Work Experience
Taking Part in All Sided Games

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Abstract
Collective is a contemporary visual arts organisation in Edinburgh. In 2012-2014 Collective produced ‘All Sided Games’ (ASG): a commissions programme placing artists in and around host venues for the Commonwealth Games in Scotland. The Director invited me to evaluate ASG. Rather than understanding evaluation as a process of measuring outcomes, I set out to evoke the experience of taking part as a way to generate discussion with Collective. Following the narrative style of the evaluation document, this paper tells a story of the evaluation process. The story begins with my arrival in Edinburgh to take part in 001-100: an artwork commissioned from Cristina Lucas. Later we engage with works by: Mitch Miller, Jacob Dahlgren, Nils Norman, Florrie James and Dennis McNulty. 001-100 was a 100 metre run for 100 people aged between zero to 100. We do not start with the run however, but on my way to take part. Unfamiliar with Edinburgh I stop to ask a builder how to get to where I want to go. He points towards a small passageway, a space on the side of the road. This first scene frames the paper. Kathleen Stewart’s ‘space on the side of the road’ is the site of an opening or reopening into the story of America: a narrative space, it fashions ‘room for manoeuvre’ (1993: 03); she tells its story through interruptions and amassed densities of description. I ‘run’ with this. The paper reveals the evaluation process as one of amassing descriptions of my being in the programme alongside the stories of others. As with the cumulative style of the evaluation document I produced from the research, I interrupt the linear pathway of the paper to loop back to the builder twice more. Making reference to John Dewey (1934), on the first occasion I ensure that the reader is aware of my intention to trace art as part of the environment. On the second, I ensure we understand that the story, of course, is bigger than the paper. The paper positions the evaluation document as part of the evaluation process. To offer a glimpse of the (25,000 word) evaluation I include some of its descriptions; but also share what they evoked in their reading. Making reference to Josephides (2010), (as the evaluation) the paper concludes that taking part in ASG stretches participants towards understanding the nature of our connectivity. The paper offers an additional conclusion, however: in reading the cumulative descriptions the reader is also stretched towards a more intimate understanding of the way art works. Finally, the bigger bigger story is that, of course, the paper sits within Scottish cultural policy and related funding streams. Returning to the roadside I remind us that it is Collective (with the support of Creative Scotland) who has paved the way for this research. By stepping out of the usual way of doing things, Collective made this space. I recommend making more space for experiments in ‘experiential evaluation’.

Keywords: Art, applied anthropology, description, ethnography, evaluation

Key references
Collective: http://www.collectivegallery.net/about, 2015-04-13