

THE ART
OF BEING
FOR REAL

SOFIA LINDSTRÖM

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Sofia Lindström

CONTENTS

Foreword • 5

Introduction • 7

Youth culture and the responsibilities of adults • 8

The significance of culture through history • 9

Activity through dialogue • 10

Structuring the project • 11

Something about graffiti • 12

Graffiti a problem? Young people interested in graffiti a problem? • 13

What worked? • 14

The difference between communication and speech as performance • 15

Creating a Free Zone • 16

Summary • 17

Conclusion • 18

References • 20

FOREWORD

People want to tell their own stories and listen to stories told by others. In each small package of newborn humanity there is an inherent desire and ability to be creative and inventive. That is what I believe. In any place where people have lived and continue to live, this desire and ability has created an imprint for others to take part in. Obviously this holds true for dance, music, theatrical performances and works of art in museums, art centres and in public places. It applies to the furniture in our homes and to the interiors of our houses as well as their outer appearance. Aspects of our love of narration are physically collected in libraries and state museums and in the collective, amoeba-like treasure of our time – the Internet. We create and narrate because, in our capacity as humans we need to do it, and because our human fellowship also requires it. In this respect there is no difference between a graffiti painting, a written book, a beautifully decorated building on Gothenburg's main street 'Avenyn' or even a so-called 'tag'.

In the collective space shared by human beings in society, we have to leave room for human creativity in the form of physical institutions, in the area traditionally defined as culture. It is just as important that we create the preconditions for creativity in the city's open spaces. However, in the open space there is not room to house everything in any one location. Houses cannot be built anywhere, sculptures cannot be positioned in bicycle lanes and graffiti artists have to relate to the concept that not all locations are suitable for paintings. Yet it is also important to emphasise that the social status and position of architects, sculptors and street artists are far from equal. Possibly this is because of the general attitude of the public to factors such as the demographic and socio-economic status of the relevant individuals? In any case, we must not forget that it is far from easy for certain narratives and creative energies to gain the positions they deserve. Politics has a particular responsibility to level out this variance.

Sofia Lindström's text describes how the city of Gothenburg, through the Young & Creative project, has tried to forge a path in the visual arts for the human right to self-expression. This right should not be reserved exclusively for those who are privileged. The text also demonstrates what a great resource it is to have access in society to an open-minded cultural life, in this case in the form of Röda Sten Art Centre.

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INTRODUCTION

In the spring of 2009 I conducted an evaluation of Project Young & Creative at the Röda Sten Art Centre in Gothenburg. This was a collaboration between Ung Kultur 116¹ – a dialogue-based group within Gothenburg’s City Council working with young people and the issue of graffiti – and Röda Sten Art Centre. By use of an explorative perspective focusing on the participating young people, I tried to establish the successes and possible downsides of the project. The findings were presented in the publication *Evaluation of Young & Creative – a collaborative social and art educational project between Röda Sten Art Centre and Ung Kultur 116* (Lindström, 2010).

The project was very much about the lack of a space offering young people the possibility of meeting and putting into practice their interest in artistic or visual forms of expression². There was thus a need for a place where young people could activate themselves and thereby have the opportunity to achieve visibility and participation in a society, in relation to which they wished to make demands and assert themselves. But what are the implications of creating a space where young people can meet and conduct artistic activities? Setting up projects with young people often implies expectations and conceptions that are either redefined or confirmed.

The purpose of this text is to use Young & Creative as an example of a continuing discussion on the rights of children and young people to take part in cultural expression and develop their interests. The aspiration of the text is to reach out to others who wish to work with young people and put similar ideas into practice. Through conclusions that could be drawn from this project, one hopes that others, as well as being inspired by the things that worked, might also, within their own frameworks, avoid certain factors that could otherwise overturn or render more difficult their working processes aiming to create activities generated by and with young people. As yet, knowledge of promotional activities for young people – by this one means activities that encourage positive development – are relatively unresearched in the current climate in Sweden (Andersson & Jordan, 2007). In other words, this text intends to gauge what was learned from this example and discuss this from a perspective of continuing development – how may the experiences of Young & Creative be used as examples in different contexts? What is the current position in the political landscape of the discussion on the rights and needs of young people to cultural expression?

The text is also about the ways in which adults might reflect on their own role in enabling young people to furnish themselves with the cultural aspects that interest them – it is therefore an addition to a discussion on how adults may relate to and behave in the field of youth culture.

1 The name might be translated as “Youth Culture 116” – the number is a reference to the postcode of the premises where the organisation was first based.

2 Art is a word that can seem excluding, as it is surrounded by traditional concepts of genius, talent and high culture. Project Young & Creative was keen to lower the thresholds to art by focusing on the abilities and ideas of young people. It is important to lower the expectations so that everyone can feel included.

YOUTH CULTURE AND THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF ADULTS

A new way of speaking about and understanding children and childhood within childhood research has emerged, which is so fundamentally different from what was there before, that one can speak of a paradigm shift. Childhood is no longer judged from an adult perspective in which children are viewed as “becoming”, that is, future adults, but rather as a fully validated category in their own right. Children are now perceived as competent participants and emphasis is often placed on their influence and decision-making participation (Balldin & Blom, 2001). For instance, in relation to cultural practice, Gustafsson (2008) suggests that many children would like the opportunity of trying different cultural expressions, to be able to evaluate their own experiences and have a greater opportunity of selecting their own cultural preferences. She also notes that the “child’s perspective” often reflects the norms, values and expectations of adults, and that these frequently take precedence over the child’s own perspective on culture. Nowadays we often speak of culture *by* and *with* children and not just culture *for* children.

According to Article 31 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, every child is entitled to rest and leisure and to engage in play. The article also includes the rights of children to participate freely in cultural life and the arts. The Article declares:

States Parties shall respect and promote the right of the child to participate fully in cultural and artistic life and shall encourage the provision of appropriate and equal opportunities for cultural, artistic, recreational and leisure activity. (Children’s Convention, Article 31, UN).

According to Nelson (2008:10) there are several pedagogical goals of art in relation to children / young people:

- it gives children / young people a desire to see
- it gives children / young people a broader understanding of reality
- it gives children / young people a possibility of looking into themselves
- it gives children / young people a greater desire to create for themselves

The various art forms are often picked out as a challenge to more traditional teaching methods in schools. Art is said to create the possibility for children to change their ideas and think anew (Gustavsson & Fritszén, 2008). In art, it is believed that children are able to confront existential questions in codified form by activating the imagination and the ability to generate meaning (Hellström Sveningsson, 2008).

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF CULTURE THROUGH HISTORY

The significance of art in humanity’s development is rooted in Aristotle’s text *Poetics*, which describes the importance of letting young people partake of music and art because of their ability to touch people emotionally. According to Aristotle, art has a therapeutic and purifying effect which is known as *catharsis*. The German, Alexander Baumgarten, tied himself to this school of thought when during the 1750’s he presented aesthetics as a philosophical discipline, a sort of science of the emotions through which we perceived the world in other ways than the purely intellectual (Kåreland, 2008). The cultural scientists Belfiore & Bennet (2007) suggest that the perceived social significance of culture and art has gone through various phases. They interpret three very clear currents in history which, contradictorily one might think, coexist simultaneously: There is a “negative” tradition, in which the cultural expression of young people, including graffiti, is often seen as problematic. The “dance band menace” of the 1940’s is a clear example of a problem established by the surrounding society to protect its moral boundaries. The concept of catharsis is rather a part of a “positive” tradition, into which the contemporary School of Creativity fits very well because it is a project accentuating the importance of diverse cultural expression in learning. The third current is referred to by Belfiore & Bennett (2007) as the “autonomous” tradition, in which art can only be said to exist for its own sake – what is known as “l’art pour l’art”. This tradition could be described as breaking with both of the former. The art work does not have to be good or bad, as long as it avoids any form of statement on technique or social utility. Activities that propose to use art in children’s or young people’s projects could thus be seen as belonging to the second tradition, because art is being used for purposes not only to do with the art itself; such as the promotion of learning or to encourage participation in meaningful activity rather than merely expressing oneself in the public sphere.

However, in the new way of referring to children as competent and co-creative, there is reason to reflect on the neutral concept of “youth”. Children are born and live in unequal relationships of power that exist in society, and they replicate these relationships while at the same time re-negotiating and transforming them. But whose participation, what young people are we speaking of? What expressions and assessments of youth culture are heeded? How do adults resolve the balancing act between adult responsibility and those young people already able to *do it themselves*? In the light of the wish by young people to practice various types of culture it is important for adults to examine their expectations about youth when they organise cultural events, whether these are for, with or by children/ young people, in order to achieve a rich cultural life for everyone. It is probably important to bear in mind that it will still be adults buying the tickets, accompanying young people to events, managing art centres and setting up festivals. Adults are the most significant prerequisite, not least financially, for young people experiencing and working with art, even with art that has the ambition of being *by and with* children. To say anything else would not be to redistribute power to the children, but rather render invisible the power that still exists in the balance between adult responsibility and participation: the power enjoyed by adults over children’s cultural consumption and production.

ACTIVITY THROUGH DIALOGUE

At Gothenburg City Council, one way of handling this balance between the responsibilities of adults and the inclusion of young people has been to focus on *dialogue* between adults and young people. The main task of Project Ung Kultur 116 was initially to “work preventively with graffiti from a social perspective by entering into direct dialogue with youth in the graffiti/graffiti culture and, with them, develop alternative creative activities” (Sander & Jordan, 2009; 23). The brief was also to pass on knowledge about the question and, by means of dialogue, collaborate with everyone affected by the problem. What was unique about Ung Kultur 116 was its acceptance of the complexity of the issue of graffiti. It is not a simple problem, in fact it can simultaneously be a case of criminal, social and creative acts in the public space³ carried out by various young people for a variety of reasons. This was also the starting point for the collaboration with Röda Sten Art Centre. There was a desire to create an activity for young people, to catch the attention of individuals that were interested in graffiti and creative activity in the city of Gothenburg.

Röda Sten is an art centre in a district of Gothenburg known as Klippan. It organises exhibitions of national and international contemporary artists. The two organisers represented different areas with different values and goals: Ung Kultur 116 was locally and politically anchored and had a goal of working socially with young people, whereas Röda Sten Art Centre was very much connected with the world of culture, its overriding aim to exhibit groundbreaking art and work pedagogically with contemporary art and culture. In slightly oversimplified terms one could say that they were both drawn together by geographical and historical fact: the building of Röda Sten Art Centre, since the closure of the porter breweries in the 1970’s, had functioned as a gathering place for sub-cultural groups such as graffiti painters, as revealed by its still painted and sprayed walls. Röda Sten has arguably been one of Scandinavia’s most important semi-legal places for graffiti painters. This was cemented not least through the event “Everwanting streets” in 2004, when a number of graffiti artists held workshops in the area (Lindström, 2010). On the other hand, Röda Sten’s activities as an art centre were earlier hardly at all connected with the frequent spontaneous activities of young people on the exterior of the building. The staff wanted to find a way of approaching and integrating them more effectively into the centre’s activities and opening the doors to those who kept themselves on the outside. Ung Kultur 116 found this possibility extremely interesting. They had previously been doing field work in the area and were keen to have the opportunity to enter into dialogue with local youth. Consequently the two organisations entered into a collaboration, although to a certain extent they had different goals which nonetheless brought them together. Röda Sten had artistic goals and Ung Kultur 116 had social goals. Each had to assimilate the other’s activities in order to give momentum to their venture. This required a good deal of communication and mutual respect for their different skills, and herein lay the key to how such fundamentally diverse players could create something together.

³ For more knowledge on graffiti as a phenomenon, recommended reading includes for instance Broman & Fredin (2009), Jacobson (1996), MacDonald (2001) and Shannon (2003).

STRUCTURING THE PROJECT

The ambition was thus to start an activity much like a course with creative and arts-based activities by and with young people. The project began with a pilot study in which young males active in graffiti culture were invited to suggest what activities they would like to try, and within what sort of parameters. The outcome was one meeting per week in a studio-like space with the possibility of trying different materials and formats for creative activities, as well as having to take responsibility for keeping the place tidy, sometimes being entrusted with supplying coffee and helping organise the closing exhibition. The organisers also determined early on to open the course to more than just a group of “young graffiti fans” as the project might otherwise risk being perceived as stigmatising. Hence other youth interested in painting and form were recruited to the activity, primarily via peer-to-peer – i.e. young people themselves spreading the word – but also by means of targeted information campaigns to schools and municipal youth centres in Gothenburg. The set age limits were 13–18, that is, students in the last three years of their secondary education and sixth formers. In the beginning no decision was made as to the maximum number of participants, but there was a realisation that more than 15–16 people in the workshop at any one time would be too crowded. The event was held at Röda Sten Art Centre and led by an artist pedagogue and a social worker from Ung Kultur 116. Each term began with the young people making suggestions about activities, and was concluded with an exhibition at Röda Sten Art Centre (Lindström, 2010).

In other words, Ung Kultur 116 chaperoned young men⁴ into the activity, as a result of their contacts with young people detained for graffiti offences and other young people encountered in their field work. Not all who were approached were interested in taking part in the activity, but many of those who did seemed to attach great importance to the fact that the social worker employed by Ung Kultur 116 was present at the workshops. He had not counted on this at the outset, but it seems that his presence was extremely significant. The social worker and artist pedagogue running Young & Creative, divided their responsibilities during the meetings of Young & Creative on the basis of their professional skills. One had skills in the field of the arts and the other had a background in social work. This created an understanding between the coordinators.

Young & Creative began operating in 2007 and continues to be run by Röda Sten Art Centre to create activities for young people with an interest in the visual arts and contemporary artistic processes. Continued efforts to raise financial support speak of an operation that intends to function long-term as a meeting place for the young.

⁴ Graffiti culture consists mainly of adolescent males. A few recognised graffiti artists are female, but in Gothenburg’s young graffiti scene it is difficult to recognise more than a small number of girls. This gave the activity a clear gender aspect. It was also fascinating to have young people with diverse experiences coming together because of a shared interest.

SOMETHING ABOUT GRAFFITI

Graffiti is a point of focus for questions of the place of art, and what art actually is. “This is not art, this is graffiti” one used to be able to read in sprayed letters on the painted wall of Röda Sten Art Centre. This may be understood as a position against an establishment concept of art, most clearly defined by the very placement of the phrase: what took place inside the walls of the art gallery was art and what took place outside was not art. By refusing to see the exhibition as the medium, or rather by converting the public space into a medium for its aesthetic expression, graffiti mixes the private (artistic activity taking place in the home – sketching, for instance) with the public, which often stirs up feelings of both irritation, anger and agreement. At the same time the graffiti painter Gustav Engström on 20/9 2011 wrote in Dagens Nyheter’s debate page that zero tolerance of graffiti is a form of censorship of an art form. Thus it is clear that both the makers of graffiti and public opinion are divided about graffiti as an artistic expression. The fact that graffiti is not found in places where one comes into contact with art, such as galleries, art centres and museums, cannot be seen as a determinant of its status as an art form. It is not unusual for artists to take their art outside established art institutions⁵. Instead one can argue that the status of graffiti is connected with those who principally create it, a social grouping with marginalised possibilities in terms of influence and power: namely young people.

⁵ For example the artist Ester Shalev-Gertz with *The Place of Art* which partly took place in a shopping centre in Bergsjön in 2006 (see *Art Monitor: The Place of Art*. Esther Shalev-Gertz).

GRAFFITI A PROBLEM? YOUNG PEOPLE INTERESTED IN GRAFFITI A PROBLEM?

Graffiti as a form of expression can be problematic as it is carried out in the public space. It can also be used by various organisations in order to add a “youthful tone” to their various activities – youth centres, for instance. The phenomenon and the response to it are complex. The problem is that young people who are interested in graffiti and start creating it, are often treated as problems in their own right by representatives of the social services, the police or within political life. One important lesson is that the young people who chose to take part in the activity outlined in this text *did not see themselves as a problem in need of being solved*. This was a stamp that the grown-ups had tried to put on them. The adults who were running the activity could not therefore enter into it with this same attitude, when they met with the young people. Focus was directed instead at their resources, capacities and interest in expressing themselves visually, an activity known as promotion (Andersson & Jordan, 2007). This interest was therefore a respectful foundation for starting an activity by and with the young people. The decisive difference is when young people gain the necessary space to perceive themselves as meaningful players rather than a group against which society takes action (Nordenfors, 2010). It also creates a basis of trust in the relationship between adults and young people. Such a foundation makes it possible for the space to function constructively, because it creates security (Andersson & Jordan, 1997). My impression of the atmosphere at Röda Sten Art Centre was of a place with a great deal of room for warmth and humour. In my evaluation work I interviewed several of the young people taking part in the project. All who came to Young & Creative while I was there had the chance of being interviewed, but not all had the time or the possibility⁶. I also interviewed some youths who had earlier been a part of the project, as well as a parent of an earlier participant. In an interview with one of the participants, the atmosphere I mentioned earlier was clarified by our exchange on the subject of what he would have done, had he not taken part in Young & Creative. Somewhat prejudicial, I was expecting something as problematic as criminality or drug abuse, before I was given the humorous answer below:

SL: Can you describe what the course means for you?

Participant 1: For me it’s probably been, I don’t know, a path in the right direction, I’d probably have, in terms of experience I wouldn’t have come as far. But I don’t know that, I might have done something else that influenced me just as much, but I feel, thanks to them I’ve been able to reach out further, well... contacts and everything.

SL: What would have been the wrong path?

P1: Playing handball maybe? (Laughs) Not going for it, not getting into it somehow.

(Lindström, 2010)

⁶ For a more thorough discussion on choices and the method, see Lindström (2010).

WHAT WORKED?

When I set about evaluating the Young & Creative project I found an activity that seemed to have changed from the project descriptions I had read. In other words, in its third year the project had been allowed to develop in order to suit the young people with whom they were working at that particular time. The group no longer had as many people in it that were primarily interested in graffiti. This ability to adapt, it seems to me, is important for anyone who wants to create activities by and with young people. Such activities will very likely develop in a variety of ways, depending on the young people attending, and what their interests and capacities are.

Thus, the activity threw up interesting perspectives on the question of communication between adults and young people. People get to know an environment through conversation and verbal communication with others (Arnér & Tellgren, 2006). Interaction via conversation between adults and children is regarded as a way of adding meaning to existence. During the course events at Röda Sten Art Centre, many conversations came up. These were everyday exchanges about music, friends, school and draftsmanship. The evenings often passed pleasantly with the young people and course leaders working alongside each other on their own projects, while listening to music and engaging in small-talk. A decisive change came about when a temporary course leader wanted to make use of conversation as a pedagogical method. By engaging with the young people about their goals and thoughts about their art projects, the course leader hoped to raise the young people's creative potential into a more conscious form. Through conversations their boundaries might be expanded, and they would also develop artistically by verbalising what they were doing and what their underlying thoughts were. However, what actually took place on several occasions was that the young people more or less told the course leader that there was nothing in particular that they wanted. Only to be left in peace.

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN COMMUNICATION AND SPEECH AS PERFORMANCE

A person's adeptness at expressing him or herself conceptually in abstractions such as goal fulfilment is often dependent on experience and self-confidence. Putting up targets for oneself can easily take on an aspect of performance. Individual creativity is normally seen as something highly personal. When discussing their creativity, therefore, young people readily start to feel that they are being scrutinised. According to Göthlund (1997), young people have need of places where they can rest from the "dramatisation" of self in the public sphere – places where they can feel that they are good enough just as they are. If one does not define any goals there is no risk of failure. The participants' satisfaction with the project was based on a feeling of being allowed to exercise creativity without evaluation or assessment. Their need of a safe haven from a world often experienced as stressful and filled with demands, was greater than their ability to set up creative challenges for themselves. Yet those who had been taking part in the project for a longer period and had formed their creative, artistic identities, often expressed a wish to be challenged by the course leaders. The challenge for similar projects is thus to be able to challenge those who have come further in their creative process, while at the same time establishing positive interaction and a creative space without any pressure to perform for those who need this (Lindström, 2010).

In a sense, the most important lesson to be drawn from Young & Creative is that one must be ready to listen to young people's wishes about what they would like to do, and let this be the starting point for any activities undertaken. Adults have to start to nurture young people's wishes to interact with their surroundings and impact on their own lives. In this case it was about an ambition on the part of the project to be "for real". Being a part of something that was "for real" was one of the requirements that came up in the pilot group of young graffiti painters, with whom the project organisers of Young & Creative met in the early stages. It was a plea to be taken seriously. To be "for real" was eventually understood as offering the young people an activity that was professionally structured. The young people had a large range of art materials at their disposal, they worked with professional artists, they were able to visit various art institutions and themselves design and take responsibility for the closing exhibition that usually took place at the end of each programme. However, it is important to keep one distinction in mind: a project with the ambition of stimulating creative activity within a professional framework should not be turned into a conventional course with examinations or forms of assessment or reports. The most important thing I learned from the young people I met was their desire to be able to create or maintain a creative, artistic identity without having to relate to reports or value hierarchies. They also spoke about having a place where one could "hang" and socialise with other individuals that were inspiring, and having access to a different circle of friends. In other words, the activity should not consist of pottering about or games. Yet it must also be possible for participants to occasionally come and sit in, at times when they have no inspiration or wish to be creative.

CREATING A FREE ZONE

I referred to this aspect as a *Free Zone*. The term is sourced in youth culture research and has certain criteria attached. One is that there is no extensive level of adult control over what takes place within. Another criterion is that there does not need to be any goal or purpose underlying what happens in the zone, and there must be a high level of readiness for unexpected events. Free Zone is often contrasted with Norm Zone, which is primarily characterised by school. The model for youth activity presented here has the ambition to create a Free Zone. Interestingly, the activities were to a large extent Norm Zone activities, in view of just how much adult presence there was during the meetings. The fact that the young people accepted this and created a Free Zone was explained by the adults' attitude to the young people and the type of activity that were taking place. The crucial difference lay in the absence of any sort of assessment or judgment of individuals, without for that reason the activity being taken less seriously. In other words, a Free Zone must aspire to create good relations between the young people and the adults, with the adults having sensitivity about times when the young people need to be left alone – or supported when they need more active involvement. To achieve this, it is important that the activity is focused on developing the personal and social competences of young people. When young people get to develop an interest it is also possible to feel good at something, which improves self-esteem.

SUMMARY

In summarising some important lessons drawn from this example of an activity that set out to be by and with young people, one might list the following:

- There needs to be a capacity for flexibility in the structure of the activity, as well as its ambitions and goals depending on the people with whom one comes into contact through the activities, so that the latter are always by and with young people.
- It is important to have collaboration between the initiators who are connected by their common needs, skills and roles, so that the activity flows. This activity was based on one person primarily with social pedagogical skills and one person primarily with art pedagogical skills. It was also important that each tried to learn from the other's skills, in order to reach a fuller insight.
- There needs to be continuous communication and openness between different players with responsibility for the activity. Different players have different goals and thoughts about the project and their presence in it. It is best to always handle this collaboratively, through communication and shared vision.
- To be able to offer activities that take young people's ambitions and creative drives seriously, without for this reason setting up an environment much like school, where young people are judged and assessed.
- A shared respect for each other's abilities rather than a starting point of seeing young people as a problem in need of being solved. This, to encourage an activity based on common trust between young people and adults.

All this must take place from a starting point that children and young people who are listened to and taken seriously are much more likely to feel secure, be able to develop themselves and have a sense of identification with their surroundings (Eliasson, 2010). According to a study by the Children's Ombudsman in 2008, success factors are also about an activity's overall sense of purpose. This is expressed by factors such as the support of the organisers, financial and personal resources, dialogue, monitoring and evaluation. All of these were fulfilled by Röda Sten Art Centre and Ung Kultur 116 by means of financing from Allmänna arvsfonden [The Swedish Inheritance Fund Commission] and later Gothenburg City Council, as well as the knowledgeable organisers of the project and their communication and attitude to the young people.

CONCLUSION

A crucial theme in this text, then, is the position of power adults have in relation to young people. Participation is about levelling out this power structure and letting the young people exert some of their own influence over the questions that affect them. Young people often lack and do not even expect the right to be asked or considered. The ways in which participation is invited by young people in projects is also dependent on the views and wishes of adults (Nordenfors, 2010). What this project was able to demonstrate was that when the adults' ideas about art education and pedagogy claimed a greater share of the space than the young people were able to supply for themselves, the activity no longer seemed as interesting and Young & Creative started losing participants, especially those who came via Ung Kultur 116, which was no longer running field activities to find new participants.

According to Sinclair & Franklin (2000) there are several purposes for children's participation. These include a strengthening of democracy, improving children's skills and building their self-esteem. Within the framework of this example of an activity run by and with young people, I would add several aspects. The purpose of children's participation can also be to gain access to different opportunities for expression, to be able to put into practice or evolve an interest and have the opportunity of meeting other young people with similar interests. In this activity, young people of various ages, from both sexes and different backgrounds, met and were creative together. Through a shared interest in visual forms of expression they created a platform for respectful meetings with other young people. The purpose of participation, thus, does not primarily have to be meetings on equal terms between adults and young people but just as much equal and fruitful meetings between young people.

On the basis of this example it is possible to discern issues concerning the rights of young people. These include the right of being treated with respect, the right to adult role models who have a belief in the right of young people to be themselves and be accepted for who they are – as well as viewing them as creative beings. Young people also have a right of access to places where they can develop a sense of being valuable and in this way have the possibility of developing their identity in the secure knowledge that there is nothing wrong with them (Lindström, 2010). As citizens, young people have the right to make certain demands of the society of which they are a part – to be able to participate on equal terms and have access to places where they can be active. Such places might be workshops, youth centres, studios, rehearsal rooms, youth activity centres or sports halls – as long as these offer a space for young people's activities to take place.

Culture for children and young people enjoys a high position in the prioritisation of Gothenburg City Council and nationally (Beckman & Månsson, 2008; see budget for Gothenburg City Council, 2009; Swedish Parliamentary proposition 2009/10:3 *Time for culture*). To enable young people to become a part of something meaningful and thereby acquire the tools to take part in society through a sense of being respected, various types of spaces have to be created (Taylor & Percy-Smith, 2007). Young people must therefore have physical, social and cultural spaces to engage with other young people and adults, spaces where meaningful interaction can take place. One way of bringing about change is to place individuals in stimulating environments, that is,

places where the individual can make use of what the individual perceives to be his or her abilities (Paldanius, 2002). One important task for politicians is therefore to try to make the provision of such spaces a reality. Or, as one of the young participants in this activity put it when we met: "When you were having a bloody hard time you could just come here. Here I could express myself. Here, what I do is accepted, that felt great."

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Young & Creative was set up in 2006 with Röda Sten Art Centre as the principal actor and the municipal project Ung Kultur 116 as a close collaborative partner. An art pedagogue and social worker worked together to develop a method based on young people's participation. "By and with young people" was a guiding light from the very beginning.

Initially, the project was backed by Allmänna Arvsfonden [The Swedish Inheritance Fund Commission], Ungdomsstyrelsen [Swedish National Board for Youth Affairs] and the Philipsonska Foundation. These last two years the activity has been financially supported by Gothenburg City Council. The collaborative partner Ung Kultur 116 was financed by a range of city districts and municipal departments.

The project has turned the spotlight on the right of young people to exercise their own creativity and, in certain cases, to one-to-one conversational support as a way of gaining access to the creative arena.

Röda Sten Art Centre, with its Young & Creative project, has contributed to changes outside the Arts Centre but also within it. Today, a legal graffiti wall and a skateboard park are tangible examples of this. Also in the city as a whole there is greater emphasis on young people's right to creativity. In fact, this has become an area of development, and, in this spirit, a space for youth culture known as Frilagret was inaugurated in the autumn of 2012.

Young & Creative is still welcoming young people who want to explore their creativity with art pedagogues, invited artists and other cultural interpreters.

For more information, please see:
www.rodasten.se och www.frilagret.se

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The Art of Being for Real opens up new paths and perspectives concerning the right of children and young people to self-expression. Young & Creative is an example of young people having access to a place in which to meet and express themselves artistically. The setting for this was Röda Sten Art Centre in Gothenburg. While the meeting between young people was a founding concept, the project also had certain pedagogically groundbreaking aspects in that it brought together two different professions – social workers and art pedagogues. These two groups met head on with a great deal of courage and, working alongside the young people, developed an approach and methodology to nurture creative energy. This exciting project had earlier been assessed by Sofia Lindström. The reader is now able to partake of the lessons of her assessment, as presented in this booklet.