D printers. We found a name for the

project, a member of staff created a logo, the timetable was filling up, and equipment was on order—we were off!

What happened?

Working collaboratively with Tech Resort and Community Works enabled an open invitation to a broad range of audiences to play and experiment. The outcomes will help to inform the design of a makerspace at Colonnade House for the future.

- Artists Michelle, Shona and Peon all experimented with turning their line drawings into designs etched into wood
- Maker Tom designs bespoke wooden instruments called Timberharps. He explored how the laser cutter could easily add his logo and other etched designs to his products
- Bookbinder Maudie used the laser cutter to emboss leather and cut card in intricate designs. This opened up potential new areas of work for her to explore
- Artist Zach realised how a laser cutter could save him time and open up more design options for stencils and cut lettering for an outdoor installation project
- Local voluntary group Men in Sheds etched lettering into slate to test an idea for creating new products for sale
- Animator Laurie learned how to recreate one of his characters as a 3D printed model
- Dads and kids printed 3D models together on a Saturday morning
- Local design agency Shake It Creative set up a hack session with a range of creatives to do a complete overhaul of a charity's website
- Local engineer Paul 3D printed cookie cutters that he'd designed
- Sam from Transition Town Worthing learned how to programme an Arduino as part of a project to create a remote plant watering device
- Community group Tide of Light explored how they could code a Raspberry Pi to customise strips of LED lights to go inside processional sculptures
- Animator Ginny from Persistent Peril learned how she could set up an Internet of Things system to operate things remotely in her house
- A local primary school built electronic scribbling bugs and let them loose on a giant roll of paper
- Digital artist Adam learned how a Raspberry Pi could be programmed to register faces and translate them into live images
- Martin from a local project for people using power chairs built customised adaptations by learning how to code an Arduino and 3D-printed spare parts
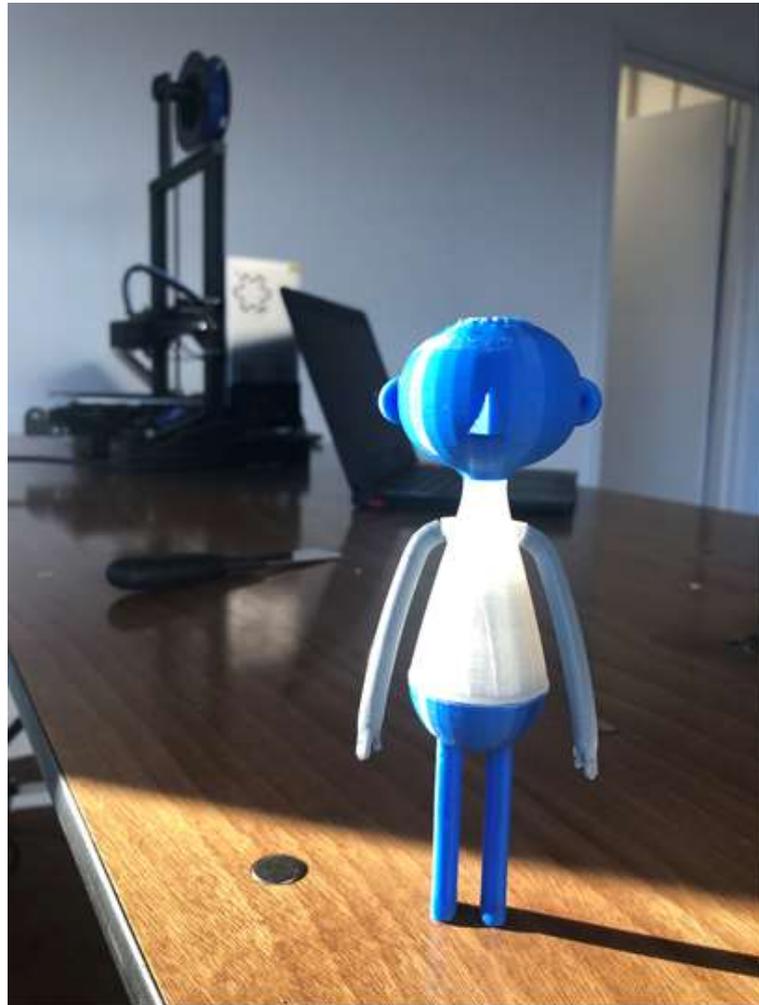
What experiences did people have during the project?

Colonnade House staff:

At the project planning stage, it was clear that one of the things we lacked was the language to describe what we wanted to do. When asking people what they would like to do with digital tech we quickly got stuck in verbal quicksand, using words like 'coding' without being able to explain what you could actually do with a Raspberry Pi and having to admit that you didn't know what 'internet of things' really meant. The whole project was a step in the dark – there was so much that we didn't know.

The planning day was really helpful in cementing the relationships with the two partner organisations and starting to put flesh on the bones of the project, but the real step-change in learning came from our workshop session at Tech Resort in January where we built the 3D printers that had been bought for the project and learned how to use them. The laser cutter that we bought is designed for a home market, so we worked out how to use this ourselves. By the start of the programme of activity at the end of January the team could operate the laser cutter and the 3D printer—we were not experts, but we knew

enough to be able to support others to learn alongside us. Tech Resort have a 'how hard can it be?' ethos that is very liberating and supportive for groups of people who are learning to use technology together, and we took this approach forward into the rest of the project so that as a staff team we could be co-learners rather than being seen as experts.

Community partners:

The project provided an opportunity for collaboration between Colonnade House and Community Works that hadn't arisen previously. The invitation to join Space to Make aligned with ambitions that Community Works have for groups within the local community to be able to access digital equipment and skills. They were aware of the potential benefits of this from their experience of similar projects in other areas. The planning day and a follow-up meeting at Colonnade House helped to clarify the ideas, as did the process of explaining the project to potential participants.

One member of staff at Community Works is also part of a community group, so she saw the project from both sides, and has gained significant insight into the potential for digital tech within the community, and contacts made may now lead to new kinds of volunteering opportunities.

Community participants:

The workshop sessions that Tech Resort ran for community participants gave people an opportunity to get to grips with an aspect of digital technology that they wanted to use. It was great to see how this relatively small amount of input was enough to give people the confidence to take big leaps with their ideas

The availability of Tech Resort to answer on-going questions also underlined the value of expertise—while navigating (sometimes stumbling) our way through the learning process, being able to shoot a quick question to them by email would save a lot of time.

Building on this, collaboration with others and connections made through the project—including between artists, people from the wider community and professionals—showed every chance of continuing beyond the project, and came into its own during the early stage of the Covid-19 crisis as our 3D printers were used to print PPE .

Professionals:

Studio members at Colonnade House and other artists from the local community were enthusiastic about having access to the 3D printer and laser cutter because they had specific ideas in mind. Once they had had a chance to try out their initial ideas and got a sense of what was possible, there was a real sense of excitement about what they could do if they had access to these

facilities permanently. Most of the people in this group were already familiar with using computer programmes for design, and so it didn't take long to learn the basics of the relatively simple slicer programme for the 3D printer, and the online platforms for the laser cutter and Internet of Things projects. Learning to code so that the potential of Arduinos and Raspberry Pis can be harnessed takes longer, and it was in this area that Tech Resort's knowledge was particularly valuable.

Collaboration between professionals worked best where they already had a working relationship and shared interests, and longer-term development in this area would require further support. The project highlighted the need for expertise to be on hand in a future makerspace.

Conclusions

To what degree was the project co-created?

After the project ended, the lead partners from Colonnade House, Tech Resort and Community Works reflected on the co-creation process and our relative levels of engagement and input.

The initiation of the project by Colonnade House meant they held a high level of agency throughout, including control of financial resources—but there were specific areas where the other partners took more of a lead. Tech Resort had a high level of agency in defining and then leading the activities, and Community Works led on the selection and support for community participants in the project. The project has laid the groundwork for future partnership working with Community Works to embed community access within a new makerspace, and with Tech Resort for technical advice and support. The project scratched the surface of the potential for collaboration within the creative community and we can confidently return to this if we have dedicated space and resources in the future.

Overall, this partnership worked very well as each partner brought an essential area of knowledge and expertise to the project. West Sussex County Council and Adur & Worthing Councils contributed funding to the project were less engaged in the practical design and delivery of the project but helped to define the strategic context that guided it.

How well did we meet our objectives?

In a relatively short space of time we were able to gain insight and gather feedback on most of the questions that we had started with. We collected feedback via written forms, an online questionnaire, through conversations and by recording activity with films and photographs.

The project has provided evidence of a number of ways in which a makerspace could be used in Worthing such as developing skills, supporting innovation, prototyping products and promoting collaboration. It is yet to be seen whether the investment needed for this will be approved, but we have a much clearer basis for estimating the requirements for space, equipment and staffing.