

## Growing in Sheffield

What Next Sheffield, at Sheffield Theatres, 16<sup>th</sup> July 2013



Our first meeting was held on the 16th July and was themed around the concept of Growth. It was organized and facilitated by Malaika Cunningham (The Bare Project), Ruth Nutter and Teo Greenstart (Creative Associates of Encounters). The event was documented visually by Joseph Houlder, who painted what he witnessed.

### Summary of Speeches

*What Are You Growing?*



**Bob Levene**, multi-disciplinary artist

- Her growing pains caused by realising and facing the enormity of the global challenges we face, causing a state of feeling lost
- Reflection of core values to move on and cross threshold to re-frame practice
- Blurring of roles as citizen and artist
- Necessity and value of connecting more with non-art world
- Art's value to say things freely, without constraint

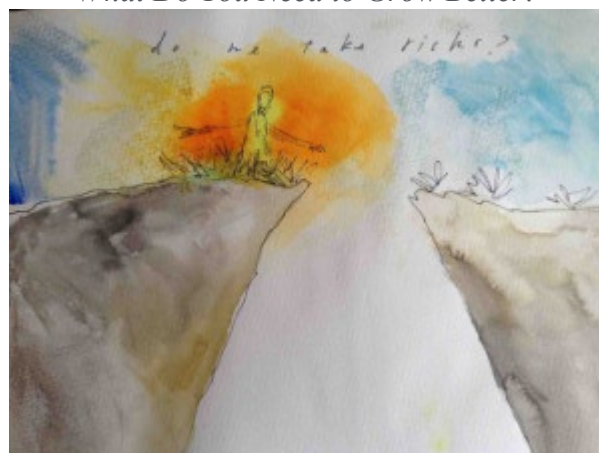
*What's Growing Well in Sheffield?*



**Sara Hill**, Opus Independents, (inc. Now Then magazine)

- Been a positive artistic response to austerity in Sheffield
- Artistic arena has been the place to ask the hard questions in Sheffield, doesn't have media constraints
- Sheffield is a hidden gem, lots of small independents with healthy attitude to risk
- Question of whether it is necessary or desirable to 'shout' about successes - does small scale work because it's 'quieter'?
- Strong interpersonal scale of interactions in Sheffield helps things to grow well
- Strong DIY principles, networks of mutual support keep independents grounded and supported

*What Do You Need to Grow Better?*



**Professor Vanessa Toulmin**, Director of National Fairground Archive, and Head of Cultural Engagement at University of Sheffield

- Sheffield has been a hidden gem for too long, we need to make the most of Sheffield
- The Culture Consortium established to develop a vision and not be caught up in politics - a 'coalition of the willing'.
- Workshop consultations in city took place for a strategic plan, resulting in an application to create a Little Mesters Guild
- We need to make the most of the Tour de France in the region next year, shine a light on the city

## **World Cafe Conversations**

*What Are You Growing?*

**Wildflowers** at the University and Green estates. **Ethical business**, eg. Opus: affordable advertising, knowledge share space for independents. Feminist Art: 1 billion rising in Sheffield. Making communities 'smaller', eg. Silent Cities Neighbours project. Going out and growing alone: beyond big organisations. **Growing ability for flexibility**. 'Jack of all trades'. People's theatre: engaging the disengaged in theatre. Growing tools to 'create your own.' **Social Enterprise**. Growing creative communities. Community cohesion through information. Growing veg! eg. Abundance Project (Grow Sheffield). Growing into the east of the city. **Beyond need for traditional spaces and project frameworks**.

*What's Growing Well in Sheffield?*

**Home grown projects** are growing well. A lot of organisations concerned with the 'state of the world'. eg. Grow Sheffield. Knowledge and use of technology in response to industrial decline. Schools and communities. Engaging formerly disengaged communities. Arts work spaces: **claiming or re-claiming art space**. Food! Guerilla Knitting. Music and bands, 'no pressure', compared with other cities. **Connections between independents**, eg. Hagglers Corner: 16 groups in same building. Social enterprise: drop dead clothes, DIY, Access Space. Routes to audiences, eg. Festival of the Mind. City of Festivals: each distinct. Community gatherings: farmers markets, Refugee Week. DIY Culture.

*What do we need to grow better?*

Improvisation and actually 'Doing Something': sea change in apathy. 1 clump of black grass has 10, 000 seeds in it: don't judge 'weeds' straight away. Openness, not tribal.

**Collaboration**, Cultural diversity. **Ownership of public space**. We need experience, flexibility, risk and knowledge. Strong networks to link up our work. Tour de France provides an opportunity. **We need a cultural hub**: it can be difficult to find out what is going on. Information is mostly spread by word of mouth, which can sometimes alienate. Joining up together to overcome divisions between big and small, DIY and institutions. Mid-scale institutions are largely missing. Sheffield needs to become more aware of its potential. In competition with other cities and we should be more competitive. Creating a climate in which change is possible and risks can be taken. Communication: why don't the festivals talk to each other? **More imaginative communication: face to face, not marketing**. How can we build new audiences? How can we measure/be aware of impact? When is art successful? Sustainability: finding new ways of creating new art in Sheffield and engaging new audiences. Art can help to create new spaces: room for self expression, ownership and openness. **Helping others to help themselves. We need to strengthen foundations and give time to reflections**. Engaging with technology in a new way: technology can be key to communication. Re-assessing values. Urgency can help us to see goals as achievable. Opportunities to allow people to change. Different kind of business: communication between arts and business. **Encouraging a different focus: change not profit**.

