# The Maugherow Project

unwrapping creativity: an intergenerational approach pilot phase 1998-2001



resource handbook

































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# Foreword

I am pleased to welcome this publication which documents the pilot phase of a remarkable and innovative intergenerational arts project. *The Maugherow Project* involves young and older people working together through the arts to explore and develop their creativity.

The County Arts Office initiated the project as part of the *Placing Art Programme 1998–2001*. It was undertaken in a true spirit of partnership, involving St Patrick's National School, Maugherow, local artists, the Arts Council, and the North Western Health Board. The project is ongoing, and learning from the pilot phase has informed actions included in the new County Arts Plan 2002–2005.

In August 2001, I had the privilege of opening Séideán Sí, an exhibition of the project's work 1998–2001, in the Model Arts and Niland Gallery. Through the years I have seen a heartening growth in the confidence and enthusiasm of the various participants. They deserve great credit for the spirit and vision with which they embraced the project, a project that has excited the imagination of anyone with an interest in the arts.

Cllr. Tony McLoughlin, Cathaoirleach, Sligo County Council.

# Introduction

This publication provides an insight into the history, principles, processes and working practices of The Maugherow Project. It is hoped that its contents will inform and inspire others who wish to develop similar work in the area of intergenerational arts. A 22 minute video documentary about the project has also been produced.

Both the publication and video, document the pilot years of the project, 1998–2001. Consequently, the Maugherow Project is often referred to in the past tense. It is important to note however, that the project is still ongoing in St. Patrick's National School, Maugherow.

The handbook has been split into six sections, each focusing on a different aspect of the project. While we are conscious that our readership will be quite diverse, we hope that you will find something of benefit in each.

The voices of participants and others are interspersed throughout, where possible we have identified the speaker, in most cases however comments were recorded anonymously during the evaluation process.

The development of the Maugherow Project has been a purposeful and genuine exploratory and evolutionary process. It has proven to be a wonderful learning experience for children and adults, artists, and funders alike, and has provided us all with a vision of new possibilities in this field.

Ann O Connor, Project Leader, Sligo County Council.

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# Why Intergenerational Arts? background to the maugherow project

#### **Project Objectives**

To explore, evaluate, and document the potential for using arts activity in a rural primary school as a resource for addressing the social exclusion of older people in rural communities, in a way that is mutually beneficial for the older people, the children and the school.

To use the arts as a way of tapping into the wisdom, experience, skills and knowledge of the older people and making it available to the wider community, particularly the children.

To build the relationship between the school and the community, and to develop a broader role for the older people in school-based learning.

To promote positive attitudes towards aging and older people within the wider community and encourage children to recognize learning as a life long process.

To develop the creativity, arts skills and confidence of the children and older adults.

To create opportunities for older people to socialize with one another in a relaxed and friendly atmosphere.

To document and evaluate the experience of the project in a way that will make the learning from it readily available to relevant, health, educational, social and cultural policy makers and providers.

To test the emerging model from this project by undertaking a second project in another area.

To secure mainstream funding for the project.

Pictured Left: Sadie Gillen and Laura Wilson.

The Maugherow Project is an intergenerational arts initiative, which is based in St. Patrick's National School, Maugherow. It was initiated in 1998 by the Arts Office of Sligo County Council in partnership with the school, and is also supported by the Arts Council of Ireland and the North Western Health Board.

Maugherow is located 12 miles north of Sligo town. It is not actually a village, but rather a expansive rural community, located on a peninsula. It has a population of approximately 750 people, which are widely dispersed throughout the area. Maugherow is an exceptionally scenic part of the world. Yet, it shares the challenges which also face many other rural areas such as - poor physical infrastructure, an inadequate public transport system, an increasing elderly population, high levels of social exclusion and feelings of isolation, especially among older people. Limited opportunities for social interaction and particularly, limited opportunities for creative expression.

The project was set up in order to explore the potential of using the arts in a school environment to address, the isolation and exclusion, experienced by many older people in rural areas. It was considered essential that the project would be structured in holistic way, which not only benefited the older people, but also the school, it's students, and the wider community. The establishment of an intergenerational arts project was an obvious and ideal mechanism to fulfil this objective.

"Intergenerational programmes have become increasingly necessary, in order to reinforce generational bonds that have been reduced because of geographic or societal distancing of our old and young."<sup>1</sup> Such programmes encourage young and older people to interact in a way that allows them to share experiences, knowledge, skills, build cross-generational friendships, provide positive support for each other, and promote cultural exchange. Both generations have many reciprocal needs.

Older People's Needs	Yo
To nurture	То
To teach	То
To have successful life review	То
To share cultural mores	То
To communicate positive values	То
To leave a legacy	То

Young People's Needs To be nurtured To be taught To learn from and about the past To have a cultural identity To have positive role models To be connected to preceding generations. "Sligo County Council recognise the value of investing in and supporting the County's vibrant human infrastructure. Through the Maugherow Project, the Council is proud to have supported the youngest and oldest members of the community to explore their creative potential." Mr. Hubert Kearns, County Manager, Sligo Co. Council.

"The Maugherow Project is a great example of how a social model of health can be expressed in the arts. A strong sense of place and connectedness, emotional literacy, and keeping the imaginative right-side of the brain active throughout life are significant factors in individuals' health and community well-being. Maugherow has realised this through a creative relationship between young and old. The local authority and health board have helped nurture an oasis of possibility in local arts development – an example from which other communities could usefully learn."

Mike White, Director of Projects, The Centre for Arts and Humanities in Health and Medicine, University of Durham.

"This project is very much in keeping with the Health Board Strategy of health and social gain... it is an unique project which embodies principles of respect, choice and dignity and centres on older people in a holistic and creative Way." John Hayes, General Manager, Community Services, North Western Health Board.

"The Maugherow project is a fine example of how communities can creatively explore and express the richness of experience between generations and how school can facilitate the ongoing link to community life, benefiting both the young child, and the older person."

Helen O'Donoghue, Senior Curator, Head of Education and Community Programmes, Irish Museum of Modern Art.







Clockwise from top: Mary Mitchell, Mark McLoughlin, Laura Wilson, John

Legge and Reuben Cummins. Stephen McTiernan and Mark McLoughlin on an visit to IMMA.

Ita Waters, Edel Mullarkey and Bridget Currid.

Both generations share the need to have a sense of past, present and future. To feel worthy and be acknowledged. Intergenerational projects have also been shown to play an important role in building community.<sup>2</sup>

Since 1998, the Project has been driven by a number of key individuals, notably, Mary McAuliffe, Sligo County Arts Officer and Joe Leonard, School Principal. In 2001 the North Western Health Board became involved in the project, and the contribution of Des Keaney, Community Worker, has also been invaluable. Each believed, that meaningful participation in the arts could facilitate the sensory, emotional, intellectual and creative enrichment of the entire community. Creation and engagement with works of art are contributions to a community's culture (be it the culture of the classroom, school, locality, town, city or beyond). Cultures in turn become expressions of the identity and significance of a community, simultaneously creating and deepening both the culture and the community. A number of important values have guided the Project's work.

- Full access and participation in the cultural life of the community is a fundamental right of all citizens.
- Creativity has no age.
- Older people are a mine of experience, skills and insight; a resource in the community.
- Learning is a lifelong process.
- Consistent interaction between young and old, can impact on an older person's feelings of life satisfaction, and on children's growth, learning and attitudes towards ageing.
- Health is a state of complete physical, mental, and social well being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity (World Health Organisation).

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- Arts-based work has a beneficial impact on people's mental, physical and social well being.
- Studying Art is a fundamental part of a balanced education. The arts can also
  provide engaging and motivational entry points to academic study.
- Good community arts practice is not about occupying participants for an hour or two, but facilitating the development of their confidence, creativity and art skills, and encouraging quality artistic work.
- Working with older people is not just about reflecting on the past but also about contemplating the present and the future.
- Learning from arts-based activities can make a valuable contribution to social policy development and service delivery.

In terms of the actual delivery of the project the role of the artist is pivotal. The Project has been very fortunate to have had access to highly skilled, inventive and committed artists. All of whom, subscribed fully to the beliefs and objectives of the Project.

<sup>1</sup> Intergenerational Programs, Past, Present and Future / Sally Newman / 1997 Available from: Generations Together, An Intergenerational Studies Program, University of Pittsburgh, USA. Email: humplo@pitt.edu



# The Creative Process project activities, workshops, themes

Through the arts we express human experience creatively and imaginatively. Ideas, feelings and insights are communicated through images, gesture, music, movement and language. Research has also shown that participation in the arts can cultivate awareness, judgement, capability, receptivity, and other cognitive abilities, and can enhance self-confidence, risk-taking, motivation, empathy for others, community engagement and identity. This section looks at the creative work and development of those involved in the project.

Key Ingredients for Successful Group Creative Process

Imagination Resources Skills Humour

Collaboration Flexibility Respect Choice

#### Background

Since 1998, students and older people from the Maugherow area have worked together in St. Patrick's National School with professional artists. Workshops take place each Thursday morning (10:30pm–1:00pm) during the school term. Older participants are picked up from their homes by bus and brought to the school, where they are joined by fifth and sixth class students. During the pilot phase 47 people participated in the Project, ranging in age from 9 to 78 years. There are 12 older people involved in the project.

Project participants have explored and developed their imaginative and creative skills using a variety of artforms: drawing, sculpture, painting, drama, creative writing, ceramics, photography and video work. They have also gone on various field trips and visited a broad range of art exhibits. At every stage participants have been guided, encouraged, and creatively challenged by skilled and committed artists.

In June 1999 and 2000 the group hosted exhibitions of their artwork in the school and made various presentations to the local community. In August 2001, Séideán Sí, an exhibition of the project's work 1998–2001, was shown in the Model Arts & Niland Gallery, Sligo.

#### Activities, Workshops & Themes

The development of creative work during the pilot can be split into three phases.

#### Phase One

Phase one is characterised by a number of short-term projects, largely conceived by the artist. This approach allowed the artist to introduce the group to a variety of mediums, and to encourage participation, interaction and bonding between participants.









"I really enjoyed making the Maugherow Urns - I always wondered how pottery was made. I enjoyed seeing them come to life." Older Person



Clockwise from top: Artist Martina Coyle. Participant Olive Siggins and Artist Ann O Connor. Mary Mannion, Sadie Gillen and Rita Cribben with the *Maugherow Urns*. Teresa Nicholson, with Artist Sinead Aldridge.

Sadie Gillen working on the *Willow Project*.

Initially the older people were invited to come the school to work with the children on a 6 week project called *Standing on the Shoulders of Giants*, May/June 1998. Visual Artist, Sinead Aldridge had already commenced work with the children on ideas for the project, and inspired by the children's drawings, the group made a series of giants created from recycled materials. The giants were displayed in the school grounds and parents and members of the community were invited to view the work. Although successful, the older people found it difficult at times working with the students on this project. They were unused to creating artwork, being in a school environment, working with children, and working with each other. The older cohort was at this point a collection of individuals, who had not necessarily known each other before joining the project.

*Giants* was followed by *The Willow Tree Project* in July 1998. This project took place during the school's summer holidays and the artist worked with the older people only. This gave the older participants an opportunity to get to know each other better, and to become more familiar with working and thinking creatively. The group was encouraged to explore the potential of their own environment by using local found material to produce a sculpture of a willow tree. Participants drew trees using charcoal and ink to plan the project.

In September/October 1998 young and old researched their local area together, and using multi-media approaches created a dynamic large-scale map of the Maugherow. This was followed by a ceramics project in November/December 1998. Participants worked with potter, Con Lynch, to create three large clay urns. The urns were inspired by an urn from the bronze age, which was discovered locally. During this time the older group also worked with the Arts Officer, Principal, artist and a facilitator to develop a theme for new work.

The culmination of this period from May 1998 to December 1998 marked an important transition phase in the older people's engagement with the project. At the outset many were fearful and cautious, wishing only to be instructed in the different artforms, by the end of the year the group had begun to voice their own ideas and preferences for future work. Observation, imagination and the participant's own experience became the starting points for themes and artistic activities.

#### Phase Two

Through consultation with the group in this phase, two key needs were identified. The need to introduce different artforms, while continuing with the visual arts, and the need for the group to have a purpose to their work, aside from its intrinsic value, or its value to them personally. The group wanted to "do something for the community", and to "show others what was going on in the school." In response to this two new artists were became involved in the project and plans were made for an exhibition in June 1999.

From January to June 1999, the *People, Places and Stories* project took place. Drama facilitator Fionnula Gallagher and writer John McDwyer joined Sinead Aldridge on the project. Taster sessions of the different artforms allowed participants to make choices about which they wanted to explore. Adults, children and the artists all worked in one room. One group used disposable cameras to create large photomontages of their homes or the surrounding countryside. The drama group did a variety of movement, sound and improvisation sessions. They also developed a number of storyboards, scripts and performances. The third group focused on developing their writing and imagination skills. Inspired by a visit to Lissadell House, participants wrote many stories, some of which were compiled in a pamphlet.

The project hosted its first exhibition in the school in June 1999, and made a number of presentations to the local community. The exhibition was a great success and there was a lot of support locally. The participants had their first experience of talking and presenting publicly, which they thoroughly enjoyed after initial nervousness.

*People, Places and Stories* was followed by *The Raughly Project* which was the theme for work from September 1999 to June 2000. Participants continued working through drama, writing and the visual arts, taking their inspiration and ideas from the local area of Raughly. In January 2000 Sinead Aldridge left the area and the visual artist Martina Coyle joined the project. Martina worked with the group using the old art of hay rope making. The older members of the group shared stories and showed the young people how hay was spun to form ropes, and the steps involved in making a hayrick. The group then worked together to develop their ideas and create sculptural forms. The Project held its second exhibition in June 2000. The exhibition highlighted the increasing confidence of participants and the growing support and appreciation of the community for the project's work.

Phase Two saw participants more comfortable with each other, artists, themes and the idea of working across different artforms. Both generations began to work more closely together and became more experimental in their work. Hosting the exhibitions played an important role as it meant the group also had an external focus and worked together towards a shared goal. This focus on the creative product provided a tangible framework, which enabled participants to become more familiar with and appreciative of the creative process.

## Phase Three

Phase one and two were predominantly focused on building relationships within the group and facilitating participants to become familiar with different artforms, mediums and ways of working. While phase three maintained this focus it also included a number of other important dimensions which are outlined below.

# Appointment of Project Leader

Phase three commenced with the appointment of a full time Project Leader/Artist in October 2000. While the Project had been working very well to date, it was agreed by all involved that a full time post was necessary to ensure the achievement of project objectives, the 2001 exhibition and seminar, completion of the evaluation process, the development and dissemination of appropriate documentation and resource materials, and the ongoing planning and co-ordination of the artistic programme.

"Our writing class is so much fun, It makes old and young together as one, We write about what comes to mind, In our mind, what we can find." Laura Wilson, Student







Clockwise from top: John Dunleavy working on a photomontage. Participant Kathleen Walsh with Drama Facilitator Fionnuala Gallagher. *Hayrick Sculptures.* 





"Before I became involved in the Project I thought I was rubbish at art, but now I start to think I am quite good at it." Young Person

## Séideán Sí Exhibition

The local environment inspired artwork in phase three. Ideas for drawings, paintings, collage, sculpture and drama came not only from the physical landscape, but also from discussions about the area now and in the past. Memories, sounds and smells all featured. The group worked enthusiastically in preparation for the Séideán Sí exhibition, which was held in the Model Arts & Niland Gallery, Sligo, August 2001. This was an ambitious exhibition of the projects work over the previous three years, held in a prestigious newly reopened gallery. The opening was a great source of pride and celebration for participants, their family and friends, artists, and the wider community. Artists Ann O'Connor (Project Leader), Martina Coyle, and Fionnula Gallagher worked with the group during this period. Artists Catherine Fanning and Aïda Bangoura, assisted with the installation of the exhibition.

## Seminar

During the exhibition the Project also hosted a seminar in the Model Arts & Niland Gallery. The seminar aimed to highlight the philosophy, methodology, successes and challenges of the project, and to promote reflection and debate about the wider roles of the arts/health, and the arts/education. Over 90 people attended the seminar with participants from, Belfast, Dublin and Cork. The children and older people from the project participated in the organisation of the seminar and performed short sketches and made a number of presentations. This again was a measure of how individual participants confidence had grown since the beginning of the project.

# Evaluation and Documentation

Evaluation, documentation, and the development of resource materials have been key elements of the pilot phase, both in order to be of practical benefit to others who wish to develop work in this field, and to use in influencing relevant policy makers and providers.

Evaluation has been an integral part of the project since 1998. The process has included, observation visits, questionnaires, meetings with participants, school staff, artists, the Project Steering Group, members of the local community, and representatives of outside agencies. Evaluation has been essential not only in assessing the effectiveness or otherwise of ongoing approaches, but also, in assisting planning for the future.

Throughout 2001, video worker, Maria Gibbons worked with the project. The process began with video workshops for participants, which included learning how the camera works and opportunities for the group to film and interview each other. From there the participants became familiar and in time oblivious to the camera, as Maria documented them at work. A 22 minute video has since been produced.

#### Clockwise from top:

Steven Henry, Mary Mannion and Bridget Currid. Re-opening of the *Seidean Si Exhibition* in the School September 2001.

Seídean Sí Exhibition poster, Sadie Gillen (model) and Michael Foran (artist).

In addition the resource handbook, a short descriptive publication was produced to coincide with the Séideán Sí exhibition in 2001. This gives a broad outline of the project and examples of some of the participant's work.

## September 2001 to June 2002

In September the Séideán Sí exhibition was rehung and reopened in the school

with great celebration. This was followed by a group review and planning session, in which participants looked back at what they had achieved, and considered what they would like to do in the future. The seashore was chosen as the theme for the work. In addition to the Project Leader the key artists at this point were, visual artist, Catherine Fanning, felt artist Brigitta Varadi, ceramicist Bettina Seitz, and writer Maura Gilligan. This period of work culminated in an exhibition called *Time & Tide*, which opened in the School in May. In 2001, work also began with teachers to develop an integrated arts plan for the school, which incorporates many of the elements and lessons learned from the Maugherow Project into the overall curriculum.

Phase three saw increased equity in interaction and affection between generations and a new inventiveness, individuality and confidence in the artwork produced. Looking back to 1998, all involved have commented on the transformation in participants, and in the older people particularly, from passive consumers to vocal and creative risk takers. Teachers commented on a new maturity in many students and a new confidence in how they expressed their views.

"Age, gender, social class or community must not be allowed to become barriers to participation in community arts education. In terms of equity and social justice, we must strive to ensure that all those who wish to do so may enjoy the benefits of lifelong learning in and through the arts. Community arts education opens up a new vision and future for all those who participate."

Prof. Iseult McCarthy, Artlink, Drawing a Balance, A Journey in Art, Education and Community, 2000.





# **Getting Started**

#### The Maugherow Project

Further to the establishment of Sligo County Arts Office in May 1997, the need to address arts development in a rural context was identified as a particular concern. The Arts Officer, Mary McAuliffe, had previous experience of working with older people through the arts in an urban context, and conscious of the increasing isolation of elderly people in rural areas, was keen to explore this area of work in a rural setting.

During the summer of 1997, Visual Artist, Sinead Aldridge, then living locally, contacted the Arts Office with a proposal to develop an arts project for the Maugherow area. A period of research (Sept-Dec 1997) followed initial discussions, and looked at existing practice relevant to working with older people through the arts in a rural context.

In January 1998, the artist and Arts Officer met with Joe Leonard, Local County Councillor, and Principal of St. Patrick's National School, Maugherow, to discuss their ideas. The Principal and staff of St. Patrick's National School were very aware of the increasing elderly population in the area, and the reality that many lived alone and had little or no contact with young people. Like the Arts Officer and artist, the Principal held a strong belief that the older members of the community were a rich resource in the area, and that creative expression can have beneficial impact on people's mental, physical and social well being. Added to this, obviously, was the desire that the schools students would have the opportunity to interact with and learn from older people, and to participate in the creative arts themselves. Following a number of subsequent meetings, discussion and approval by the school's Board of Management, a structure for The Maugherow Project was developed.

It was decided that a personal approach was the most appropriate way to invite older people from the area to become involved in the project. As Joe was a well-known member of the community, this became his role and he called in person to older people's homes. The target group for participation in this project were; active older people, who lived alone, or were isolated from friends or neighbours, older people who may not have had many opportunities to get involved with activities in the local community, and people who were not already availing of Health Board day care facilities.

# "I thought it was all a mad idea at the beginning."

Older Person

#### Guidelines for Starting Your Own Project

Find out who can help you get started. Talk to the County Arts Office or Local Partnership Arts Development Worker. Visit your local Arts Centre and see how they may be able to help. Visit and talk to people running similar projects. Do a web search and see if the idea has been developed somewhere else. Invite like-minded people to work with you. Make contacts and linkages.

Take time to explore your ideas for the project. Tease them out with other people. Find out if other groups are meeting similar needs and decide how to continue with your idea.

If you decide to start a project, gather a team of people to work with you. Meet and make a plan of action that answers these questions.

- Why are we doing this?
- What needs are we meeting?
- Who will be involved in the project (participant and partners)?
- Who will support us?
- What are we going to do?
- Describe your key activities in the creative project. - How will we resource this project? Resources cover
- money, buildings and people. Explore all avenues for potential funding and sponsorship. - How do we want to work together? This is where
- you clarify the values and principles that are at the heart of your project. You also discuss when you will meet for discussions.
- When and where will everything happen?

Take the time to develop relationships with the people that will be involved in the project. Share your enthusiasm and also let them ask questions and air any concerns or ideas. Build a group that has a common mission and commitment.

Throughout all stages of the project revisit the objectives set out at the beginning. This will help maintain enthusiasm and focus as the project evolves. Ongoing evaluation is also essential for growth and development.



While a number of the older people were immediately delighted to have the opportunity to be part of a local arts project, many have commented since, how they came initially only as a favour to Joe, and that it was difficult for some to come back to into a school environment. Others considered themselves "useless at art" and were understandably, fearful and cautious in the initial stages. For some too the prospect of working with "energetic, noisy, children" was daunting. Judging by the students' responses during the evaluation process, they too had their own reservations about working with older people at the beginning. As the comments below indicate, all this changed over time, as relationships were built and negative preconceptions dissolved.

- "I wasn't sure what I had let myself in for but I'll stay in." Older Person
- "Being involved with the children seems to energise us." Older Person

"Some people say older people are boring, but not these ones they are the complete opposite." Young Person

"My child talks about older people like class mates." Parent

"Older adults and children can work extremely well together in an arts activity, can create and enact stories and find each other funny and interesting and a refreshing change." Artist

The individual personal approach taken by Joe to get the older people involved worked. We do not propose however that this is the only method that could be used. It is entirely dependent on what is most appropriate for your own environment.



# People & Partnerships

surviving and thriving, project management, co-ordination, resources

Many believe that the most productive innovations are generated through collaboration, multiple voices, which stimulate each other by their varied frames of reference. This has certainly been the experience of the those involved in the Maugherow Project.

As outlined in the previous section *Getting Started*, what was to become the Maugherow Project started out initially as a collaboration between the Arts Office and the artist. The school became involved, ideas were merged and a structure for the Maugherow Project was developed. The Arts Council was involved as a funder at the outset, and in 2001 the North Western Health Board joined the Project. The experimental and holistic nature of the project, which impacts on areas such as, education, health, and rural development, in addition to the arts and intergenerational work, meant that a genuine partnership approach to its development, management and co-ordination was essential.

Partners in the Maugherow Project The Older People The Children The Artists The Arts Office The School The Health Board The Evaluators The Arts Council



## Management and Co-ordination

#### The Arts Office

The Arts Office was responsible for overall management and administration of the project. The Office managed all finances, accessed additional funding, organised and attended meetings, liased with all partners in the project, identified artists, developed contracts and payment schedules.



#### The School

The School was responsible for providing the physical spaces for arts workshops and ongoing input into overall project planning and evaluation. The principal was the key contact in the school. The Principal and Arts Office communicated regularly throughout the project.

#### The Artists

Until the end of 1998 the artist initially involved in the project, Sinead Aldridge, was responsible for the co-ordination and delivery of art workshops, with the support of the Arts Officer and School Principal. When two new artists joined the programme in 1999 it was felt that a forum to assess and exchange ideas would be beneficial. Artists met for a short time after each session to review and plan activities and process. Artists were responsible for keeping a record of their sessions. Also in 1999 Team meetings took place every 4 to 6 weeks. The Team comprised of the Artists, Arts Officer, Principal, and Evaluator. These meetings provided the opportunity to, hear from each artist on the progress of the activities and the group, discuss any difficulties, celebrate any successes, and plan the next steps in the process.

#### The Participants

From February to June 2000 a facilitator liased with the adult participants in a series of meetings to decide how they could be involved in the development and management of a future programme. The older people were quite clear that they did not want to take on any unnecessary responsibilities at this stage in life, and did not feel it was appropriate or timely to form a management committee of their own. Participants did agree to appoint a group representative, who later sat on the Project Steering Group.

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#### The Project Leader

In October 2000 a fulltime Project Leader/Artist was appointed. As described previously, in the Creative Process section, it was felt that a full time position was necessary to ensure the achievement of project objectives, 2001 exhibition and seminar, completion of the evaluation process, development & dissemination of appropriate documentation and resource material, and the ongoing planning and co-ordination of the artistic programme and weekly workshops.

#### The Project Steering Group

Further to the appointment of the Project Leader the Steering Group was established to direct the final phase of the project. Members included a representative from the North Western Health Board, a representative of the older participants, the School Principal, Arts Officer and the Project Leader/Artist. The Project Evaluator also attended as appropriate. Artists continued to meet after workshop sessions to review and plan.

#### Surviving and Thriving

No project develops without meeting challenge, yet challenge can be seen as an opportunity and a framework for effective practice. Key insights and lessons from the Maugherow experience to date are outlined below. In addition to learning from its own experience, the project has also been informed by research and models of good practice elsewhere. A list of some useful resources has been included at the end of this section.

"It was strange at first. We were never told what to do... Now I know why... you come up with your ideas and people listen and support you." Older Person



"I found out that older people have very imaginative and creative minds... and that old people aren't dryed up old bags like some people think, but they are fun and very helpful and kind."

Young Person

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# Key Insights

# **Remain Participant-Centred**

Research has highlighted that successful and enduring partnerships place the needs of participants at the centre of their work. While acknowledging and supporting the plans and needs of artists, teachers, funders and other partners, keeping a continual focus on the needs of the participants, ensures that the projects work remains relevant to its original goals. The ultimate priority in the Maugherow Project was to provide quality opportunities for creative expression and facilitate genuine interaction between the students and older people. There were many valuable associated objectives, but in order to achieve these in a meaningful way, plans had to be responsive to the needs of participants.

# Importance of Quality

Establishing and maintaining high quality experiences for the participants was a core component of the Maugherow Project. This was achieved by employing skilled and professional artists, using quality materials, spaces, and providing appropriate transport. Other aspects such as remaining responsive to participants needs were also essential. Maintaining quality in all aspects of the creative process in turn facilitated the creation of confident and creative work, quality product. Yet, programmes do not maintain quality naturally. It takes ongoing determination, sensitivity and vision.

# **Creative Paradox**

A paradox that is present in any creative project is how to facilitate people to move from a sometimes limiting comfort zone to taking creative risks. When faced with change we can feel frustrated, confused, resistant and excited to name but a few. The key is in knowing that once people have taken some creative risks their confidence increases. The challenge is in knowing when to push the boundaries and when to be patient. With support from the artists and at times requests by the artists for participants to trust them, a balance was achieved.

# Stereotypes

All of us enter projects with conscious or unconscious stereotypes about people, places and processes. The Maugherow project was no exception, over time and through real contact with each other, people's views about other groups of people (e.g. artists, older people, younger people, bureaucrats) changed. It took time for people to get to know and trust each other. Among other things, the project demonstrated to the younger generation and to family and friends how vibrant and creative older people are, and how much they have to contribute to community life. In turn the older generation realised that younger people are not from another planet, but and are, thoughtful, respectful, interesting, and creative people in their own right.

# **Divergent Needs and Goals**

There are many areas of potential mismatch in any partnership. While partners may agree a common vision they may place different emphasis and priorities on varying needs and goals. Balancing the needs of funders, management and participants is a fine art. A potential area of divergence is the need for a project to become visible in order to gain sustained resourcing, and the need for

Pictured Above: A group of the older participants on a visit to IMMA.





participants to settle into the creative process and not be pushed too quickly. In the Maugherow Project, this was addressed by remaining participant-centered, discussing the need for visibility with participants and agreeing on an initial public presentation, which was scaled down and comfortable for them. Over time, people's confidence increased to the point, where they were content to be filmed for a national television programme and to make several group and individual presentations at workshops and seminars. It is important that partners identify needs and goals that have the potential to conflict and then work together to find ways to accommodate each perspective.

# Letting the Programme Evolve

Over time, internal and external changes in people, money and policy will affect the shape of a long-term project. In the Maugherow project there were a number of changes with artists, evaluators, and partners. Some of these transitions were planned and others were not. Having an open attitude to change, and an ongoing process of communication, reflection, planning and decision making, meant that unexpected or inconvenient events were worked through and accepted as a natural part of the process.

# Importance of Time and Flexibility

Research highlights that successful partnerships create the time and space to listen, learn, plan and change. This was an important element of the Maugherow project. From the beginning there was a strong willingness to listen and change the pace or content of the creative process. This process was not immediately embraced by the participants. Many wanted simply to do and not discuss, and felt that it was others' job to instruct and make decisions. Over time this has changed and everyone contributes their ideas and thoughts. Participants began to see that they were being listened to and that their opinions and ideas had real value and were central to the development of the Project. All themes and ideas for artwork were developed through talking with and listening to participants. Time is also critical to develop the trust that is needed for a successful partnership.

#### Managing Complexity

The organic and experimental approach adopted by the Maugherow Project meant, it was important to maintain a focus on many dimensions of work simultaneously. Areas of work which required ongoing and often simultaneous attention, include:

- Clarifying and communicating the vision, goals and principles of the programme on an ongoing basis.
- Planning, implementing and reflecting on the creative programme from all stakeholders points of view.
- Developing trust, communication and decision making processes with partners and participants.
- Managing existing budgets and forward planning for future resources.
- Making the programme visible to the local community, and wider communities of interest, through public events and documentation.
- Establishing appropriate and flexible structures as the programme progressed.
- Ensuring a quality programme and process for everyone involved

Pictured from top to bottom: A *Barnacle Goose* in mid flight. Clay animals from the *Maugherow Maze* installation.



"Quality has been very important to the success of the project... superficiality is easy." Teacher

## **Ownership and Investment**

Partnerships thrive when they have a broad base of ownership and investment. Each partner brings different strengths, experience, resources, connections and economies of scale to a project. The Maugherow Project began with a core group that was deeply committed and involved in the establishment of the project. Yet, from the outset, the need for new and relevant partners was acknowledged. When the project had progressed to a point where it showed visible creative product as well as participants who were more comfortable and confident in their creativity, a new organisational partner was approached – the North Western Health Board. Health Board staff were invited to come and meet the participants and view their work. The Health Board is now a partner and investor in the project.

## Making the Project Visible

The Maugherow partners were committed to sustaining the project. One way of doing this was by making the project visible to people and organizations beyond themselves. Visibility is necessary to convince communities, funders and policy makers that a project is viable and worth supporting. Visibility also serves to provide a real public forum to celebrate and respect the creativity and learning of the people who participate in the project. The project created a number of opportunities to make its work visible over the years, some local, in the school, and others aimed at a wider audience, such as the Séideán Sí Exhibition and Seminar in the Model Arts and Niland Gallery, Sligo. The project has also produced a number of descriptive and evaluative documents and a video.

#### Sustainability

How many times have you heard "that project was going so well and then x left?" Many projects endure because of the vision and effort of core individuals who provide leadership and drive. Yet, it is vital to understand that projects cannot expect to thrive if they are dependent on one or two or four key people. The development of structures and processes that could last beyond the participation of project instigators was an objective from the outset. This process began by bringing in other people and organizations to broaden the base of ownership and commitment. Influencing relevant policy makers and providers is crucial, and maintaning quality is also essential to ultimate sustainability. If the quality of the creative process is poor, the work of sustaining the project is more difficult, even questionable.

## Meeting Challenge

It is said that one way to make people more creative is to give them harder problems to solve. Meeting 'harder problems' or challenges is an inevitable part of working in the evolving area of community arts education. Programmes need time, experience, experiments, failures and sucesses to find their way to sustained excellence and growth. Developing new and effective practice, supporting that practice and then working to sustain it, can be difficult and frustrating. Yet, difficulty can be surmounted and indeed, turned into opportunity, when the commitment and belief in the value of the arts in peoples lives, and the will to maintain a partnership approach, is strong.

#### **Useful Resources**

Arts Survive, A study of Sustainability in Arts Education Partnerships / Steve Seidel et al / 2001 Available from: Project Zero, Harvard Graduate School of Education, Cambridge, USA. http://pzweb.harvard.edu

Common Knowledge, Interim Evaluation Report, Tyne & Wear Health Action Zone's Arts and Health Project / 2001

Available from: CAHHM at the University of Durham. Visit the Common Knowledge website for details of this and other useful publications. www.commonknowledgenet.co.uk

Creative Reverie, Meeting the Person as An Artist / Mayo County Council / 2002 Available from: Mayo County Arts Office, Castlebar. Tel: 00 353 94 24444

Critical Links, Learning in the Arts & Student Academic and Social Development / RJ Deasy et al / 2002 Available from: Arts Education Partnership, Washington www.aep-arts.org

Drawing a Balance, A Journey in Art, Education and Community / 2000 Available from: Artlink, Buncrana, Co. Donegal. Tel: 00 353 77 63469

Even Her Nudes Were Lovely, A Research Report on the Museums Programme for Older Adults / T Flemming & A Gallagher / 2000 Available from: Irish Museum of Modern Art, Dublin. Tel: 00 353 1 612 9900

Intergenerational Programs, Past, Present and Future / Sally Newman / 1997 Available from: Generations Together, An Intergenerational Studies Program, University of Pittsburgh, USA. Email: humplo@pitt.edu

#### Funding

Gaining and sustaining financial support is an ongoing challenge that everyone is familiar with. Sligo County Council and the Arts Council have supported the project since 1998. The North Western Health Board contributed further funding in 2001. The budgets over the four years are detailed below.

Year	Funders	Annual Total IR£	Costs
1998	Sligo County Council Arts Council	15,000	Artists Fees Materials Transport / Excursions Evaluation
1999	Sligo County Council Arts Council	25,000	Artists Fees Materials Transport / Excursions Evaluation
2000	Sligo County Council Arts Council	25,000	Artists Fees Materials Transport / Excursions Evaluation
2001	Sligo County Council Arts Council North Western Health Board	75,000	Artists Fees Project Leader Wages Art Materials Transport / Excursions Evaluation Video Documentation Publications Exhibitions Seminar

"The project became expensive in 2001 as a larger budget was created to ensure that the outcomes were fully disseminated through public exhibition, seminar, publications and documentation. This additional money will be well spent if other agencies are able to adapt the learning from this project and create their own exciting intergenerational collaborations. However, to replicate the basic wisdom of the project is not necessarily costly when one reviews the kinds of benefits being identified." Alan Tweedie, Evaluator

Less costly yet effective projects can and have been developed, but it is vital that emphasis is placed on maintaining a high quality experience for participants. A teachers words, which address the cost/benefit issue, warn that "acceptance of cheaper cosmetic exercises that are not in reality a true intergenerational creative experience are a threat to this kind of work."

"The development of the capacity to improve the quality and impact of programs over time and in ways hardly imaginable at the conception of the partnership, is perhaps the defining characteristic of a thriving partnership. This is the challenge which, when met, not only provides a wonderful learning experience for children and adults, but provides us all with a vision of new possibilities." Steve Seidel, Arts Survive, A Study of Sustainability in Arts Education Partnerships



# Challenges & Rewards

# views from everyone involved in the project

Since the establishment of the project in 1998 there have been many formal and informal opportunities for people to reflect and comment on their experiences. Naturally, everyone involved will have their own observations about the project and its impact on them, yet, undoubtedly, much remains known only to the individual. This section looks at the challenges and rewards of the project from a number of different viewpoints, including, the participants, artists, the school, wider community, and funders. It is not intended to be comprehensive, rather a montage of perspectives. For further reading on the benefits of challenges of intergenerational, arts, health, education work, the publications and contacts listed on page 23 are an excellent resource.

#### **Project Participants** | Rewards

- Both generations enjoyed contact with the other age group.
  - "Interaction is important for both sides. The children see that even though our bodies are aging our minds can still be alert and active. We're in touch with the latest slang words."
  - "We found out things from older people about our area and they found out things from us. It was also enjoyable talking to the older people and finding out about people back in older times when they were young."
  - "Everybody looked forward to Thursday. Working with the older people was cool and there should be more of it."
  - "Working alongside children was an aspect I found interesting, particularly as I have no children of my own."
  - "Being in this arts project I am making new friends old and young."
- Particular benefits to young people included, increased personal and creative confidence.
  - "When I was acting it helped me to improve my learning skills. When I was making the made up creature it helped to build my imagination."
  - "It helped me to realise how much I liked doing art, drama and writing. It made me want to do those sorts of things in my spare time. I liked it so much I was disappointed about leaving primary school."
  - "Before I became involved with the project I thought I was rubbish at art, but now I start to think I am quite good at it."
- Older participants also indicated that their personal and creative confidence was increased.
  - "What I found here filled a gap in my life."
  - "Gives me great satisfaction when something I haven't done before is achieved."

"Children now stand in the street and talk with us, they wouldn't have done this before" Older Participant

"Some people say that older people are boring, but not these ones, they are the complete opposite." Young Person

- Older people enjoyed the social contact the Project provided and felt a decreased sense of isolation.
  - "I enjoyed the social side as we were meeting with different people in the community and we were taken to different places and of course the cup of tea and biscuits!"
  - "The most thing I like about the arts class I get away on the bus every Thursday I meet my friends in the class, the children work along with us which is great and they enjoy it."
  - "Children now stand in the street and talk with us they wouldn't have done this before."
- Older people also said that they felt a sense of greater well being as a result of the Project.
  - "Being involved with the children seems to energise us."
  - "It's like a new lease of life... It's great to be alive and fit to take part in it all. As the younger generation say, it's cool."
  - "We had lots of laughter and everybody feels good after a jolly morning."
- As part of the evaluation process older participants completed a questionnaire about benefits or otherwise of the project, results are as follows:
  - "No-one identified any bad effects from taking part. 100% made new friends and got to know people better. 91% learnt about other people, went to new places and tried things they hadn't done before. This is powerful evidence that this group of older people are feeling involved and positive about their experiences. There is evidence of people becoming happier and more confident. Given the average age of older participants is 75 years, it is encouraging that 45% had decided following this experience to get involved in training or a course. 45% got involved in other local activity. 82% have been encouraged to try something else. 64% are more positive about where they live. 82% want more of this activity. 45% have changed their ideas as a result of their involvement. 72% rate the arts activity, as much more enjoyable or more enjoyable than other local activity in which they are involved." An Tweedie, Evaluator

# **Project Participants** | Challenges

- Getting used to the different levels of energy and ability in the other age group. For instance a younger person commented *"When we do drama the older people don't always want to join in."* Over time the group found its own dynamic, young people calmed and the older people became more adventurous.
- In small group discussion students were given the opportunity to name two parts of the project they were not so happy with. They responded:
  - "We don't even have two pieces we didn't like about this project we enjoyed every minute of it."
  - "We are not unhappy about anything we enjoyed it all."
  - "We thoroughly enjoyed this project. There were no bad bits."
- The older participants identified the following challenges:
  - "Feeling frustrated when you can't see where things are going."
  - "Changing from believing that you aren't creative to seeing that you are."
  - "As we are senior citizens and did not have any training in drawing or art, sometimes we find it difficult."

"As a visitor to older people, what I do is nothing to compare with what the older people get and give; what they achieve." Parish Priest





"Its like a new lease of life... 26 it's great to be alive and fit to take part in it all. As the younger generation say its cool!" Older Participant





"At mass he winks at the older people." Parent

The School | Rewards

- "The Project provided exposure to high quality art, artists and materials, to which the students would not otherwise have had access." <a href="students-shool Principal">school Principal</a>
- Teachers made the following comments in relation to the Project:
  - "A child with a good sense of self-value will find things easier in the rest of the school work – the project enhanced this sense."
  - "It provided challenge and real affirmation to children who may not be achieving academically, people saw them in a new way."
  - "The writing sessions improved children's literacy skills and interest in writing."
  - "Children came to believe their views were important and would be listened to."
  - "Children are now more able to express themselves on an equal basis."
  - "The project was a stabilising influence within the school."
  - "It made an improvement to the school environment making it more natural."
- The Parish Priest, a frequent visitor to the school commented that "the kids are so much more at ease with me – would not have had that ease in the past."
- A parent said "now we see the school and older people are huge resources in our community."

# The School | Challenges

- The initial focus of the project was on the needs of the older people, and older students. It was not conceived as a fully integrated school project. While there have been sessions for the younger classes, students and teachers have not benefited as much from the project as the older classes. In an effort to address this, the Maugherow Project Leader and Teachers are developing an integrated arts plan for the school, which will incorporate methodologies and learning from the project into the overall curriculum.
  - The ongoing challenge of gaining resources (money and people) to sustain the quality of the Project.
- "Schools might initially see this sort of project as disruptive, because it takes a while to become part of the school culture. You do have to believe in the value of the process."

# Family Members & Wider Community

- The evaluator held a group meeting with members of the participant's families and members of the local community. Discussion highlighted that the project had been greatly appreciated in the community. Participant's relatives were enthusiastic and felt that the project had enhanced the quality of their children's and parents lives. People living locally also took pride in how the area had gained prominence, through documentation, exhibitions and television coverage.
- Comments from family members and the wider community included:
  - "The project has created common ground (between generations) when they had little in common in the past."
  - "This has changed her whole life, she's blooming."
  - "My child talks about the older folk like class mates."
  - "At mass he winks at the older people."
  - "For children, this creates familiarity and ease with adults."
  - "It's great that the wider community are involved and know about the different
  - things are happening at the school."
  - "There are lots of other opportunities to be taken, these (older people) are talented and resourceful people."

Pictured from top to bottom: St. Patrick's National School, Maugherow. Mark McLoughlin. - The main challenge identified was how to ensure that the project continued and developed in the school.

# Artists | Rewards

- The artists involved brought a variety of experiences to the project, yet, all identified an increase in their own confidence from working with the group.
   All were also able to identify confidence building among the participants.
- Comments about the benefits of participating in the Project included:
  - "Watching participants personal and creative confidence grow was fulfilling."
  - "Watching relationships develop between younger and older was rewarding."
  - "Having access to quality materials, space and support made all the difference."
- All artists said that they enjoyed working with other artists and across art forms and everyone enjoyed working with the mixed age groups. Although *"dealing with different energy and attention spans could be both positive and negative."*

# Artists | Challenges

- Challenges identified by the artists include:
  - "Making time to meet the differing needs of individuals while also working with the whole group."
  - "Listening to a multitude of ideas and then trying to put the different elements together in a creative process."
  - "You have to balance having a session plan with being flexible and responsive to what comes from the group."
  - "Encouraging and enabling participants to believe in themselves and their abilities."
  - "Dealing with people's frustration and fear when you were asking them to take creative risks."
- Some insights gained by the artists include:
  - "Older adults and primary school children can work extremely well together in an arts activity, can create and enact stories and find each other funny and interesting and a refreshing change."
  - "Working with one group over a period of time builds up a group vocabulary, as well as trust in themselves and the rest of the group – which leads to greater participation and enjoyment."

## Funders | Rewards

- Funders highlighted the following benefits of being involved in the Project.
  - "Being part of an open and dynamic partnership had been a positive experience."
  - "Contributing to the positive transformation of participants was very rewarding."
  - "Gained greater understanding of the issues involved in providing locally based opportunities for the arts."
  - "Increased awareness of the resources necessary to undertake development projects and how to structure them."
  - "Through collaboration we were able to apply a creative and holistic approach to health in a rural setting."
  - "Through this work we can learn a lot about the needs and aspirations of the community, and interact with members in a different more positive way."

# "I learned a lot from this project, but what I learned most is team work" Young Person



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"Everything was a challenge as it was all new to me, but I enjoyed every minute of it." Older Person

Above Left: George Bennett making felt. Above Right: J.P. Lenehan working on the *Willow Project*.

# **Funders** | Challenges

Challenges included:

- "Understanding and dealing with barriers to participation."
- "Giving the large amounts of time and energy needed to establish and sustain such an experimental and innovative project."
- "Meeting the challenge of mainstreaming and communicating the project to a wider audience."
- "Gaining partners and resources to sustain the project."

"I think the Maugherow Project has been hugely beneficial to everyone involved and to the whole Maugherow community. I think respect for old and young, people and neighbours, grew immeasurably and self-confidence and pride in self and environment rose considerably." Artist

"Certainly, the reaction is very positive and the responses confirm this as a very strong educational project, a confidence building experience, and a skills development and community building opportunity." Alan Tweedie, Evaluator





Drawing of barnacle geese by Donna Gallagher.













# Beyond the Pilot Phase the future of the maugherow project

An important objective of The Maugherow Project has been to evaluate, document, and disseminate its experience in a way that is of practical benefit to others who wish to develop similar work.

As described earlier, evaluation has been an integral part of the project since 1998 and evaluation findings are available from the Sligo Co. Arts Office on request. In addition to this resource handbook the Project also produced a short publication to coincide with *Séideán Sí*, an exhibition of the project's work 1998–2001, Model Arts & Niland Gallery, Sligo, August 2001. A 22 minute video documentary about the project is also available.

It is anticipated that these resource materials will also assist the project to inspire a commitment by educational establishments, health boards and others to make funding and other resources available to projects of this type on an ongoing basis, and to establish the model in other locations and contexts.

As mentioned in the introduction the pilot phase of the project has ended but The Maugherow Project is ongoing in St. Patrick's National School, Maugherow. As to the future, the Project Steering Group are working to ensure that the Project continues and are taking steps to influence relevant policy makers, in order to build sustainable programmes, which tap into the creativity of young and old and their communities.

"We think that all over Ireland people should start this arts project, old and young!" from group exercise by Young Participants

#### **Project Steering Group**

Ann O'Connor, Project Leader/Artist, Sligo Co. Council Des Keaney, Choice Programme Co-Ordinator, NWHB Joe Leonard, Principal, St. Patrick's National School. Mary McAuliffe, Arts Officer, Sligo Co. Council. Peggy Waters, Maugherow Project Participant.

The Maugherow Project Steering Group would like to extend sincere thanks and appreciation to all who have supported and collaborated in the development of the Project. With very special thanks to project participants.

#### Project Participants 1998–2001

Anthea Feeney Brendan Lenehan Brian Dunleavy Bridget Currid Cathy Dunleavy Christopher Dolan Clare Gillan Conor Boyle Daniel Carty David Jordan Donna Gallagher Emma Brady Eoin Leonard Ita Waters J.P. Lenehan John Dunleavy John Legge Karen Herity Kathleen Herity Kathleen Walsh Laura Wilson Michael Foran Michael Lenehan Mary Mannion

Mark McLoughlin Mary Mitchell Maeve Leonard Michael Conway Michelle Coyle Nicola Currid Nicola Anderson Nigel Gallagher Olive Siggins Padraig Meehan Padraig O Boyle Peter Siggins Peggy Waters **Reuben Cummins** Rita Cribben Sadie Gillen Samantha Feeney Shane Leonard Sorcha McGinty Stephaine Currid Stephen McTiernan Steven Henry Teresa Nicholson

#### Arts Facilitators 1998-2001

Sinead Aldridge, Visual Arts Martina Coyle, Visual Arts Fionnuala Gallagher, Drama John McDwyer, Writer Ann O Connor, Visual Arts/Project Leader Catherine Fanning, Visual Arts Brigitta Varadi, Feltwork Maria Gibbons, Video Work Bridget O Connell, Textiles Con Lynch, Ceramics Sorcha Carroll, Drama Lee Delong, Drama Aïda Bangoura, Exhibition Installation

#### Evaluation

Alan Tweedie, Liz Lennon,

#### Community Development Consultant Barry Lynch

#### Teachers 1998-2001 St. Patrick's N.S.

Principal Joe Leonard Francis Kearns Catherine McGinty (until 1999) Ken O'Hare (from 1999) Mary Leonard (until Dec. 2001) Claire McGowan (from Dec. 2001)

#### Board of Management 1998-2001 St. Patrick's N.S.

Canon Peadar O Laimhín (until 2001), Fr. Colm Hayes (from 2001), Claire Lenehan, Maura Foran, Jim Callaghan, Zita Waters, John L. Conway, Mary Gillan, Nancy Farrell, John Nicholson.







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North Western Lingth Beer

































