



Create London The White House

Interim Evaluation Report,
Executive Summary
2017- 2019

Susanne Burns Associates

CREATE



THE WHITE HOUSE

"I am always made to feel very welcomed at The White House and thoroughly enjoy my time spent there; it is like going from 'home' to 'home' and aids a sense of belonging. It is a space that encourages creativity, community participation and allows local people to appreciate the arts right on their doorstep. In such a short space of time I have witnessed the positive impact that it has had on people's lives (including my own) and really look forward to seeing this brilliant facility flourish and improve the lives of local residents." (Local Resident & Artist) ¹

Create London was founded in 2008 with the aim of developing closer relationships between artists and communities in East London. Since that time, the organisation has explored the ways in which artists can make positive contributions to the lives of people in cities, working closely with public authorities, housing providers, developers, private companies, arts and cultural organisations, artists, designers, architects and communities. Create has commissioned artwork and delivered long term creative projects that contribute to improvements in neighbourhoods and provided significant new opportunities for artists encouraging them to consider their relationship with their neighbourhood. The work is primarily focused on the communities of East London.

¹ Where attributed to an individual a quote has been published previously in a report. In some cases quotes are from key documents and these are named. Where quotes come from conversations with the consultant, they are acknowledged as 'Team Member'.

Since 2012 Create London has delivered six projects in the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham (LBBd) to respond to the specific social needs of local communities and aimed at increasing their appreciation of the arts and to widen participation.

There was therefore already proven track record for impactful delivery within the borough. When the opportunity to take up residence in The White House came up, it was the culmination of a long-held ambition to deliver a permanent and sustainable project on the Becontree Estate in Dagenham - a part of the borough with the lowest levels of cultural participation.

The White House's ambitious programme aims to be an exemplary long-term project demonstrating how art can be used as a tool to bring about long-lasting and meaningful social impact. The White House seeks to become a permanent artists' space to facilitate community development, exchange, learning and research. In a residential area, the project presents a domestic context for local people to encounter the opportunities presented by resident artists.



A particular concern for The White House is the home and domesticity as a place for cultural, creative activity and exchange. The White House presents, in a sociable and domestic setting, a new opportunity for local people to meaningfully collaborate with artists.

Through The White House, Create London is seeking to establish new approaches for artist-led social practice in an area that has experienced years of social and economic deprivation and which has had few opportunities for diverse groups of people to undertake self-development to positively change their life circumstances.

The vision is clear: a permanent community-led space where artists and the community come together to create work that is directly related to the locality. This was to be a new kind of community arts space, a reimagining of the arts space as home.

The values that drive The White House are about creating 'home':

- an open, inclusive and tolerant space;
- a sociable space where people belong and friendships can be made and maintained;
- a safe comfortable space where growth and ambition are possible and where art can be made that is relevant and reflective of context.

A pilot programme took place between January 2016 and December 2017.

January 2016

Research & Development
Apparata start renovation



August – December 2016

The White House opens
Chad McCail & Patrick Goddard start the first residencies;
Christina Ford and Eve Chabanon's residencies follow



January – December 2017

Alice Theobald, They Are Here and Wouter Osterholt residencies
PHF agree three years of funding (Nov 17)

The learning that accrued from the pilot informed plans for the three-year period 2018 -2021 which was funded by the Paul Hamlyn Foundation and which has been evaluated by an external consultant.

There was a recognition at the end of the pilot period that The White House is different, that it potentially represents a new kind of arts space in a community and that this requires new approaches to both day to day and strategic management, project planning and facilitation and curation. It is challenging hierarchies, exploring approaches to co-creation and community-driven provision and decision making and this requires an openness and honesty from the team as well as the organisation who are ultimately accountable for it.

Create set out to achieve some ambitious outcomes in four dimensions by the end of the funded period:

- Artists
- Participants/Audiences
- Community and Partners
- Create and the Sector

Threading through the aspired four outcomes were the simultaneous development of a range of support opportunities for artists – local, national and international – and the co-creation of opportunities for the local community to engage with art and artists, to take part in arts activity and to ultimately develop local ownership of the house so that it could grow into an independent community-led organization.



The programme to date has been diverse:

November – March 2017/2018

Evaluation Framework developed
Friends of The White House established
Wouter Osterholt residency



April – December 2018

Artist Development Residency with Raju Rage and 6 local artists
Consolidation of Front Room Programme
Gal Leshem and Aquí Thami residencies; Alice Theobald exhibition



January – March 2019

Revision of Aims, Delivery Plans and Interim Evaluation report
Final work on Garden by They Are Here; Wouter Osterholt exhibition

We are able to track significant progress after the first 15 months in all four impact dimensions.

Since 2016, there are many people whose development The White House has supported in various ways. In turn, they have put a lot of time and effort into the house. Creating spaces and opportunities for them to grow and develop skills and life chances is important but it is also important to reach new people to scale up this impact and reach more widely into this community. The report contains a series of case studies of artists and community members that demonstrate this impact.

The team are adopting an iterative approach to evaluation and learning that is informing the ongoing development of the programme.

Key learning has focused attention on the need to:

- Achieve greater clarity on objectives and expectations and clarifying and aligning contracts when working with partners;

- Prioritise and focus support for local artists;
- Explore different models and structures for residencies working out what is most effective and why, in what contexts and with which audiences;
- Support some groups to become self-sustaining;
- Develop a programme of training, mentoring and development for the 'Friends';
- Structure the programme in seasons which will make the programme easier to navigate and understand;
- Embed approaches in the wider context of Create London;
- Put in place a programme of work that will share learning with peers and the wider sector.



All pictures by Emil Charlaff

To support the programme moving forward, recommendations are made that will:

- Improve data collection;
- Clarify aims and objectives and align these with a refined evaluation framework;
- Further improve approaches to partnership working;
- Support local artists;
- Further explore different approaches to designing and structuring residencies and commissions;
- Enable the team to reach a wider demographic through a more cohesive approach to programming all elements of provision;
- Share the learning to date;
- Embed approaches to learning and evaluation within Create London as a whole;
- Support the aim of community asset transfer in the longer term.

The White House is challenging hierarchies, exploring approaches to co-creation and community-driven provision and decision making and this requires an openness and honesty from the team as well as the organisation who are ultimately accountable for it.

As stated earlier, The White House is different. This should not be underestimated or burdened with unrealistic expectations. What is being achieved - and what can potentially be achieved - takes - and will take - time and trust and phased approaches to generating ownership and localized empowerment. This is no quick fix.