

ARTS AND HEALTH AUSTRALIA

Healthy People, Healthy Communities – engaging with the Arts

THE ART OF GOOD HEALTH AND WELLBEING

International Arts and Health Conference
exploring best practice policy, programs and research across primary
care, community health, health promotion / medical humanities
www.artsandhealth.org

10 – 13 November 2009 Port Macquarie NSW Australia

Pre-conference workshops and training program
7 – 10 November 2009

Keynote Presenter: Mike White M.Phil, MA, Senior Research and Development Fellow in Arts in Health, Centre for Medical Humanities and St Chad's College, University of Durham, UK

With its discernible origins barely two decades old, the practice of arts in community health has rapidly become a small-scale global phenomenon. This presentation will consider how and why this field of arts development has come about, the characteristics of its practice and the challenges it poses for evaluation, and will summarise what has been learnt from a number of case studies and other forms of research from the UK and elsewhere.

Arts in community health is a distinct area of activity operating mainly outside of acute healthcare settings and is characterised by the use of participatory arts to promote health. The development of such work within the interweaving strands of health, education and social policy suggests that arts in community health has not evolved simply as a result of the successful advocacy of an arts sector keen to demonstrate its relevance to health, but rather through the wider recognition of a phenomenological connection between engagement in cultural activity and well-being. It is due to this convergence, and not simply to the debatable effects of the arts acting as a sole instrument to improve health, that some credence can be given to the bold assertion that the arts 'can have a lasting and transforming effect on many aspects of people's lives'.ⁱ

This presentation draws on the author's twenty years' experience both in the delivery and research of arts in community health, and will attempt to place in the context of this Port Macquarie conference some international perspectives on the work, as set out in the recently published *Arts Development in Community Health: a social tonic*.ⁱⁱ

ⁱ Arts Council England. *Ambitions for the Arts*. 2004

ⁱⁱ White M. *Arts Development in Community Health: a social tonic*. Radcliffe, Oxford. 2009