

NOTIONS OF HOME



Thoughts on Home, hearth and navigation within older age and care home settings.

“It feels like a sea of whispers and I am listening to people’s thoughts, voices and hearts. Hearing from all sides: workers, wives, residents, visitors. It says so much about the importance of the work and the space it opens for people finding new places to call home. That was certainly my experience when I worked with you for that day at the (21st Century) Tea Dance. I was surprised how at home I immediately felt that I belonged and was part of something wonderful.”

Artist Kirstie Richardson on ‘Notions of Home’



Notions of Home is a compilation of essays, poems and drawings by the Entelechy Arts community of creatives (professional artists, members and volunteers), who share in a culture which co-creates a sense of belonging wherever we are in the journey through life. Some of the following pieces candidly express what it feels like to lose a sense of home in all that this might mean.

In their writings, artists lay bare some of their own subjective experience. This subjectivity helps us to better understand what might be happening in the space between us all - highlighting the communality of story.

What follows is part-archive, part-blogpost as it mixes writings from the past with the present - thereby revealing similarities and developments spanning time. It is also part-chorus-of-voices heralding in humanity within the multiple thresholds of life and in institutional spaces.

Each piece stands on its own, yet the word “home” in all its complex connotations binds the writers together. Some of the themes and questions which emerge about what contributes to our sense of home include:

- what are the qualities that create a sense of home in institutional, public and transitional places, when we are away from anything we recognise?
- how might our sense of home be informed by our physical and sensory intelligence and our bodies, whilst navigating change?
- how does a sense of home reside in the connections we have with others as well as in an actual place?
- what ingredients within improvisation, creativity and imagination bring us home?
- how might our sense of home guide creative practitioners who work in institutional contexts.

Notions of Home is compiled and narrated by Rebecca Swift.

Photos: by Roswitha Cheshier (*except snap shots of the ‘sewn’ house on page 1 and of Kathy on page 4*)

House drawings emblem: by MMA artists and members, friends Patrick and Mavies.

Some names have been changed to respect confidentiality. Each piece is introduced at the end rather than the beginning. This is an on-going blog as enquiry.



I miss my house

by Kathy

I miss my house
My neighbours

I think about it every day-
That's life!

We used to go dancing,
Used to go to nursing homes
And dance for the residents

Alive and cooking.
Alive and clicking.

I miss my house,
My neighbours

I think about it every day
That's life!

After you had your tea,
You don't want to go to bed.

Sorry love I am not going to bed!
Not at 8 o'clock.

Alive and cooking.
Alive and clicking.

I would like to add:
The lovely nurses

How about the men?
No men here!

Sad innit?
Could you find a boyfriend for me?

Alive and cooking
Alive and clicking

Oh, I do like a chat
Am a right old chatterbox

Alive and cooking
Alive and clicking

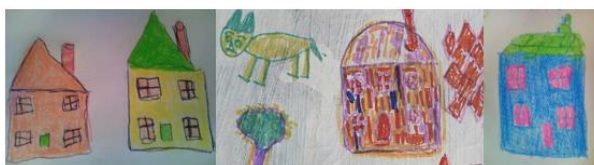
Would like to add all me' friends:
This young lady is Pat, Paulette
Sandra – she is very kind and thoughtful
They are wonderful friends.

By Kathy, 2015



Kathy is a 'Walking through Walls' Entelechy Arts artist and Tower Bridge care home resident. The chorus was provided by Albert from Tower Bridge. 'I miss my house' was performed by Kathy with Albert at the 21st Century Tea Dance 2015.

Photo: Kathy with Ida Bar at the Deptford Albany Theatre.



Basically, we're all trying to get home by Kirstie Richardson

Recently I started work in a care home which specialises in people living with dementia alongside residential assisted living and a nursing wing for end of life and more complex conditions.

What struck me immediately on the dementia floor, and later on other floors, is that everyone is trying to get somewhere. They were late, needed to pick up children, needed to be picked up by their parents, needed to put on the dinner for their husband or their elderly mother. Or they simply needed to get home. Their sense of urgency, desperation and panic is heart-breaking. Indeed, many dementia wards have installed a bus stop specifically to respond to this innate urge to return from where we came from.

I began to wonder why we all feel such a strong sense to return to our nests, to our places of comfort. As the environmental movement artist Helen Poynter once expressed when talking about returning to England after living away for many years, 'I needed to go where my bones felt at home'. Furthermore, Liz Koch writes in *Stalking Wild Psoas* that 'it's the sense of being in bone that increases our sense of embodiment'. The idea that home is not just a physical place and that we each have the capability to connect deeply within to find our inner nest, offers great comfort and encouragement. It is a call to explore one's inner landscape.

As I find myself here in California for three weeks after leaving the UK in a whirlwind family drama, I think of the many residents who have had their lives packed up and found themselves somewhere else trying to find their ground, adjust and make a new home. But what if a new home can never be realised while we are in a state of shock, unwell, confused, disorientated? What then? What if we are outside of postcode and country with different smells, food, accents, people, common ground and sense of humour? How then do we re-connect?

And to add to this list, what if all those we trusted are no longer with us, ignoring us (or so it might seem) or unable to visit? Everything we know now and have previously known has disappeared. We have landed on the moon far far away and nothing will ever be the same. And to make matters worse, we need care, lots of it and we are going to need much more as time goes by.

And sadly, for those individuals who are painfully aware of their deterioration, all of the above is amplified.

As a movement practitioner, my interest lies in my somatic practice and I constantly ask myself how do I reconnect? What do I need to put in place to gather myself? I lie on the bed in my hotel room and can feel the panic in my cellular self. I am not at one, not rested and not able to rest or to feel. I am numb. I tell myself “first things first: remember to breathe, don’t panic, go in deep and listen.” This is a luxury because of course I can do this. This is what I do and teach but what about those others that I am looking after from a very different generation – those taught to toe the line, to sit still and be quiet, not to make a fuss. What about them? After all, most people don’t know what a “somatic practice” is.

And so, I suppose that is what my job is and what I find myself constantly trying to do. How can I connect with this individual who is discombobulated and unsure of almost everything so that I can then connect through them and with them? I want to facilitate and create the space and allow them to unfold and perhaps notice what they need and want. Above all, I want to be able to assist them in this process of feeling at home, physically and mentally. Noticing what they want to surround themselves with and their creature comforts – for example smells, cushions, lighting, music, books and objects – is a very individual process and not always obvious and is only the tip of the iceberg.

So finally, how do I connect on a less superficial level with another person? The only way I know how and the only way we all know how. We have to smell, crawl, taste, hear, touch and feel our way through. And always to ask the question: how can I be of service and how can I help carry your bones home?

By Kirstie Richardson, 2019.



Kirstie Richardson is an Entelechy Arts affiliate artist. In September 2019, you could find her in a sea of people at the Age Against the Machine Festival 21st Century Tea Dance at the Albany, working with a queue of elders on touch-based Alexander Technique, whilst the atmosphere buzzed around them.



Touching home

My Husband was very cuddly by Rosie Wheatland

He used to put his arms round me or touch my neck, just in passing.
He died - now there is no-one to touch or feel.
Only time is when my son comes down and he puts his arms round me.

For the last couple of weeks, I haven't spoken or touched anyone.
it's been me in my own bubble.

When I do the movement and theatre the touch makes me feel alive.
You've got a reaction from other people through touch –
just a hand on another hand.

I was always affectionate, and it feels nice.
Touch makes me feel I belong.
Now I'm on my own, apart from the cat.

By Rosie Wheatland, 2010



Rosie is an Entelechy Arts artist, poet, actor and was a peer mentor at Manly Court nursing home from 2010. Image: Rosie performing in the first production of BED at the Bold festival at the Albany, 2015.



In Search of Me by Pauline Payne

I'm still here
I'm still me
But trapped inside this shell
Of a body that was once virile
And one you knew so well

I look through eyes no longer wise
Don't say I've lost my mind
I may look funny
I can't spend money
I need you to be kind.

Be patient with me when I'm slow
And when I lose my cool
I rant and rave
No longer brave
Don't treat me like a fool.

There was a time
When in my prime
I'd made it
Top of the tree
Now I am lost
I'm all crisscrossed
But I'm still
Me, Me, ME

By Pauline Payne, 2011.



Pauline joined the Entelechy Arts team whilst she was visiting her husband in Manly Court nursing home. She worked with us as poet and peer mentor with Entelechy's artists and the residents, performing her poetry at the Deptford Albany Theatre.

Image: Pauline performing her poetry at Entelechy Arts 21st Century Tea Dance, 2013.



I want to go Home by Rebecca Swift

I'm sitting in-between Ruby and Gloria - two residents in a local care home. We are taking part in a weekly creative session with residents and care staff, in a tiny communal room in a nursing home in New Cross Gate.

This cultural space, deftly facilitated by artists Charlene Low and Zoe Gilmour, allows me, Ruby and Gloria to meander our own conversation within an overarching activity - doing your own thing whilst simultaneously being part of the group.

My perception of this moment reveals as much about me as it may cast light on others; we might sense a resonance in someone, because we know that quality within ourselves. This two-way process illustrates how meaning can be alive in the space between people and beyond the word dementia.

Gloria, to my right, speaks rapidly, barely taking a breath to an exhausted support worker who looks the other way. Gloria appears certain and the next minute not; past, present, people and place jumble together (Ruby to my left is quiet, unmoving). Gloria then relates her stream of story to me - and having the luxury of only popping in for a few hours I listen intently. I don't know how to relate to her, and this perturbs me.

Gloria's words seem full of an urgent quest to pin something down, reminding me of myself when trying to sort out a problem that overwhelms me. I decide to assume that she is in fact trying to solve something - even if it's not the case - hoping this will connect us both.

She frowns as if searching for meaning, as if she sensed if she were to stop talking, she might completely disappear or not be held together. I grasp at reasons why: *Maybe she genuinely did hold things together for her family or is dementia displacing her sense of self or maybe the transitory nature of a care home compounds the sensation of feeling home-less....*

During coherent and broken sentences Gloria mentions Cornwall. 'Cornwall' feels like a passing fish in a torrent of water, so I catch hold of it. We talk about a place in Cornwall we both know, and with that Gloria seems to have

stepped onto solid ground (me too). With heart-felt emotion followed by silence, she says, **“I want to go home!”**

My thoughts stream like hers with an urgency to alleviate her longing: *Was home Cornwall despite us sitting in a care home next to a new housing estate bordering onto an industrial estate at the back of New Cross Gate? What about all the other names, streets and people that pepper her tale from now or the past?* I begin to feel as disorientated as I assume, she is feeling. Gloria conveys with absolute certainty that she knows the feeling of wanting to be home.

Many residents have expressed their longing for home with definite clarity. Sometimes they were returned to their room and it may have been the best sentence at hand to say, “can I leave please, I am tired”, or “this experience is overwhelming.”

But what if being returned ‘home’ to their room wasn’t always what that person meant, in its entirety? What could any of us mean by the word home in all its connotations?

Research arising from work with refugees identifies many-layered meanings and associations held within our sense of home, and the impact that loss of home can have on us. Comparing the transitions we might go through within frailer older age with the disorientation that refugees experience, could help clarify the enormity of the threshold - whether pleasant or challenging - that some of us cross when moving into a care home, whilst simultaneously dealing with complex life changes such as dementia.

In ‘Therapeutic care for Refugees, No Place like home’ (Karnac, 2002), psychologist Renos Papadopoulos writes that “Home is one of the most fundamental notions of humanity.” He suggests that our sense of home is made of complex layers - both concrete and imaginary - which symbolise different aspects of what it means to be human.

Home conjures a feeling of being whole, in one place, un-scattered; where being ‘myself’ might also translate as the capacity to draw together very different facets of experience into one place. The idea that our homes enable us to unite different parts of life and self is echoed by Papadopoulos: “within the context and relative permanence of home, one can experience the co-existence of seemingly irreconcilable opposites” (*Papadopoulos, p16, 2002*).

It’s possible that our experience of living with dementia increases the sensation of being strewn apart. This feeling of not being held together in one

place could be further compounded if our sense of self and what we are communicating is misunderstood or not engaged with. In addition to this disorientation we are far away from the senses and feelings attached to our original homes, terrains, communities.

Home, ideally, is a 'safe space' in which to meander, dream, and relax our outer presentation of self. At an informal Entelechy Arts round table, the social scientist Tim Dartington in discussing his book 'Managing vulnerability, the underlying dynamics of systems of care, suggested that in social situations "we all 'perform', even people with dementia perform." Maybe there is a point in the social space where it is too exhausting to keep up the social presentation, especially if our memory doesn't fit in with the accepted conventional norms and speeds of most social interaction:

How might our sense of home be manifest within social and cultural spaces whilst we are cognitively, emotionally and metaphorically 'homeless'?

How can we re-build feelings of home when we are home-sick and refugees from anything we now recognise?

The phrase 'home away from home' often crops up when artists describe their experience of Entelechy's Ambient Jam improvisations: dance, music, live-art improvisations which bring people together with and without complex disabilities, across abilities and ages. Many have said, "It's like coming home." These sensory improvisations value modes of expression and ways of connecting that may not always be verbal or linear. A social ecology infused with these particular ingredients can signal home away from actual home for some. For others these improvisations have been known to initially increase feelings of vulnerability as social etiquettes and norms of mainstream society, on which we rely and excel, are often turned upside down.

The following answers identify a few of those ingredients within the social ecology of an Ambient Jam which might help many of us, whatever our descriptions and labels, feel at home in the presence of strangers. They allude to a sense of home found in being physically present or embodied, situations where many different conversations in different modes can co-exist equally in the same place:

- sensory improvisation allows for multiple ways to co-exist. Ideally it honours that there may be many ways into a conversation.

- different energies and contrasts from pedestrian to aesthetic beauty, collide creatively in one place.
- a natural sense of mindfulness ensues as we begin to bring attention to ordinary, fleeting, subtle or tiny moments, usually dismissed or not noticed.
- similarly, there is a re-awakening of our physical presence (suspending the stream of thoughts in our mind) bringing attentiveness to incremental moments of agency arising from our own volition.
- improvisation at its best doesn't put a premium on any one way of doing things or on just achieving an outcome, but on how we might all, in sometimes imperfect ways, build something together in the moment.
- we all can share in and legitimise disorientation together.
- sometimes being able to make a mess, being wild and chaotic, releases us to be ourselves again.
- a multi-layering of senses, such as stepping through a play of light, whilst hearing music and smelling mint, can be a fundamental element in bringing us 'home'. Our physical selves can lead us to a feeling of home through the senses, and often through the natural world.
- there is a release of the social pressure to always appear to be doing something – although this doesn't exclude moments where we do try something out just to see what might happen.
- opposites come together, such as sadness and humour, quite happily – some call this surreal.
- let's add pets, dogs, cats to this list – not Ambient Jam necessarily – but important facilitators in affecting how we interact and cultivate a sense of home through simply being.



Whilst chatting to Gloria - Ruby, to my left, murmurs to me. I wonder if she wants me to understand what she says and yet she seems to run out of muscle and memory. I can't distinguish the consonants in her speech. I suppress my sense of failure to comprehend - a fear of my inability to make things better. I wonder if both of us are under pressure to get the communication 'right' from different ends of the bridge.

Moving into Ambient Jam mode, I am given a legitimate code to listen for tone and feeling as a way to receive indistinguishable words. This different way of listening - in a social space that allows for different qualities of time and both non-verbal and verbal communication - becomes a lifeline between us. She touches the material of her trousers with both her fingers. Her gesture is full of intention. Although it is a common gesture with many residents living with dementia, it seems full of meaning: her hands in movement remind me of a seamstress. This may well have been the case. Isn't it better to assume so for a while, just in case? A creative line into communication is to sometimes imbue an action with meaning, simply to see what happens.

With a guess I mention sewing - a currency of many of her generation. Ruby nods and Gloria agrees too. I assume 'sewing' is something tangible and familiar to them, although it's hard to know whether Ruby is responding to the tone of how I say it, rather than to 'sewing' itself. Maybe it doesn't really matter. Holding suspension of belief where it doesn't really matter allows for a quality of play which facilitates a testing out of ideas together.

From her expression I feel I have done well to say it, which makes **me** feel better. We are both helping to make each other to feel better. I then share the word 'sewing' with the whole group and to the facilitators. For a few seconds

Ruby and Gloria connect to everyone in the group. Ruby then softly rubs the forefinger and thumb of her left hand together and reaches out much further to a definite place in front of her. She repeats the action and with focused attention reaches further, repeats, and even further. Her repeated gestures as they grow in strength bring her presence into the room and the group, from the periphery. Her movement has the quality of sensing or searching for the name of something, yet conversely knowing something, as if the reach of her gesture brings her back into being. She may be seeing something tangible that I can't see.

Because of the easy atmosphere in the group, I can 'listen' to both her arm gesture and its grace as dance, not as a clinical symptom. I make a choice to believe that the way we listen to someone alters something, however minuscule, in each of us and shifts who we can be in relation to each other.

Ruby gives me a gentle, warm hug. It's a gift I happily receive. I felt very appreciated, I assume, for listening. Maybe I remind her of someone in her past too. But then, surely this combination of past imbuing the present and vice versa is no different from the rest of us.

Registered nurse and lecturer, Dr Fiona Kelly writes "Laing (1961) suggests that the process of complementarity contributes to people's positioning by others and to their acceptance of their positioning. Within this feature of "relatedness", the "other" is needed to fulfil or complete one's sense of self. Any action, gesture, feeling, need or role is the complement of a corresponding action, gesture, feeling, need or role of the "other". Thus, interaction involves a reciprocal process whereby the self is both receiver and giver and the "other" is also needed as both receiver and giver. Our sense of self is constructed through such interactions." *Fiona Kelly (2007, Chapter 2: Theoretical frameworks. Page 25), 'Well-being and expression of self in dementia: interactions in long-term wards and creative sessions'*

Some nursing homes are over-stretched to bursting, and when resources are tight, it's hard for anyone to create space to give time and take initiative beyond organisational systems and coping mechanisms; to really implant that complex weave of elements that can nourish a sense of home. We are always on the move in some form or another, always changing and dealing with multiple thresholds.

By the end of the session I felt close to Ruby and Gloria, despite any assumptions I might have made in translating their actions. Each of us might have stretched beyond our present selves to connect – it was hard work. I

haven't forgotten them since. I felt the three of us achieved a sense of real communion between gesture, searching and tumbles of words made legitimate because of the ecology created by the artists and residents in the group: The odd word 'struck a chord' and being received by them with a gentle hug or a direct look was something I felt I needed too, and therefore I was not exempt from the communal narrative of the space. It felt like whatever our mode of expression we came together as 3 women searching for meaning and different individual senses of home, in a transient place.

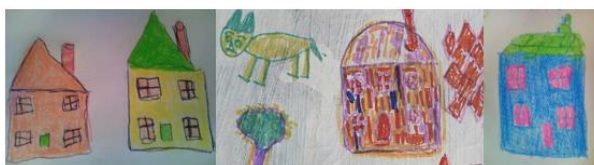
"Our relationship with awareness of our own vulnerability is far from comfortable – we have a natural tendency to locate it in other people – it is he, not me, who is in need, it is she, not me, who is vulnerable." *David Bell, 'Welfare State expresses an ideal of a good society' (The Guardian, November, 2010)*

By Rebecca Swift, 2011

I want to go home comes from field-notes about a session facilitated by Entelechy Arts artists at Manly Court nursing home in New Cross Gate:

Visiting the work gave me the freedom to listen from a place of being a member (not a facilitator) of a group. Being part of the group created the opportunity and privilege for me to learn and listen in a different way. In this vein the work in our care home settings and in Ambient Jam continues to be a 'university of life' and embodied research, in conversation between all parties: residents, artists, family and staff.

With thanks to lead artists Zoe Gilmour and Charlene Low, and peer mentors Lillian Bartholomew, Rosie Wheatland, Sybil Reid, and Pauline Payne for creating such a happening, fertile space.



I had to give up our beautiful house by Peggy

It's so hard to let go
I used to play my piano,
loved my grand piano
back in Ireland.
I started falling out of the blue.
Once I fell onto a road -
a bus was coming.
Then my husband died, suddenly
I had to give up our beautiful house,
my grand piano.
Moved into a nursing home in Ireland.
Then I came here to be near my daughter.
I don't know anyone in London.
Lost everything.
Had to come to terms with it.
It's so hard to let go.

By Peggy, 2015

Peggy was a much-loved resident at Tower Bridge care home and an experienced artist throughout her life. With her permission her piece was shared at the performance of 'Memory and Place' in Elephant and Castle shopping mall, in 2016. This event explored themes of personal and local change within the backdrop of regeneration taking place around Elephant and Castle.

Her story about resilience, loss and identity was shared to a local audience, passers-by, families, and the London Latin American community. Her favourite Irish song was sung by the Blackfriars elders' choir.



Manly Court nursing home, New Cross Gate

How Entelechy Arts' collaborations with care homes started

In 2010 Entelechy Arts began their first programme of long-term collaborations in care homes with a four-year residency at Manly Court nursing home in New Cross Gate. Manly Court became the site of an exciting creative hub co-created by residents, staff, family, friends and artists. Their work together forged the values that guide us in the care home 'Walking through Walls' programme we have today, where artists and residents weave stories and develop ideas which come from the local area and each other's life stories.

Artists Zoe Gilmour and Charlene Low and creative peer mentors, Rosie Wheatland, Sybil Reid and Lillian Bartholomew from our elders Theatre group (later joined by Pauline Payne), worked with residents and activities coordinators Janet, Theo and Lodup, to co-create a new cultural space. This was made possible with on-going funding from Deptford City Trust. The funding also included a residency by artists Barbara Kane and Chinyere Nwaubani at Deptford Mission, working with older house-bound members.

The ripple effect from weekly sessions at Manly Court care home



Image above: Singer and raconteur Frankie Dickens with artist Zoe Gilmour holding the Deptford Albany Theatre audience, 2014.

The Entelechy Arts team soon discovered talented artists in residents Frankie Dickens (above), Cedric Skyers, Dulcie, Pauline Payne (the wife of a resident), and in Lodup - a care worker and Tibetan singer and musician.

Our peer mentors inspired many residents through their own creativity: poets, performers, and singers emerging from Manly Court performed at our 21st Century Tea Dances at the Albany Theatre. Cedric went on to perform his poetry at the Kings Place with the Spitz charitable trust.



Image: Manly Court resident Cedric Skyers performing his poem with Spitz Guitarist Alan Weekes, at the 21st Century Tea Dance, 2014.

The Manly Court 'cultural hub' became an inspiration and learning space for practitioners and new organisations: Director Jane Glitre introduced musicians who had played at the Spitz jazz venue in Spitalfields (which had closed) to Entelechy's residency in the home. After observing the work at Manly Court, Jane developed her own unique template of introducing top musicians into care homes. She set up the Spitz charitable trust, now based at Bridge side Lodge care home in Islington.

Entelechy Arts commissioned Spitz musicians to play at the Manly Court care home and Deptford Mission tea dances. This included playing alongside residents' bedsides and in corridors. This collaboration with the Spitz continues today.



Image: The Spitz playing in the corridors at Manly Court care home in 2011 with Entelechy's peer mentors and artists.

The expertise our artists and peer mentors developed from their residency at Manly Court and Deptford Mission contributed to the design of the then new 'Meet Me at the Albany' (MMA) programme for housebound elders, which started in 2013: Training and Continuing Professional Development for associate Albany associate artists working at MMA included spending time at Manly Court care home with the Entelechy Arts team there.



Homeward through song: an email 'post-card' from ESKA

Visiting Manly Court nursing home formed part of the CPD for Albany associate artists working with the older community at MMA. In the following email-letter, artist and musician ESKA, an Albany associate and MMA artist at the time, describes her first impressions of a care home (having never visited one before).

There aren't elderly care homes in Zimbabwe where I was born. Families take care of their elders. That's non-negotiable. I'd hate to imagine ending up in a place surrounded by strangers in my elderly years. Needs must in the society we've created.

We are living longer but not necessarily better. When I was 18, I returned to Zimbabwe with my family. We visited my homeland or 'kumusha'. Everybody has a kumusha - the land/origins of your tribe. It's called Mtungwazi village. The bus-stop is called 'Mtungwazi' and so is the local shop. The pastor in the chapel is Mtungwazi and, well I'm sure you get the picture!

There was some singing going on in one part of the village. It sounded like a low, gentle drone of female voices. It was coming from one of the big mud huts. We were taken there to see one of the elders who was dying. She was lying down, surrounded by all these women who were also lying down and singing over her.

Her hair was gently being stroked and I could hear that she was fighting for breath. They had been doing this for weeks. She had not many weeks/days remaining, and these women were singing spiritual songs over her night and day.

I remember praying, God I want to die like that - with people singing over me.

Sorry if this is all tangential and over-romanticised but the care home reflects the society we've made and it's not about enabling us to face old age and death head on at all. We just can't face having frail people in our midst. Putting them all together in institutions like that is

outrageous. There's not even a piano in that space!?!? No music playing in the corridors!?!?

I can understand when there are great levels of medical care required that people need to be in the right environment to receive this. I can get that but if you're asking me about first impressions, I'm overwhelmed and challenged beyond words. Rebecca, it's going to take a long time to absorb yesterday,

Thanks again for a life-changing experience.

By ESKA, 2013

.... Six years later it's 2019 in a care home in Bermondsey. The creative work has evolved to include residents who are bedbound. Cynthia, a care worker describes a moment when Entelechy artists, Christina Brown, Rainer Knupp and Cai Tomos sing by a resident's bedside:

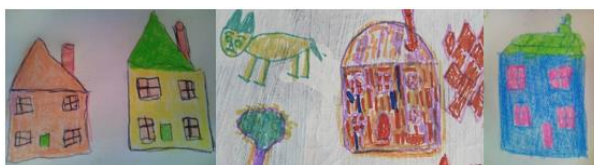
This is such a different way of being together. I can tell she's loving it. It gives value to her, and value to this part of her life.

I love my job. And you being here - and me seeing all this - it reminds me why I love my job. It helps me understand and remember that about my job. But it also helps me understand something about people at that stage in their life - so it helps me understand something about myself, too.

Big difference! It makes such a big difference.

It's the singing. For her, she loves the singing. And with you here it's more than one voice singing in her ear.

Cynthia's description is briefly reminiscent of ESKA's story where an elder is gently immersed in song by the women in her community. In this London care home, there is an echo of how song might accompany an elder 'home' through the dying process.



When the colour orange draws us home by Doris and Rebecca

In a place far from home, an atmosphere, the way light falls, or the smell of cooking, can bring us back to ourselves and feelings associated with home.

A sense of home can be found in the memory of our younger self meeting our older self as if time hadn't existed. Sometimes seeing time as a spiral or as patterns rather than a line can be another way to affirm our belonging and our orientation within life. This could be the case whatever age we are:



Painting by Doris, at MMA, 2014

Doris and I are chatting around a table in the Deptford Albany cafe at Meet Me at the Albany (MMA) - a cultural day centre for housebound elders, based in the Deptford Albany cafe and run by volunteers and artists. Doris is adamant she must go out shopping. I am sitting with her, so she doesn't escape the building. She paints the colour orange over and over again on lots of pieces of

paper. Doris was a talented ceramicist. At MMA orange becomes her colour in all her paintings as her memory increasingly gives way.

Whilst painting orange she tells me about two apple trees in her garden: “one’s an eater, the other’s a Bramley.” She ‘superimposes’ on the present fact of the two trees in her garden today, the first time her husband set eyes on her 65 years ago in Rotherhithe and how later they married and had twins. She tells her story in slightly different shifts of emphasis over and over again, whilst the colour orange is painted onto paper on which she lets me draw the two trees and write her story; then she folds them into small squares with the ‘art’ on the inside – a new development. She closes the lid of the paintbox with a final emphasis as if to convey the end of the story.

It was a gift to receive her sharing of a ‘story poem’ told in one colour. The symbolism of two trees structured the story in a beautiful way by uniting two moments, two qualities of two separated by time: two trees and twins. I doubt I will forget this moment. It is interesting how these creative conversations stay with us and inspire us long after, like a dance or artwork we have seen. A few weeks after we had sat together, I learnt that Doris has passed away.

From field notes by Rebecca Swift, 2014



Imagination takes us home: Walking through Walls

Ten years after the first care home residency with Manly Court nursing home in New Cross Gate, the 'Walking through Walls' programme continues Entelechy's collaboration with care homes. This work forms part of the weft of engagement within institutional settings, both the good and the difficult, originally arising 30 years ago from our work in collaboration with people with learning disabilities, leaving the big institutions and hospitals of Darenth Park and Grove Park to live in the community. In 2016 long term residencies in three HC-one care homes were made possible with funding via the charity Attend. One of these care homes – Tower Bridge Care Home – continues to be the epicentre for our creative research, informed and forged by the long-term collaboration between artists, residents and staff. Tower Bridge care home 'creative hub' was originally kickstarted in 2015 as part of a collaboration with Siobhan Davies Dance Studios and their producer Alison Proctor.

Funding has allowed us to expand the work with groups to include one to one bedside work for elders who have complex disabilities, profound dementia and with residents in palliative care. Thirty years' of work within weekly Ambient Jam improvisations in collaboration with adults born with profound and multiple learning disabilities (PMLD) has been adapted to bring improvisation to the care home setting; a diversity of improvisation styles, co-created by a team of artists and care home residents takes place by bedsides, in corridors and kitchens.

Greenock, West Scotland in a Bermondsey care home

by 'Jack' and team

The sea, being on a ship, Cai reads a poem, we are going to Greenock in West Scotland. Rebecca finds an image of this beautiful place on her mobile phone - a place with mountains and sea; the resident plays the music using a Shruti box.

Artist, Rainer Knupp describes a beside story conjured by a resident with the Entelechy Arts team in Tower Bridge care home, 2019.



This ship-bed drawing by artist Cai Tomos captures a moment when Jack, a resident in palliative care, gave us the gift of imagination in seeing the nursing home as a big ship that is slowly moving - even though he is confined to his bed. He enabled us to enter an unrestricted world without walls, where a bed and small room sets the stage for a story, and we journey to his hometown in Scotland.

The beauty of this bed-ship drawing, as another form of documentation, is in how it reflects the quality of relational space between the artist and the resident: The story of being near the end of life eventually belongs to us all. For this reason, the drawing captures the essence of a dialogue between everyone sharing, witnessing, telling and receiving, within the 'performance' space of someone's room. It is rare to forget these moments and stories – they become imprinted into the artist's memory and inform everything that follows in years to come. With Jack we are all trying to make sense of this part of our lives.



Heart = hearth = home

from Cai Tomos

Dance artist Cai Tomos describes a creative conversation from the moment of entering a resident's room at Tower Bridge care home:

We enter the room and Sheena is in the bed with stillness about her. Her face has a trace of curiosity as we enter. I play a few chords on the accordion and Rainer sings some deep notes alongside. As soon as we begin, it feels as something starts to deepen. I feel my body stilling and as we travel further down to someplace, Sheena is both a witness and a guide, it seems. There is a fullness of feeling, both a lightness and deep expansion in my body. I feel the heart as the primary place in which I'm perceiving from. Everything has descended to the heart; I feel as if I'm seeing or hearing and speaking from here...

No thought.

Rainer moves his hands in invitation to the people in the pictures on Sheena's wall behind him, inviting them in the dance.

Sheena points with great vigour to a picture on the wall. It is her. Her hands delicately resting on the white keys of an organ in a chapel, she has a wide smile and a round hat. In that gesture something else is revealed:

She speaks a few times, 'my calling' ... my calling.
I ask about a hymn, and we sing 'This little light of mine, I'm going to let it shine...'

Sheena has a broad wide smile and holds both of our hands.

I leave the room with a tender but shaky quality through my body; and a wordless feeling - I thought about the intricacy of love, of the hidden coves in the heart, love in all its manifestation, like it's always there waiting to appear from behind a door.

With this example by Cai, the artist tracks moments of creativity and connection through monitoring how it affects them too. This embodied documentation in his writing conveys an innate poetry that flourishes within sensory and physical intelligence. These poetics reside as much within the

rhythm of unspoken connection between people as well as when words are used; silences permeate the improvisation co-built by artists and residents alike and is indicative of how these short moments might bring us back to bodies, ourselves, and a sense of home.

Cai's language encompasses a sense of 'seeing through our hearts' to describe the depth and authenticity of connection. The 'heart-led' perception appears to override assumptions we can make about a situation, or intention. Stories shared in this way are about receiving and exchanging and even in a short moment a hearth-like atmosphere is created.

Home, room, house: Thresholds = self = space from Cai Tomos

This drawing and the following words by Cai Tomos capture the 'felt sense' of a threshold from the corridor into a resident's bedroom, within the care home setting, as if the person and the space are intertwined.



Inner and outer, some so hard to cross, inner and outer.

Kept thinking about the word '**care home**': The culture of the home, the rhythm, the weight of care, culturally how do we care.

These eyes seeing out, seeing in, seems like the room feels like a part of the self; the room and the people become one - the thresholds - like we walk into the person. The felt sense in that room, that I'm in a world... suspended. Each person, each room with its subtle and distinct gravitational pull, light, heavy thick air.

Each Tuesday morning, I feel I 'time travel' and occupy states of presence called up in us by the people.

Taken from weekly field notes about Tower Bridge care home, by Cai Tomos, 2019

For residents who are bed bound, a room and bed become the locus for a sense of home where we try to weave our humanity, our dreams and who we are - integrating past, future and present together. The territory of thresholds and spaces within a home become synonymous with qualities within or of ourself. This (above) excerpt from Cai begins to test out the terrain of thresholds in all its potential meanings.



Home: the space in-between us all by Rebecca Swift

How co-creation and confluence create a sense of home through shared experience.



It's difficult to concretely map what is mostly a sensed, creative transaction, often described in esoteric terms as the 'movement of energy' between people. This 'play of energy' between us all undoes the presumption that the focus of attention is only on the case of the person who is the 'participant' – 'participant' being a word the creative work itself erodes. Although our 'emerging artists' receive attention in their work, we also accentuate the space between us all.

Highlighting this 'third space' between everyone encourages a shared responsibility for stories rather than an 'othering' that can happen if we locate experiences, especially those around change and loss, in just a few. Entelechy's work brings attention to the quality of creative connection between everyone, whatever our description or label, paid or unpaid. This approach cultivates a curiosity for moments of mutual - learning and its consequent influence on the living fabric of social connection, as cultural outcome.

Seeing the potential confluences between people includes bringing people together who otherwise wouldn't have connected, and how that might 'root' us in a new place:

Two older men are sitting far apart at each side of a large table. They are new members at a new programme called 'Meet Me at the Albany' - a cultural social hub for isolated housebound elders. One man is visually impaired, used to be an engineer, and was born in Barbados. The other man used to be a watchmaker and repairer and was born in Greece. They are Londoners and both men are alone and not speaking to anyone.

They are introduced to each other. What follows is a conversation that lasts an hour about the similarities and differences between engineering and watch repairing and how this reflects on technology today. Inquisitiveness aroused by good debate attracts others to the conversation. The two men's knowledge and expertise become visible, held in a public space of the Albany café. We all begin to feel a sense of home, through communion created by good debate and social connection.

Identifying artistic process and product as dynamically shifting and occurring in the space between people has its parallels in Winnicott's concept of the 'potential space' and 'transitional space' and in Gestalt therapy - Martin Buber's 'zwischen menschliche' (between people); or in psychoanalysis on inter-subjectivity (Daniel Stern) relating to our ability to non-verbally sense another's actions and intentions and identify with this.

Work that is co-authored could paradoxically better highlight the individual and their contribution to the evolution of an idea. The devising process within co-authorship can involve a multi-layered form of mapping which more explicitly names different threads of influence from different people towards the fruition of a piece. Leadership also begins to rove between people. The skill of the artist as animator is then, being able to recede in the background as much as move into the charismatic foreground, to let in something new as well as help catalyse something, to see what happens.

Ideally, unexpected confluences between others can produce a communally owned culture that voices something pertinent to the present era and moment. Confluence has the potential to incubate at its core (where lines cross) something that was already on the threshold of emerging. In this way unanticipated, unspoken resonance, across difference, can tangibly surface; drawing from the points where different people interconnect can bring into relief hidden often unarticulated communal (even hidden from ourselves)

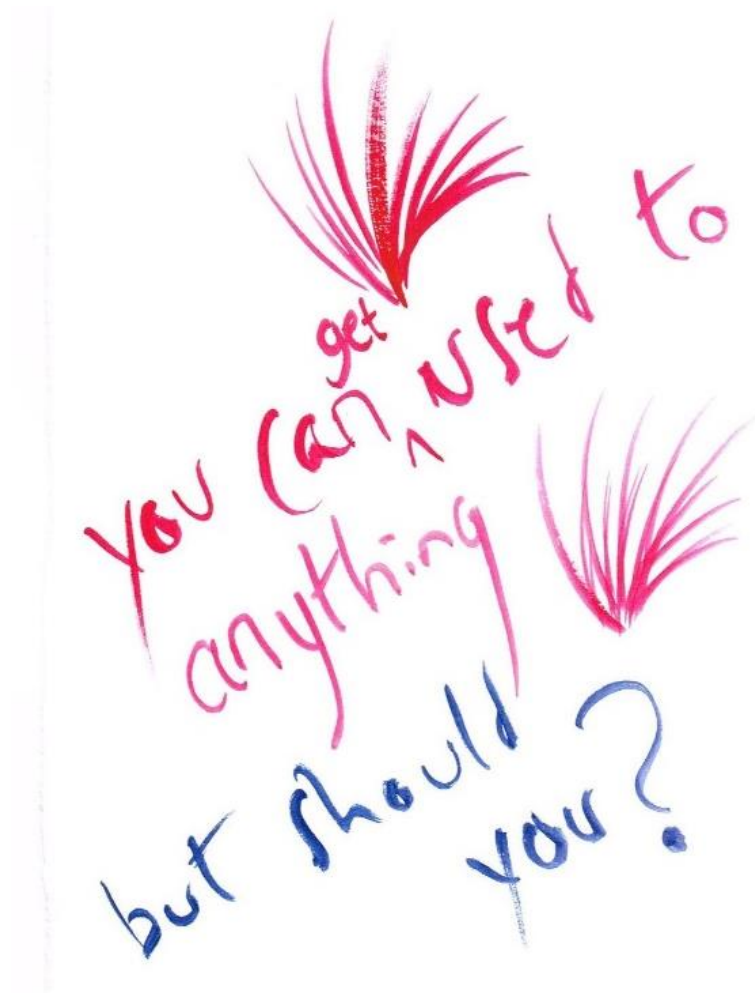
thought and experience, that can more intimately and authentically juxtaposes difference with similarity. Often this approach delivers information that is potent, alive, with the possibility of it being applied elsewhere.

Consequently, within our work, paid artists are encouraged to bring themselves into the equation whilst also being free to not know, which in turn stabilises us to listen and receive - to genuinely let in what is in-front of us. Ideally, this shift in listening frames the transaction of mutual learning; of the fine weave of different identities in informing an art form. Through the skill of the artist to receive, allow and manage their own vulnerability, as well as those of the group, there can be shifts in the balance of power between people that are often deeply subtle, but radical.

“If I was to write a song, I could draw on my methodologies and skills in that moment and produce something that delivered the goods (to a high standard); whereas here at MMA, I also work with the opposite of this, where sometimes I’m chatting and in the background, letting go of my methodologies, letting in something new, allowing for messiness, which creates space for something unexpected, from the quality of relationship I have with the elders”
Entelechy Arts associate artist, Chris Green, 2014, whilst working at Meet Me at the Albany

Image below: Chris Green and Joyce chat about life – there is no pressure to create a product or form an outcome – it’s a chance to get to know each other. Joyce encourages Chris to paint and they share a few of their thoughts which Chris then paints onto paper, having not really held a paintbrush since secondary school. Here, he is completely letting go of his methodologies.





A wise saying by Joyce and painted by Chris, 2014

From notes, and quotes captured by Rebecca Swift, 2014, drawing from her observations at MMA, Ambient Jam, and residency's at SDDS and Manly Court care home.

Photos: Rebecca Swift



Home brings past, future and everything together

from Michael and Kathy

Residents at Tower Bridge care home describe how being part of a group cultivates a sense of home, which then creates the foundation from which to have new experiences.

“In the group it’s like traffic lights: Red, orange, green. I like to turn green. Say YES to things I have never said yes to before. I want to be up on that stage, try something new. You see more of life when we go out and see how other people live; stuck in here seeing the same people day in day out – you need a change. Doing something I thought I would never be able to do. Chance to be mischievous. We are not prisoners are we!” *Michael, resident, singer and storyteller with the Walking through Walls group at Tower Bridge care home, 2019*

“Because it’s bringing the world together, where before, my world was breaking up and going out, apart, and not friendly. Bringing the world and my life together. In the group I talk to others. Makes me feel good in life. I am living a life. I’ve got a life! Making friends. I like doing the singing and the dancing, seeing other people; going to the theatre [21st Century Tea Dances]; enjoy watching seeing others flourish. Bringing me out into the world!”

Kathy, resident and artist with the Walking through Walls group at Tower Bridge care home, 2019

Establishing a strong sense of group is a vital outcome of long-term creative residencies in care homes. This quality of belonging within a group forms the foundation for a sense of home from which to try something new and be in the world.

The idea that home is a state of being or place, that can integrate and enable both our past roots and our sense of the future, is explored by psychologist Papadopoulos in his work with refugees: “the very idea of home includes in itself origins as well as aspired goals” (Therapeutic Care for Refugees, p11, 2002). He suggests that different etymological origins of the word home, points towards it being a relational “collective connotation” not just “a personal home of one person”. It makes sense then that within the relational space which creativity and culture protects and values, the quality of our experience of home is enhanced. Residents, Michael and Kathy clearly convey that this enhancement of a sense of home, through our sense of self and community, both nourishes our roots (origins) whilst conversely attending to the future and enabling creative risk - to be part of the world outside the home itself.



Still I don't know where I'm going
by Lillian Bartholomew

Whatever I do
To mine own self
I must be true
My life is full
And overflowing
Still I don't know
Where I am going
I make my plans for each new day
But things just don't turn out that way
Sometimes my life is golden thread
At times it's black and filled with dread
But like a tapestry as it unfolds
Comes blues and greens or red so bold
So, I have learned to accept each part
To live it with a thankful heart
I have a choice wear out or rust
To choose the first I know I must
Still I don't know where I'm going.



By Lillian Bartholomew, 2014

Lillian Bartholomew has been a member of Entelechy's elders Theatre ensemble since it originally re-grouped at Southwark Pensioners Centre over 15 years ago. She is a poet, facilitator, actor, activist.



Rebecca Swift, Creative Director 2020