



Category: Community Relations Campaign

Company: Southampton Solent University

Entry title: Small Faces

Brief and objectives:

As well as connecting with local and national artists, Southampton Solent University's Showcase Gallery wants to find new ways of engaging with the wider community and encouraging more creative activity in the city.

Small Faces was a postcard portrait exhibition with-a-difference held at the gallery in March/April 2017; every piece submitted was shown; nothing was turned away.

The concept had 4 key objectives:

To create an exhibition that was as widely accessible to engage with as possible.

To support local and national artists with exhibiting their work.

To engage with non-artists from the community to encourage creativity and remove barriers to the arts.

To produce a high quality art installation with a strong visual impact where every artwork is given the same value.

Rationale behind campaign, including research and planning:

The idea for the exhibition was simple; work had to be postcard-sized and be a portrait. Postcards are cheap and readily available, no expensive framing required. Portraits have a long and established history within art and a popular appeal in that all 'selfies' are essentially portraits so we were able to attract a diverse range of audiences.

The work would not be 'judged' in the same way as a traditional open exhibition, whereby a panel select certain pieces for show while others are 'rejected'. All work was guaranteed to be shown, removing another barrier to exhibiting in a gallery.

Strategy and tactics, including creativity and innovation:

The main challenge of this campaign was to effectively encourage the community to participate. The gallery relinquished curatorial control; totally relying on participants to make the exhibition a success. To tackle this challenge, a communication plan to engage with often hard-to-reach areas of the community was needed. This included:

- bespoke leaflets for schools, colleges, local art groups and organisations, offering free workshops to help create portraits
- activity packs for those wanting to be involved remotely

- building relationships with key figures in the community, creating an effective 'word of mouth' campaign
- the use of targeted social media
- bespoke emails sent to local schools, colleges and organisations
- face-to-face communication with presentations at local committee meetings and art groups.

Implementation of tactics:

October 2016

Tactic: networking across Southampton through word-of-mouth and established artists.

Action: local artists led workshops with affiliated groups, networked across the city distributing information, community leaders brought people to the gallery so that we could run workshops for them.

November 2016

Tactic: raise awareness in schools, offering free artist-led workshops.

Action: bespoke emails to heads of art, headteachers.

December 2017

Tactic: promote and engage local media.

Action: sent press release to local media and pitched project to local broadcast; promoted release through University's social media channels.

January 2017

Tactic: raise awareness and invite participation in national artistic community.

Action: place advert in an-magazine and promote through local art social media channels.

Tactic: place flyers in key community spaces around Southampton to catch as wide an audience as possible.

Action: leaflet printing and distribution.

Tactic: continue to encourage participation in project.

Action: workshops with schools and community groups commence.

Tactic: continue raising awareness of the event to media and the community.

Action: create video to share via University social media channels.

March 2017

Tactic: Provide exhibition access for as wide an audience as possible.

Action: 360° online tour published for those unable to physically visit the space.

Demonstrate tangible benefits to the communities where the campaign was targeted, including any sustainability:

Local schools and colleges got behind the campaign; 32 sent in portraits and 11 participated in free workshops run by the Gallery.

64 community groups took part in the exhibition, with 22 hosting free workshops. 90% of these groups were from the Southampton area with the remaining 10% based in Hampshire.

The campaign was a great opportunity to engage with and learn more about what these groups would like to see from the gallery. It resulted in further workshops and a commitment to continue to work on creative projects with selected groups.

As well as offering artists the chance to exhibit in a professional gallery, the exhibition removed barriers, allowing more people to take part in a creative activity. For many visitors, this was the first time they'd visited a gallery.

The exhibition was packed with personal stories: a teenage girl with terminal cancer had the opportunity to debut her artwork in a public space; a 90-year-old created artwork for the first time in 40 years; and a group of refugees remembered those they'd left behind.

At the installation, the gallery became a hub of students, staff, local artists and individuals, working together to produce a collective act of creativity.

Measurement and evaluation:

Positive publicity - including local broadcast, print, social media and word of mouth – raised awareness of the gallery, cultural quarter and art in the city.

Over 600 people attended the opening, more than triple the amount of previous exhibitions.

3,216 people visited the exhibition - over 1/3 of the yearly total in 6 weeks!

113 local groups/schools engaged with the project. The gallery ran workshops with 13 Southampton schools and over 2,000 pupils. All the schools who participated expressed an interest in further workshops.

We ran artist-led workshops with 22 local groups - from a hospice to refugee groups. All are interested in future projects.

Our Graphic Design, Illustration, and Fashion courses all included the exhibition as part of the students' coursework; 33 students volunteered to install the exhibition; five supported artist-led workshops and seven invigilated the exhibition.

Staff, students and volunteers from the community came together to install the exhibition in the gallery over three weeks.

Footfall to the gallery's following exhibition, although a smaller show, increased by 10% on the previous year.

Budget and cost effectiveness:

£6,000 was used for workshop materials, artists to lead workshops and leaflets.

The University's gallery space was free of charge and the exhibition installed thanks to a large volunteer workforce.

All publicity was generated through the University's PR team and the Showcase Gallery.