

# European Learning Partnership

## Participants' reflections

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European Learning Partnership, Stockholm and Visby, Sweden, September 2008

A magnificent dinner followed by communal singing with colleagues from Italy, Estonia, Portugal, Ireland and Sweden is my abiding memory of my first trip to Sweden.

Other memorable moments include:

Curatorial inspiration from the Moderna Museet – hanging blinds to break up vast exhibition spaces.

Beginning to recognise the differences between Swedish and English culture: our brief glimpse of Swedish culture gave the impression that it's not quite as overtly hierarchical as our English class system. Although Sweden is just on the cusp of dealing with social issues developing out of increasing immigration pressures.

A public gallery sitting side by side with a library is an idea which I've wanted to see in action for a long time, and the reality was inspiring. I'm still hoping that when Cambridge finally re-opens its library it will incorporate more visual arts projects.



Botkyrka, as an organisation focused on non-commercial, contemporary art in a multicultural neighbourhood Botkyrka engages artists from countries such as Nigeria and Romania while

neighbouring the library environment which gives a fascinating dimension to the gallery's visitor demographic.

Presentations by experimental artists working at Candyland, a space in an industrial building, financially supported by the Cultural Department City of Stockholm and the Swedish Arts Council.

An incubator of creativity incorporating commercially successful businesses and circus students wasn't something I was expecting, but the cutting edge project to link the business world with creative practitioners at Subtopia 'Silicon Valley of Culture' was very exciting. Initially the work focused on the circus arts, with the project building on past work which had showcased the creativity of the artists via live 'Powerpoint, shows in unusual places, circus workshop and experience lunch' The business industry was inspired by how artists could enhance desired aims and objectives while the artists were given employment in their own right as artists.



The luxury of the Swedish Travelling Exhibitions building in Visby on the beautiful island of Gotland. The clear recognition from funders of the importance of experiment and creativity on such a large scale was very encouraging. The flexibility in the scale of their exhibitions, from a travelling truck converted to show video work, to exhibitions robust and large enough to satisfy any national institution in Sweden and beyond national borders was a good benchmark to bring home.

Although the space, technology and tools were breathtaking it was clearly the ambition and rigour of the staff which drove the organisation successfully and innovatively. In addition, the hospitality extended by Goran and his colleagues was hugely generous and creative and much appreciated by us as visitors.

Just before boarding a few of us explored the reality of the kulturhuset as a hub of egalitarian cultural activity. Viewing a Nan Goldin retrospective exhibition and then observing a huge but very happy creative space designated for children's painting, reading and singing, in the same building was very civilised and thought-provoking.

I returned home full of inspiration and with an appreciation of how far we as English gallery

educators have come over the past five years and the obstacles which we have had to overcome to be accepted as a critical part of a healthy creative education for people of any age. Hearing our European colleagues talk through the same issues of money, beurocracy and recognition of value was unifying and reassuring. The individual and organisational relationships which blossomed in Sweden will be of real value to our communal confidence and the speed at which we can all progress with our complex but hugely rewarding projects.