

THE PAPER PROJECT



The Paper Project was a collective of young migrant artists, who made cross-arts, immersive performances and ran workshops for young people and arts/non arts professionals.

The Paper Project was launched in 2013, initially as a collaboration with award-winning theatre director Mark Storer after which Ovalhouse continued to support the artists for a further three years by providing financial and organisational support.

The artists began as participants at Ovalhouse, then undertook leadership training and apprenticeships with Stella Barnes, then Director of Participation, as part of the Young Associate programme. Stella continued to support the project as a mentor and associate artist.

The project embodied the value of arts as an act of hospitality, with social interaction integrated into the arts-making process and sometimes also into the performance. The group always either began or ended a devising session by eating together and saw this as an essential part of the creative process. A lot of the time was spent catching up on people's lives, what was happening for them and reconnecting.

The artists drew on autobiographical experiences of migration and national and international events to make work, usually performed in non-theatre spaces. They utilised the visual language of theatre, drawing on metaphors and symbols that were highly personal and at the same time universal.

When The paper Project began making a piece, no one knew where it would take them. Sometimes they were asked what the piece they were making was about and often they couldn't say. Sometimes only one person came to a devising session, sometimes two, sometimes five and sometimes because of the complexity of living as a migrant in the UK, one of the artist was not able to contribute until really late in the process. In order to make art together they have had to rewrite, or perhaps reject some of the rules of theatre making, the hierarchies and the preconceptions.

The Paper Project collaborated as a group and as individuals with a range of arts organisation in London and across the UK. Their theatre, workshops and advice about making work that intersects with the politics of migration, were much in demand from.

The Paper Project performed at Refugee Week, The Museum of Childhood, Good Chance Theatre, Ovalhouse, The Southbank Centre, Platforma Festival and Migration Matters Festival.



<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p0376swt>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dMo0StuYZlo>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gVoWA0Zfg7c>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ABtzltmE700>

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I found the whole show tremendously moving. I hadn't previously realised how potent images are, going deeper than words. The photographs were wonderful, and the coloured ribbons showed so clearly how we are all tied and constricted, making movement impossible, pulling in different directions. The dancing was so lovely, so young and brave, living in the present and looking to the future. It was when the actor rolled himself up in those crunching eggshells that I cried. It was heart-wrenching. The slow pace of movement, gentleness and pain, all beautifully done; that too made me cry. I loved the image of the young man dreaming about his village and his horse. Don't we all dream of the village of our magical childhood?