



PLANNING FOR WORKSHOPS

THINKING AHEAD

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CONGRATULATIONS YOU GOT THE GIG!

You've landed a booking running a workshop and now you're probably thinking, ok so how can I make this the best workshop that I can do.

There's a few things to think about that can help inform how the workshop goes.



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10 WHAT'S THE JOURNEY OF THE WORKSHOP

Overall it's great to consider what the outcome of the workshop will be, and then work backwards.

Do you want learners to leave with a particular finished physical outcome or skill?



How can you get to that result?

Every great workshop needs a beginning, middle and end; just like every good book. At the start introductions and icebreakers are essential, depending on how much time you have these can be adapted but should always feature as a way for your learners to ease into the workshop space. Always introduce yourself and any relevant information about your creative practice; please be aware that there is a line between an 'artist talk' and workshop introduction... they are very different! For that reason, I often think **an introduction to yourself and your creative practice should be no more than 15 minutes.**

Consider then you will go from introductions into activities; I try to get my learners stuck into making as soon as possible so that we make the most of the creative time together. There's more on active/passive facilitation further on in this resource, but ideally you want to give learners variety throughout the session.

Make sure you have time beyond the outcome/endpoint for some reflection, this will allow learners to share what they have learnt with you and the rest of the workshop community.

Every workshop will have a different flow because each person in the room contributes to the energy in the space. Embrace the possibility that the journey of the workshop will feel different, even if the content is the same!



02 CONSIDER YOUR AUDIENCE

(INCLUSIVITY IN ACTIVITIES AND REFERENCES)

I always create workshop plans that are mindful of all abilities and needs; one of my strengths in life has been my neurodiversity; a high proportion of creatives are neurodiverse, so I am mindful of how session plans can be structured to keep attention and energy levels high. **Think about how you can be mindful of your learners and any needs they might have; if you don't know who is joining your workshops then be prepared for all levels.**

Consider having a variety of activities that appeal to different learning styles. For example, you might want activities that encourage creative physical outcomes or you may want activities that inspire critical reflection.

The best way to consider what you will run is asking yourself the following questions?

1. What do I want learners to feel?

2. What do I want learners to leave with? (Both in terms of physical things, as well as anything that we absorb/develop such as skills, thoughts, knowledge, perspective etc)

Then I like to do a working backwards process...

1. What sort of activities will support these outcomes?

2. How can you play to your own strengths as a workshop leader?



CONSIDER YOUR **AUDIENCE**

(INCLUSIVITY IN ACTIVITIES AND REFERENCES)

There is a slightly more etheric approach too, how will you appeal to attendee's senses? I always find this helpful when planning my workshops...

Think of the different senses:



SIGHT Sight: How will you visually inspire and encourage? Will you show some thrilling visuals? Will the space be designed to appeal to the vision?

SMELL Smell: A funny one, but if you are working with specific materials this can be crucial; think about that gorgeous smell that comes with oil painting, or the heavy earthy smell of clay? I myself love the smell of books and libraries... as soon as I walk into a library and get that olfactory connection to books, then I can't wait to pick up and look through them. One of my friends Ocean Baulcombe-Toppin makes bespoke incense and tea blends as part of her artworks – these draw you in with a very otherworldly escapist feeling. So perhaps consider smell within your workshops!

TOUCH Touch: Gorgeous materiality; how can you connect materials to your learners? What materials will inspire through touch? Activities such as closing your eyes and feeling an object and drawing it can heighten our connection to touch in beautiful ways. Also object handling is often done within museum-based workshops to allow learners to build connections with past histories, stories and experiences.

HEARING Hearing: Playlists! A great set of atmosphere-evoking tunes is just one example of how you can connect to your audience. Other activities such as Active Listening exercises (give it a google) can prompt your attendees to listen with deeper intention to their peers and yourself. For longer sessions or activities such as crits, active listening exercises can really support learners in listening!

TASTE Taste: If you can build some sort of food/beverage sharing into the session that also avoids allergens and caters for everyone's dietary requirements, then that is another way that you can bring a group together. 'Sharing food is the best way to create memories' – Noopur Surti

03 PREPARING THE WORKSHOP SPACE

Think about what activities you have planned, inspired by the aims of your workshop. For an ideal workshop consider the following:

Inclusivity – How can you ensure that the space acts as an equitable space for all, so that no one is left out? **If possible, try and collect the access needs of your participants when they book onto your workshop.** Do they need wheelchair access? Do they wear any hearing support equipment?

There was a real trend for beanbags and floor cushions at one point with workshops... Whilst this made for a 'relaxed' atmosphere, it meant that those unable to sit on the floor due to all sorts of reasons, were immediately 'left out' before the workshop had even begun.

If you can, add questions onto your booking form or ask the organisation that you're working with to add these. This could include something broad like 'How can we make your learning experience as comfortable physically as possible?' or 'Is there anything you would like us to consider when planning the workshop space setup for you?'

If you don't have the capacity to ask these questions, then just consider planning for all access needs as possible.

How Space Creates Engagement – One thing I would encourage if possible, is to consider your workshop space, as an artwork or tool in itself.

I once did a workshop for Tate Modern where we set up a DreamLab; we set the space up as an immersive experience, where families could come in and were registered by DreamLab Technicians (all looking rather scientific), before heading over to the DreamHub where they would sit down and talk to each other about their dreams. There was space for families to draw or write about their dreams, before moving to the DreamVision activity where we had acetate (coloured and plain) and overhead projectors and families could restage their dreams with each other in them. They got to photograph each other and build their dreams visually through projections. It was a really beautiful experience and required 'zoning' of the learning space which managed our activity numbers too, meaning that each family had time in each space, and the activity moved at a natural pace.

We played with lighting using desk lamps from the office space, that created mood and atmosphere in the beginning activity and gave families clipboards and paper to draw and write their dreams. The children took charge of the clipboards, giving them a sense of autonomy in the process, and was a prop that they got excited about!

So what I'm trying to communicate here, is see how the different elements within the workshop space can be played with to support the learning. Those elements can include:

Setup of furniture

Lighting

Audio/Visual equipment
and/or effects

Props/costumes
(where appropriate)

04 HOW TO READ THE ROOM

There are many ways to assess how your workshop is going, here are some suggestions:

Ask – Ask your learners at various points throughout the session.

Asking questions such as **'Does that make sense?'** will provide mainly yes or no answers.

Asking questions such as **'How does that make you feel?'** or **'Does that remind you of anything?'** Will incite more personal responses that go beyond yes or no

Body language – Sometimes it can be obvious... Being phubbed (the act of someone ignoring or snubbing you whilst using their phone) is pretty horrible, but gives you an immediate and honest suggestion that someone is not engaging and perhaps you need to adapt your activities.

In the opposite sense, where learners are animatedly talking to each other, getting stuck in and smiling – these are all signs that your workshop is a success.

How are learners getting on with the tasks you've set? If you've provided a great workshop space, an inspiring set of activities and all the materials that are required then you are likely to see your learners getting on with the activities, making/creating with ease. If you see a learner struggling, go over and ask them! What can you adapt? How can you help?

There is a caveat here, that not everyone is so obvious in their engagement, which leads us to....

Providing space for passive and active moments of participation – Not everyone will respond enthusiastically when being asked to put their hand up and answer a question (we've all been there in those deadly silent moments!).

Providing moments where people can provide feedback in a written or anonymous way can give you a further 'reading of the room'.

Consider also where setting moments of reflection or individual making supports your activities, as well as group work or collaborative activities. I ideally go for a mix of both those, so that you are giving people a workshop that contains lots of different moments and routes into engaging.

FEEDBACK/EVALUATION

Feedback and evaluation supports your artist educator practice to grow. Consider collecting these before, during and after your workshops. You might do this by:

Before

Asking learners what they are looking forward to about the workshop. What do they want to get out of the experience?
Why did they sign up?



During

Please see the Read the Room section!



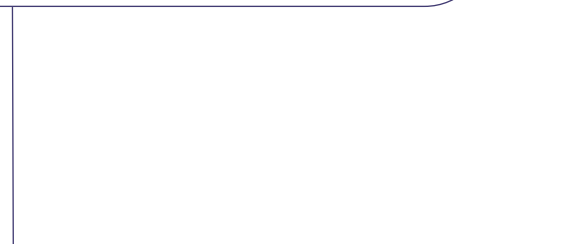
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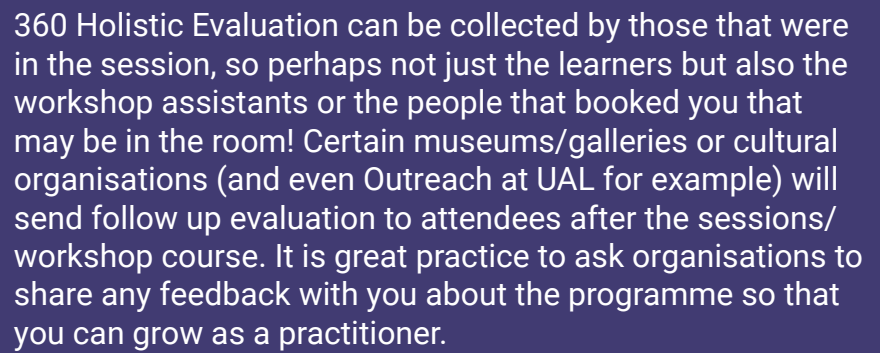
At the end of the workshop I ask my learners to fill out a post it note answering 'What Went Well' and 'Even Better If'. This encourages to assess what went down well and then how you could improve things for the next time. It gives those who are afraid to be vocal in the session a space for their voice to be heard. This method is also really handy if you are running a series of sessions, as it gives you an opportunity to adapt your next session with the feedback from this last session.



Learning from workshops

What went well and even better if for yourself!





360 Holistic Evaluation can be collected by those that were in the session, so perhaps not just the learners but also the workshop assistants or the people that booked you that may be in the room! Certain museums/galleries or cultural organisations (and even Outreach at UAL for example) will send follow up evaluation to attendees after the sessions/workshop course. It is great practice to ask organisations to share any feedback with you about the programme so that you can grow as a practitioner.



A final note is that people may like to leave you feedback on social media!

So if you feel like you want to open that door to feedback and provided that you have permission from the organisation that you delivered the workshop for, I find that writing a post and sharing images from sessions often allows learners to write how they found the session in a digital space!

It can also be a nice way for you to share how the session went, and help you perhaps catch the eye of other people from different organisations looking for people to book... and might get you your next workshop booking!

