

#### 4. 'ACP' WING [Art & Culture]

*"But to shut me from the light of the sky and the sight of the fields and flowers ... to chain my feet so that I can never again climb the hills; without these things I cannot live."*

*George Bernard Shaw 'St Joan'*



#### **Art & Culture in Prison (2010-12)**

*[Funded through EU programme: Culture 2007-2013 - Education and Culture DG]*

Coordinating organisation: Fondazione Giovanni Michelucci, Florence, Italy  
Partners/countries involved: 6 partners from Germany, Italy, Spain (Catalonia), UK (England & Northern Ireland),  
Partner meetings: 2010: Florence; Belfast. 2011: Berlin, Manchester, Florence  
Publication: ACP Project report  
Outcomes: Website; research findings;

*Arising from its coordination of the PAN Network, The Manchester College was invited to take a major role in a project focused less on the educational aspects of art activities in prison than on the cultural dimension of such interventions. The coordinator was the Fondazione Giovanni Michelucci in Florence, an organisation with a long tradition of involvement in the encouragement of innovative prison architecture, supported by the Tuscan Culture Department. Joined by other European partners with a range of experiences and specialisations, the project aimed to achieve a perspective on the ideas triggered by art products behind bars. The partnership worked to identify shared criteria for the creation of cultural productions of high quality in prisons; to identify the guidelines for the recovery, renewal and enhancement of the spaces devoted to culture in prisons; to promote the creation of new spaces, justified by the level of needs to be met; and to foster the co-production of activities and events among arts professionals from different countries. The results of these explorations and research findings were identified during the transnational partner meetings and published in a comprehensive final report.*

ACP CELL 1

**"Artistic activities: numerous. Dignified living conditions: zero"**

by Alessandro Margara

*[published in the ACP Report]*



*LEAP - Learning in Prison - was a one-year EU-funded project coordinated by the Fondazione Giovanni Michelucci which identified problems and examples of good practice in 6 countries: Catalonia, Cyprus, England, Germany, Greece and Italy. Alessandro Margara, Prisoners' Ombudsman for the Region of Tuscany, Guarantor of the Rights of Detained Persons, contributed this article on the issue of prison overcrowding which face Italy and many other countries, reproduced in ACP's final report.*

We need to agree on a premise. The conditions in many of our prisons fully justify the very severe judgment passed by the President of Italy at a conference held at the Senate last September. The President said that the conditions in our prisons are unworthy of a civilized country. Furthermore, Italy was condemned by the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) for inflicting inhuman and degrading treatment on detainees, in other words for a treatment that under Article 3 of the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights is defined as "torture". When that ruling was handed down in 2003, it referred specifically to the space available to the detained person in an overcrowded prison. ...The situation obviously had worsened, for an even larger number of convicts. If the living space of those prisoners was their cell - as it was for many of them - then, what we are talking about is unliveable conditions.

## EUROPEAN PRISON ARTS

Is this the case in other countries as well? In late January 2004, the CPT (the Council of Europe's Committee for the Prevention of Torture) released a devastating report on the "inhuman and degrading treatment" that was the common lot of French convicts. In a Federal Constitutional Court ruling of 2011 in Germany, the judges stated that the execution of a prison sentence by the State must immediately be deferred if the conditions of detention faced by the person concerned do not comply with the principle of human dignity. If the Court felt the need to affirm such a principle, it clearly means that those "detentions that do not comply with the principle of human dignity" undoubtedly existed. There is no doubt that there is a trend in Europe towards allowing the general economic and employment crisis to enter our prisons.

The United States - the world record-holder for the size of its prison population - has since the 1970s shifted resources from welfare services to the police. The USA has re-legitimized prison detention and totally abandoned the principle that the function of prisons is rehabilitation. The Italian way - following along these lines - has included cutting the resources that provided employment for inmates and maintenance for prison buildings, reallocating the funds to combat small crime, multiplying arrests and thereby further increasing the overcrowding of jails.

Under such conditions, the ultimate goal of prison detention - as solemnly affirmed in our Constitution - can no longer be pursued. This is aggravated by the staffing policy of our Administration, which has favoured high numbers of Penitentiary Police but very reduced levels of "educatori", the specialized social workers whose task it is to encourage and monitor the detainees' rehabilitation progress. Not long ago, the ratio between the two forces was a hundred to one. Yet - and I am still referring to the Italian experience - the results of a survey by ISSP (Higher Institute for Penitentiary Studies), an entity under the authority of DAP (Penitentiary Administration Department), are surprising: the survey reports that there are a very high number of artistic and cultural activities, a striking contrast to the critical situation of our prisons, unable to provide conditions worthy of a civilized country (to quote our President) to the desperate groups of foreigners, drug addicts, people in critical psychiatric conditions and social outcasts, all of which represent between two-thirds and three-quarters of the prison population.

## EUROPEAN PRISON ARTS

Briefly put: Artistic and cultural activities in our prisons: numerous. Dignified living conditions: zero. Prisons where detainees are subjected to inhuman and degrading treatment, nearly comparable to torture. One needs to grasp correctly the difference between the daily routine of the prison and the organization of the artistic and cultural activities mentioned above. The daily routine is negatively affected by the lack of organization and of funds in our prisons, while the latter are occasional events, largely organized by persons and entities outside the Penitentiary Administration, and with external funding.

As far as the staff are concerned, there has always been a shortage of "educatori" and social workers. Just recently the Administration has announced further staff reductions: a 35% cut in social workers and a 27% cut in "educatori". This suggests, on the one hand, that the Administration has voluntarily abdicated from the educational role that prisons must have according to our Constitution and to the Law; on the other hand, it also suggests that an involuntary externalization is taking place, towards social entities from outside the prison Administration, endowed with more ideas and more funds.

Reading between the lines, however, one can glimpse another story. In the 1980s prisons were designed and built as systems based on single cells, to achieve a disciplined prison, unlike the prisons in the previous periods that had often been the scene of riots. The prison population was combative, characterized by people convicted for terrorism and organized crime. The number of convicts was decreasing, although they were of a more dangerous kind; thus, it was considered necessary to divide them and house them in single cells. Today the situation is very different: the prison population is growing, there is a need for larger spaces to house less combative prisoners, who represent a concentration of all types of poverty. Our prisons will be different in the future.

Furthermore, this reneging on the prison as it is envisaged in our Constitution is nothing compared to what happens to inmates suffering from psychiatric conditions - and there are many in our prisons. They are transferred to penitentiary asylums for the criminally insane where no alternative to a life of misery is provided. The solution of building hangar-like structures in the garden spaces of our prisons - when they exist - to relieve the overcrowding, may be a first step towards more neutral spaces: our prisons are copying the detention centres for immigrants, not the other way around.

ACP CELL 2

**From the objectives to outcomes**

Extracts from an article by Corrado Marcetti, director of the Fondazione Michelucci

*[published in the ACP Report]*



*The ACP partners discussing ideas at the Fondazione's centre in Florence*

**The sense of the project**

Whoever has a deep knowledge of prisons knows how, beyond all appearance, art and culture cannot be considered as mere casual guests within the walls of a prison. Even when conditions are not so favourable to art and culture, they appear through unpredictable pathways as sources where one can tap new life elements. "No one can imagine how important a whale is in a prison", was the answer that the French writer, Jean Giono, gave to those who asked him about the detention period, when he had worked on the first French translation of the masterpiece novel *Moby Dick* by Herman Melville. This sentence by Jean Giono was a sort of *leit motiv* for the project: culture, intended as extensively as possible, is like Melville's whale within the walls of a prison, capable of lifting those who search for culture away from the day-to-day life of detention, enabling them to drift away towards open and often unknown seas, and guiding the adventures in exploring one's own being and the universal character of relationships with others.

This dimension of regeneration is especially true for those who have started with prison experiences in theatre or visual arts or music, almost as if art itself needs to find, even through these pathways, its flesh and meaning, without the fanciful ambition of having rehabilitating, re-socialising and therapeutic connotations. The basic aims in promoting cultural and artistic activities in prison are different: the acknowledgement of the right of citizens deprived of personal freedom to benefit from the cultural opportunities available and give expression to their artistic talents; the contrast between the de-socialising effects and the general cultural impoverishment that the state of detention tends to produce, and therefore the re-socialisation of the person in detention.

Generally, they are classified within the consolidation of the re-educational proposals promoted by prison institutions and local communities, but the promotion of cultural and artistic activities in prison forces the reconsidering of the primary elements of communication, in opening a research territory, bringing action back to the relationship with individuals and with concrete life. Whether it concerns big and problematic penitentiaries or small prisons, whether it concerns this or that field, art and culture can produce a containment of the loss of humanity that prison entails.

Moreover, the performance of artistic, theatrical and musical events has often been an opportunity for cultural interaction among detainees from different national origins. The participation of foreign inmates as actors in a theatre performance or as musicians in a concert has not only enriched the events with unprecedented intercultural characterisations, but has had positive consequences on co-existence-related aspects in difficult circumstances like those of being in prison.

Also the inside/outside, internal/external relationship is positively modified by the cultural activities carried out in prison. Although most times artistic, theatrical and musical events have been performed with only a few resources, they have been able to build bridges with outside society, to knock down the walls of prejudice and lower the barriers of separation. However, inside the prison systems in Europe the production of cultural and artistic events can very often create excellent results and can contribute on a general scale to the development of culture and art in society.

ACP CELL 3

## The management of cultural activities

by Jaume Martin Barberan and Xavier Buscà *[Catalonian Ministry of Justice]*

*[published in the ACP Report]*

*In Spain, Catalonia is the only autonomous community with authority for the execution of penal measures dictated by the courts. Such competence belongs to the Ministry of Justice of Catalonia.*



### 1. The Social Education Framework Program in Catalan prisons

Social education in prisons is specified in a set of actions that are in the field of non-formal education to meet diverse educational needs of individuals: interpersonal relations, communication skills, responsibilities as members of society. These interventions are part of the Social Education Framework Program of prisons in Catalonia, which allows the coordination of effort, systematized guidelines, methodologies and procedures, ensuring that this area of work has an identity and coherence. The educational activities carried out within such a framework program are seeking to turn the prison into an educational space (the idea of an educating community). These interventions address the individual educational needs and also affect the social and cultural contexts in which people interact (social dimension).

## **EUROPEAN PRISON ARTS**

Providing stable and ongoing activities, this network is one of the main resources of the socio-educational intervention, through which you can meet both the general process of socialization of individuals and situations of social maladjustment, promoting community awareness and internalizing behaviours that facilitate social and emotional relationships with the environment.

### **Framework Program of visual, performing and audio-visual arts**

Art in all disciplines is in our society a source of culture of great importance, and in recent centuries have been the tools of democratization of a culture that wants to reach everyone and strives to do it with activities that we undertake in prison. In 1985 art workshops, encouraging expression and communication, were introduced into prisons, which have since grown. In recent years the world of art has undergone changes in its conceptualization and its use, the workshops have been adapted and have been integrated under a single name, that of artistic', bringing into its scope: visual, plastic, scenic or audio-visual arts.

The aim of the art workshops is to provide detainees with the opportunity to develop new skills, aptitudes, interests and acquire knowledge of certain cultural events, their own and others, as well as to educate and use this knowledge as a tool to overcome the separation about the cultural life from the community and obviously as a tool for rehabilitation. The task of projecting the art workshops is organized into three strands: exhibitions, competitions and fairs & exhibitions which are distributed throughout the year.

### **Leisure Education: The EUREKA Project**

The actions related to social reintegration have led to the opening of the prison to society and the participation of social partners in the educational, cultural, social and welfare activities, which can respond to needs identified in relation to the use of the leisure time of inmates. To meet these needs a package of activities has been designed with the aim to:

- Offer leisure alternatives to the inmates, through educational activities.
- Bring to the community the knowledge of the prison reality from a cultural aspect.
- Make available to prisoners cultural activities done in the community.
- Link community groups and the prison world.
- Strengthen and reinforce care interventions carried out as part of prison treatment.



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The activities involved in this initiative are twofold:

- Workshops, theatre, circus, games, chess, magic, radio, dance - these last for the whole year
- Shows, concerts and performances that are held on weekends.

### **Framework Program of education for coexistence in diversity**

This program is limited to a set of educational activities through which it aims to foster relationships between people from different cultures, social contexts, and promote positive attitudes towards cultural diversity and rejection of racism and xenophobia. Develop capacities to know, understand and value different cultural perspectives (expressed as different ways of thinking, feeling and acting). The educational activities are carried out by inmate groups and are characterized by their diversity in the broadest sense.

## **2. Digital Literacy Project and Cultural Revitalization**

The project focuses on the following actions:

- a) **Classroom and recycling workshop computer:** the classroom workshop.
- b) **Cyberaules:** modular computer rooms of the modules
- c) **Audiovisual classroom:** audiovisual classrooms with specialising in video, digital photography, radio and music production.

### **Actions to take care of the immigrant population**

The current prison reality highlights the increase of foreign inmates, a feature which is identified as a reason for the trend to the growth of the total population. The confirmation of this trend obliges the prison system to review their processes and resources toward the goal of effective social reintegration that the legal system gives to the custodial sentences. The Intercultural mediation program in prisons involves actions oriented and developed by cultural mediators, who have as primary objectives to facilitate communication and mutual understanding between people from different cultural areas; the development of alternative strategies for resolving cultural conflicts and the promotion of coexistence and community participation.

ACP CELL 4

**Literature behind Bars in Germany**

by Martin Jankowski, Sarah Grobelny & Rebecca Jany, Berliner Literarische Aktion

*[published in the ACP Report]*



*The Berliner Literarische Aktion e.V. is a cultural non-profit organization with the aim to bring artistic positions into the society on the base of contemporary literature. Beside a variety of projects the association since 2002 organizes the "Literature Behind Bars" program with workshops by renowned international authors in prisons. Meanwhile, this model goes far beyond Berlin and receives international recognition.*

Fiction as a central element of European culture is present today in nearly every European prison. While prison libraries are common in all states of the European Union, the systems and the quality as well as the level of access for prisoners differ enormously. Literature has not only become a part of the prisoners' private avocation but also an instrument of education and reeducation. Today, it is not only the passive consumption of literature (reading books) but literature is also more and more seen as an active instrument of education (literacy), character building (self-reflection) and creativity (artistic expression) that verifiably advance the life skills, enhances the standard of knowledge and strengthens the self-confidence of prisoners.

During the *Art and Culture in Prison* project, we discovered that the use of literature in prisons is common practice in all participating countries. But the forms of passive (libraries) and active (workshops, publications etc.) practices inside prisons are very diverse and the levels differ considerably. Evaluating the situation in Germany, we had to realize that the federal structure of our state generates a special diversity: Each federal state of Germany is responsible for its own prisons as well as for its regional educational system. That is why we have a regional plurality of different laws, systems and priorities.

### **1. The passive use of literature in German prisons: Libraries**

In Germany, almost every prison has its own library. Prison libraries have been common in Germany since the 19th century. But it was only at the beginning of the 20th century that fiction was allowed in beside the non-fiction and religious books of former times. Since then, special librarians for prisons have been employed to take care of a "pedagogically useful" selection of books. Today, the right to free access to books and libraries is stated in the German constitution as well as in penal law. It is the duty of each German prison library to offer free access to information which comprises a diversity of public media for entertainment as well as for education and to advance the information and media literacy of the inmates.

### **2. The active use of literature in German prisons: Writing**

Beside the educational writing (training, school) and the private writing (letters, diaries) especially the therapeutic writing (psychological) and the (auto-) biographical writing (psychological, literary) have gained in importance since the 1970ies. Other influential aspects of this new development are communicative writing in prisoners magazines (social) and readings as well as workshops with professional writers inside prisons; theatre work (playwriting) as a practical activity in connection with literature and, last but not least, creative writing (literary/artistic) in prisons.

Compared to the average "outside" population prisoners generally have a lower level of literacy and language skills. That is why educational writing in the last decades has become a main instrument of prison education comprising a broad diversity of forms and training methods. Today diverse forms of therapeutic writing can be found in German prisons as a special method of psychological treatment.

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An influential form of writing with a social-communicative and even with an emancipatory aim is the writing of inmates for magazines. They are common especially in prisons for male adults. The German prison magazines are as diverse as the situation of the prisons. Sometimes the prisoners themselves are fully responsible for the editing and the production. But more often the whole process is strictly controlled by the prison authorities. Even though the conditions are mostly located somewhere between those two poles, most of the magazines define their own situation as "censored and dependent". Nevertheless, prisoners magazines play an important role in the social interaction of prisoners with each other, with the authorities and with the public "outside". Prisoners who write and edit often become casual spokesmen of the inmates and can gain a higher social status not only amongst the prisoners.

In Germany, prison inmates have usually no access to computers (except for educational training) and definitely no access to the internet. Nevertheless, some prisoners' magazines, in addition to the printed issue, are also available online.

Theatre workshops and performances of inmates have become popular in more and more penal institutions in Germany as a regular cultural activity. Most textbooks are written by the instructors in cooperation with the prisoners involved. They nearly always embed ideas, texts or biographical episodes of the players, even if the basic text is a classical or modern "readymade" play. During this theatre work, the inmates get involved in the literary process of creating their own text as a basis for stage plays - a special form of active use of literature that is becoming more and more common to cultural work inside German prisons.

Since the 1970s, creative writing groups for prisoners have been developing all over Germany. These groups were offered by "outsiders" like professional writers or students as an optional leisure activity for prisoners. The motivation of the inmates to take part in such groups was mainly to breach social or inner isolation and to get a clearer view on their own situation. Due to the special living conditions of the inmates, the groups have a high fluctuation of members. Usually, the groups are directed by professional authors who receive a small allowance or work as volunteers. In contrast to the UK, German prisons do not offer any programs for "writers in residence" and only very few prisons have employed professional art therapists. The creative writing activities in prison have always been seen mainly from the political or therapeutic point of view.

### 3. Literature behind bars

Readings of professional authors inside prisons have been becoming more and more popular over the last two decades. Usually an author located in the same region visits the prison for a reading during the prisoners' free time, often on a special occasion like an anniversary, special festivities, holidays etc. A special variation on this idea is the project that we developed and started in cooperation with the *International Literature Festival Berlin* in 2002 - the program *Literature behind Bars*. Since 2002, internationally renowned authors have been going behind bars with us in order to read from their books and hold discussions and workshops with the prisoners of different penal institutions.

*Literature behind Bars* swiftly became a popular event and was met with great enthusiasm by prisoners and authors alike. We visited Berlin's large male prisons and the smaller women's prisons, in the infamous detention centre in Moabit, as well as the juvenile prisons and the unusual Hakenfelde day-release prison, bringing literature and intellectual stimulus to these very diverse audiences. Many initially sceptical prison officers also began to understand the idea behind the program and eventually came to cherish it.

And of course *Literature behind Bars* events make everybody read:

- us - as we have to choose the right books and authors
- the prisoners - even if they have never read a book before, after the event they often read the book of "their" guest author
- the guards - and also the prison direction to prepare the meeting with the famous author... (sometimes the staff brings book copies to get an autograph)

Literature is a lifelong issue for people of all ages and educational levels. Literature is usually accessible to everyone, also in prison. The active use of literature inside prisons should be advanced not only to improve the skills and behaviour of the inmates but because it is an important form of communication in our entire society.

ACP CELL 5

**Art in the UK's criminal justice system**

by Matthew Meadows

*[published in the ACP Report]*



*Matthew Meadows is an artist and writer who has worked in the Criminal Justice System since 2001, when he became a judge for the Koestler Trust's annual prison arts awards scheme. He has also worked in many other social arts and educational settings.*

**How art is made in the UK's criminal justice system**

Whatever the scale of their creative ambitions and the varying circumstances of its production, art is a vital and nurturing activity for many prisoners, detainees, and secure patients in the UK's criminal justice system. Some have discovered creative vocations and have come to think of themselves as artists, but are less interested in qualifications and prefer to work in their cells, away from an art class in education. They get sufficient approval and acknowledgement of their creativity from family, other prisoners as well as officers in their wing or landing, and sometimes a regular income from portraits.

**Cell-based art**

Generally however TV and the widespread use of electronic games in cells have seen traditional cell-based art activities decline; similarly, more regular phone contact with loved ones has lessened the need for other traditional prison art skills such as decorated handkerchiefs, etc., although others - tattooing, soap carving and matchstick modelling - persist. Packs of headless matches specially sold for this purpose are usually available in prison canteens, together with plastic trimmers and small bottles of PVA glue, which can also be diluted and used as varnish.

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This kind of art takes place outside the education department art room alongside the more traditional kinds of graphic art made in prisons such as portraits, cartoons, illustrative art of various kinds, its value set by prisons' bartering economies, its life usually ephemeral.

### **Art classes**

Though many prefer to work in their cells, those who want access to more resources, training and qualifications will go to an art class in the Education Department. These departments are tendered out to further education colleges or human resources companies, and provide accredited classes of activities across a broad range of art forms - as submissions to the UK's Koestler Trust prison arts annual awards scheme attest. What will they find there? Most of us remember the art room as a refuge from conformity: a place for self-expression, with less pressure and a more adult and sympathetic atmosphere, and the art teacher granted a more relaxed role. This relative freedom is particularly precious for prisoners. But for many, their last contact with education may well have been difficult, and for these prisoners, memories of underachievement are overcome more easily in the art room, helping reconcile the prison student to the class environment.

### **Short-stay prisons**

Teaching art in local prisons can be particularly challenging for the art tutor. These are usually in older, inner city prisons with a volatile and transient population including young inmates on remand, those serving short sentences and others waiting to be allocated to other prisons where they will serve a longer sentence. Daily routines are often disrupted: more frequent legal and family visits (which may tail off all together after sentencing) compound the emotional stress of the first time inside, particularly coming up to court day.

### **Conditions for teaching art**

So short-stay students will be lucky to find a stable, peaceful place to do art. Some of the young men or women in the art room may not be interested in education, and prefer to spend most of their time chatting with their friends in the toilets. Others attend the art class just to kill time. In these circumstances, art tutors may well prefer a stricter regime and given students' inexperience and unpredictable length of stay, hope to take them through entry level qualifications.

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But at establishments housing prisoners serving longer sentences, typically training prisons, art education departments can pursue higher-level qualifications. This may give students a chance of employment in the 'creative industries' or at least provide a progressive step towards college on release.

### **Outsider artists**

Another way inmates get to do art in prison is when outside artists go in for special projects. These artists work in the criminal justice system on a more or less independent basis, delivering periodic workshop programmes or one-off projects, perhaps as part of their wider engagement with community arts. As well as their therapeutic, educational and rehabilitative benefits they provide moral-boosting prison-camp style entertainment, and are considered good value for money by the authorities.

### **'Internment' art**

No survey of arts in the UK's criminal justice system can ignore the work made by detainees. In the aftermath of 9/11, as we learn to live with increasing restrictions to civil liberty, internment is back in the UK. The war on terror has put many Muslims in prisons and immigration centres where they are being detained without charge, held either on alleged immigration contraventions or unspecified terrorism offences. When released, control orders amounting to electronic house arrest can make living conditions for them and their families difficult. Detainees are held at several Category A high security prisons.

Despite these conditions, some detainees have managed to give creative expression to beliefs and feelings essential to identity and survival. Outstanding work was produced by several attending pottery classes at HMP Belmarsh until its closure for unspecified security reasons. At HMP Long Lartin detainees are held on the Segregation Unit, normally used for isolating 'problem' prisoners. As in other prisons art and craftwork continues to be made on the wings, and Long Lartin's Segregation Unit is no exception. For several years detainees there have used a traditional prison craft, matchstick modelling. As well as making more traditional objects like jewellery boxes for wives and daughters some have developed more ambitious projects, sometimes stained but uncoloured according to the convention which allows their intricate construction to be displayed.



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### Hospital art

Some of the most compelling art produced across the wide spectrum of closed institutions in the criminal justice system is made in special hospitals. These are high security closed NHS institutions holding 'mentally disordered' offenders. Three categories of patients are detained, some indefinitely: the mentally ill or psychotic, those with personality disorders and those with learning disabilities. Perhaps because therapeutic and drug regimes have been liberalised, over recent years some patients detained in special hospitals have been encouraged to develop strongly individual styles of artistic expression.

For many years this work could only be seen at the annual Koestler prison arts awards exhibition, but recently artist and writer John Holt has established AIM (Artists in Mind), a charity based in Huddersfield which supports artists coping with acute and enduring mental health problems. Many of these have come from prison, secure hospitals (notably Rampton), and forensic units. AIM provides these artists with studios and exhibiting opportunities and is developing an archive of their work.

### Conclusions

Those working in prisons such as managerial staff, art tutors and officers provide anecdotal evidence that inmates participate more effectively with sentence plans, behave less aggressively, improve self-esteem, develop their communication skills. Research both in the UK and USA support this, and further evidence suggests recidivism rates being reduced. And despite the challenges faced by artists, art education departments and arts organisations working in the UK's criminal justice system - particularly in today's economic climate - few countries can match its diverse range of arts provision.

ACP CELL 6

**The bottom rung on stage. Theatre in Italian prison**

by Gianfranco Pedullà

*[published in the ACP Report]*



In a cold February of 2012, the Italian film by the Taviani brothers won the Golden Bear at the Berlinale. "Caesar Must Die" was the title and it was based on the crucial work of the theatre director, Fabio Cavalli, in Rebibbia Prison in Rome. The power of the film originates from the fact that its entire cast is formed by prison inmates who had trained under Cavalli. After ten years of workshops including major stage productions, the theatre director's work encounters cinema at its best and the film reveals the expressive and creative force of the largely unexplored territory of prison theatre.

Over time, theatre in prison has spread to many regions and cities in Italy. Credit is due to the *Ente Teatro Italiano* (Institute of Italian Theatre) which, with a memorandum of understanding with the Ministry of Justice in 1997, launched some pilot projects in juvenile detention centres such as that of *Teatro Kismet* in Bari. However, the most prolific experience, in terms of artistic quality and quantity of production workshops, over the years has been in Tuscany where from 1999 onwards, and with the support of the regional government, it has become the focal point of all theatrical projects in prisons. At the moment, twelve stage companies and associations are running projects in nineteen centres around the region.

### Characteristics of the prison stage

The numerous theatre projects in prisons have given rise to a gradual creation of original solutions. A series of workshops borrowed ideas and methods from professional theatre but have taken their own route towards other innovative idioms in a 'theatre of research' which in a prison becomes a living and communicative theatre combining research and the traditional stage. Qualified groups or single persons, have had to rethink their theatrical work and recast their methods, styles and idiom specifically for the inmates.

Something new was thus born in the history of Italian theatre, a theatre based on the feel of the place, the history of its participants and the frequent invention of the stage. Often, what appears as handicaps have become winning shots. Frequently, we see theatrical forms that interlace experimentation with classical forms in European and Italian theatre. We might define it as a theatre that emphasises the *mise-en-scène* whether in a European classic or self-dramaturgy or self-script.

Many theatre directors find a theatre of gestures and of the body apt for the inmates following an idea of Pasolini's that it is in the face and body of a person that the stories are contained. In prison, the customary stage and audience do not exist. The majority of stagings (fortunately?) are basic with a minimum of costuming, poor lighting and perhaps in ill-suited areas but in spite of these drawbacks, they manage to re-invent theatre and the prison as well. Of primary importance is the use of live music which gives great vitality to the stage action as well as connecting the many illiterate in the Italian language, with the growing number of foreign inmates as well as Italian inmates who only understand their own local dialect.

Theatre operates in part upon the rational side of the actors and the spectators but also on the emotive, sensitive and instinctive ends. The crime may be positioned (obviously with other objectives) in the obscure area of the human personality in its irrational, primordial and sometime violent dimensions. The stage action impresses on pre-conscious levels of both the actors and the audience, on the possibility to create different existential worlds where, what the scholar Claudio Meldolesi described "as the primeval dimension of theatre to reveal the game of the gods" can resound.

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With the passing of time, and not without a struggle, prison theatre has managed to conquer space, credibility and usefulness. Usually towards the end of the workshop, it has helped to lighten the burden of detention with its interruption of the monotony of prison routine. It becomes a pattern with its rehearsals, the constant contact with the director and his team up to the arrival of the public and festive culmination. In that moment, the theatre has created a process of active inclusion of all the participants in a welcoming atmosphere.

### **A personal reflection:**

After the first experiences and the construction of an original approach, I together with my team, managed to connect up the various vicissitudes of the inmates as well as gaining their confidence. It was then that I came to realise the particular blend that makes up theatre in prison: the narrow confines constricting the actors, the stage area, the lights, the sound effects in a jail and the audience's constraint. I learnt to adapt theatre vocabulary to the prison environment, overturning stage rules (timing, naturalistic acting, diction and dialogue) and by doing so, breaking prison monotony. At least for the final part of the workshop, theatre manages to overcome prison modes with its own rhythms (a time for listening, for dialogue, for contact and for genuine personal rapport) which if even for a limited period of time, gave a human dimension to the place.



ACP CELL 7

**The Diversity Wall**

by Cathy Moore, The Prison Arts Foundation, Northern Ireland

*[published in the ACP Report]*



*"Since its inception in 1996 the Prison Arts Foundation has looked for the right professional artists to be a part of their Artist-in-Residence Schemes within the prisons of Northern Ireland. Cathy Moore, a professional artist and ceramicist, came to our attention in around 2001; she expressed good solid views on Arts and Society and her work reflected this. Artists and practitioners working in prisons are aware that they not only produce art with prisoners but also change within prisoners - a personal and social transformation. Cathy became another important part of our service provision." [PAF]*

I have been working at Hydebank Wood for 3 years and 9 months. I use 'Art' and the 'Creative Process' as a kind of medicine, knowing that no matter what the medium - art is therapeutic. It gives these young men somewhere to escape to and provides self-satisfaction leading to the building of confidence and offering a sense of hope. Clay as a material can be challenging and often doesn't do what you want it to do. Consequently it offers a channel for learning 'patience' and the acceptance that some things in life are never as perfect as you'd like them to be. A considerable part of my role then is the challenge of how to get this group of young men to deal with their disappointment and quick tendency to blame when something does not work out as they expected. On a daily basis I have to reiterate that, in general, *nothing is perfect - neither their product nor us as human beings.*

## EUROPEAN PRISON ARTS

When dealing with potential weapons and sometimes volatile young men one must be always aware of the danger. We must use knives to cut the hard clay; the knives are attached to the bench by a length of metal links. In my time at Hydebank Wood the knives we use to cut the clay have only been used for that purpose. The young men realise that if the knives were used in any other way they would jeopardise the class and it would be them and me that would suffer.

These young men can be incredibly funny and sharing their humour can be amusing. There are so many characters with so many stories to tell. In addition to being one of the Artist-in-Residence, one takes on the role of surrogate mother, friend, counsellor and sounding board. Sometimes they take their bad mood out on you when it was meant for the officers and they realise they shouldn't have; in situations like this it is rewarding when they realise what they've done and they say 'sorry'.

At the ACP Conference in September 2010 I was asked to help the delegates create a ceramic plaque each for our Diversity Wall. I said to the boys that we were expecting some visitors and that I needed their help to teach the visitors on how to execute their tiles for the wall. The boys were excited about meeting new people and flattered that I needed their help. The session proved very successful and I was proud of the lads during their teaching role. Each of the boys seemed to 'bond' with one of the visitors and afterwards they continued their work by tidying up the tiles, firing them, glazing them and re-firing them to completion. After the session the boys continued to talk about it and each wanted a copy of the photograph taken on that afternoon. It was a happy positive memory which I felt was wonderful.

Since the Conference the boys have won more awards with their work in the Koestler Awards and we are now finishing the Diversity Wall which has received positive recognition from so many people - the young men, themselves (never ones to praise their work), the officers, visitors and civilian staff alike. It has provided a most impressive visual statement to the Centre and has dynamically changed a drab prison space.

We, who see it each day, have got used to it being there but there are times when even I do a 'double take' and am reminded what a fabulous piece of work it is. It contains the names of hundreds of young men who have taken part in its creation; it is now a talking point, a chance to recall all those people whose names are on it, their lives now and how they've changed.

ACP CELL 8

**"Free Theater From The Inside"**

by Itziar Añibarro

*[published in the ACP Report]*



*Itziar Añibarro is a theatre director who has worked for some years at the Penitentiary of Brians 2 in Catalonia. The ACP partners visited the Penitentiary during a transnational meeting.*

**The starting point**

During the course of the 55 minutes from downtown Barcelona to my work I review my notes for my classes. ... A new project has been assigned and I soon start to think about it: Rabindranath Tagore. Memories come to my mind. How to convey that? This is the way most new projects begin. I get an assignment: an author or an event to celebrate. I think about my experience and I collect information. Then I think about them, my group of inmates at the *Penitentiary of Brians 2*. And I begin to sketch out my ideas and relate them with the characteristics of the group and its individuals - who are in the Centre serving their sentences.

Although the actors-inmates change along the months and years, the theater group keeps its name "Teatre lliure des de dins" ("Free from the inside theater"). The group is usually made up of individuals of all kinds of nationalities and ages, and conflicts. It is always essential to get a good working atmosphere in this complex group, I need them to trust me, that they respect each other, that they are sincere and they collaborate honestly.

## EUROPEAN PRISON ARTS

I usually manage to create good teams through group dynamics activities, like moulding a sculpture of, for example, a net, with their bodies, joining all arms and legs. I devote some time in each session to those activities, but what counts most is my own attitude, and the explicit statement of my values: respect, the effort to be better, the fight against difficulties, commitment and collaboration.

My starting point is the individual beings, and I relate each of them to the materials I have planned; by so doing a general idea emerges that will allow me to relate people, facts, and ideas. What matters is to find a way to raise their interest and sensibility. The first step is to accept what we feel, to be aware of our emotions, to channel them and express them creatively, using words, gestures and movement, dramatizing. We also need to discover and accept that other human beings and animals are equally fragile as we are. It is through the acceptance of our fragility and other people's that we develop what we call empathy.

I often have to redirect people who join our courses in search of the stage for exhibitionism, or narcissistic success. Art is giving. Humility, honesty, respect for peers, the public, the author, the character we play, make a good actor, along with passion, enthusiasm, self-discipline and work.

### **The making and staging of the play**

I do not decide exactly what we do until we know the components of the group: what role he play?-Here I have in mind both the cathartic aspect as personal abilities - what can he do in addition to or instead of acting?

Let me give an example: Diego was an irascible boy; he had difficulty controlling his anger at times of frustration. One day I chose for him an irascible character also. The interpretation of this character was cathartic for him, by understanding, reasoning and then acting the suffering and pain that this character caused to the others helped him to realize his own faults.

This is the "Morenic Catharsis" that I use most of the time at the reverse: that is making someone act the opposite character, for instance a peaceful person for someone who is violent, to avoid a psychodrama and to help them discover within themselves that a positive character can overcome weaknesses and frustrations.



## EUROPEAN PRISON ARTS

The stories we stage offer models of wrong behaviour that is punished or defeated or successful behaviours in which the characters are rewarded for their effort and for finding the way. That is the catharsis through drama: Catharsis for the actor and catharsis for the audience.

We also represent works without a classic plot: they are 'performances', and even short films. In these short works, as in any staging, there is a process of emotional approach, a cognitive understanding, a refinement of the body, as if it were an instrument that we prepare for a brief high-intense representation that allows us to experience what Pirandello said of theatre: "at any time we have in our hands our entire life".

On the one hand, acting allows a high level of concentration by maintaining intimate connection with one's self, without ever losing contact with the other actors and the audience. And on the other hand everyone is involved in its construction, but not necessarily as actors. Others take care the scenography, lighting, sound, others are required to adapt the text. It all depends on assigning a task that helps them show their worth, enabling them to be admired by their peers, improve their self-esteem.

Finally, I think that the theatre does not have categories, it's about life. This is the only starting point and nothing else matters. It's also my way of rescuing "my boys", making them live and "feel free from inside" which is achieved through an emotional and cognitive insight, and a control of the body and the emotions during the performances.

As you can see my general program of theatre, pivots on 4 axes: one creative and artistic, another cultural, another educational and social and another therapeutic, but the essential is to rescue lives. I thank my boss's interest to know what's going on in my classes, my colleges and co-workers for their cooperation and patience with my "assertive" personality, but I thank especially my current and former students for their progress, readiness to change, and enthusiasm.

**ACP CELL 9**

**The Pathway to Progression**

by Alan Clarke

*[published in the ACP Report]*



*Hewell prisoners' Pathway to Progression*

*At the ACP meeting in Manchester, The Manchester College invited a number of prison representatives to present examples of their work to the delegates. These projects had been identified in the ACP's good practice survey, and two prisons and two young offender institutions took up the offer. Each of the examples not only demonstrated the high quality of art work currently being achieved in English prisons, but also the effective way in which life and social skills were improved by those prisoners who engaged in them. A particularly interesting aspect was the way in which each project was able to involve not only the art departments but many other areas of the prison as well. In most cases they were also able to present their work outside prison, which had a very positive impact on the general public's attitude towards prisoners and young offenders.*

**PROJECT 1: "Stepping Stones for an Edible Garden"**

PRISON: HMP Hewell

OUTLINE: For the Royal Horticultural Society's Autumn Show, the art class made stepping stones out of clay to represent a prisoner's progression

## EUROPEAN PRISON ARTS

### DESCRIPTION

HMP Howell were approached by the local Malvern Showground to create an edible garden for their annual autumn show. The prisoners identified its aim was about reconciliation for their crimes and a way of educating the public, as well as highlighting the work undertaken in offender learning. The project under the title of Pathway to Progression took about 9 months incorporating designs by the prisoners and apart from the horticultural department incorporated media classes, construction students and art classes. The experience was described by the prison art teacher: "The path was split between words that meant something to the prisoners and between each word was a footstep showing the steps that they took throughout their sentence and hopefully turned their back on crime. We were quite concerned about it being a public show but the response from the public was absolutely fantastic. There were 65,000 visitors over the weekend and we only heard one negative comment."

### **PROJECT 2: "Gamelan - Storytelling and Shadow puppet show"**

PRISON: HMYOI Thorn Cross

OUTLINE: Using the Gamelan created a visual show with Shadow Puppets, Story Telling, Poetry & Music

### DESCRIPTION

HMPYOI Thorn Cross, an open prison for young offenders, was invited to create a special exhibition for the *European Prison Education Association Conference* in Manchester in November 2011. Their art group organised an event entitled "*Pictures at an Exhibition*", incorporating the Gamelan Orchestra, an Indonesian-type percussion group, along with the Outreach Department of the Halle Orchestra. The shadow show was divided in such a way that the viewer could walk through a themed exhibition of live images. Throughout the story Picasso's *Dove of Peace* wove through each scene, symbolising hope and new creative life throughout each age. The image of the dove also worked really well with the gentleness of the shadow play and the Gamelan music. Through this process the learners were encouraged to gain an understanding of team work, building, self confidence and self esteem.

## EUROPEAN PRISON ARTS

### PROJECT 3: "Community Art Project: The Big Draw "

PRISON: HMP Lindholme

OUTLINE: A student-based initiative to make their environment a better place, starting with murals on the wings and extending to other areas of the prison.

#### DESCRIPTION

HMP Lindholme's involvement in the nationwide project *The Big Draw* engaged both staff and learners from all areas of the prison. The idea was to reflect the history and heritage of the prison as a former airbase, including poppy fields and doves to represent remembrance and peace. The response from both staff and learners was very positive, even the governor completed a section. There were about 150 people involved and everyone got something out of it. The result was fantastic - a large piece of art work that filled one wall.

### PROJECT 4: "Museums, Libraries, Archives project (MLA)"

PRISON: HMYOI Deerbolt

OUTLINE: The production of original artwork, music & a play in collaboration with an outside arts group, Safe Ground

#### DESCRIPTION

The *Creating Community Archives* project has enabled young offenders at HM YOI Deerbolt to engage in an inter-generational learning programme. The project aimed to facilitate a conversation between young offenders aged 18-21 and older members of the community living locally through the theme of the 2nd World War. The project lasted approximately 8 weeks and involved working in the community with people in their 70s & 80s. At first most of them were resistant to having any contact with young offenders. Despite this an event was created involving art work, music and a short play, written by the prisoners themselves. About 10 old people from the local community came to the performance and were absolutely gob-smacked. At the outset one of them, a former teacher, said "Young people have no respect. I really don't think I would like to meet these people. I'm terrified of them." The same woman 8 weeks later stood in a prison with tears flowing down her face and said: "I never imagined that these young men could do this. Every one should come into the prison and meet them."

ACP CELL 10

**Change of paradigm: prison literature since the 1970s**

by Professor Helmut Koch

*[published in the ACP Report]*



The focus in this essay is on contemporary literature that has been written by inmates in prison or in retrospect of their experiences in prison since the middle of the 20th century. Peter Paul Zahl, one of the best-known prison writers in Germany, has identified a change of paradigm since the 1960s and 1970s. While before it had been the socially privileged and intellectuals writing in prison, nowadays it is predominantly the "common" inmates that are writing. Since the 1970s a downright boom of this new kind of literature from prison has developed. The first nationwide Prison Act in German history came into effect in 1977 and was based on the central idea of re-socialization as a first priority and raised hopes for a fundamental reform of the so far misanthropic and anti-constitutional penal system. First small steps towards a reform had been made and the writing of inmates was increasingly tolerated - even though this was done rather hesitantly and up to today not without interventions of censorship - and has been supported as part of the re-socialization and democratization process ever since.

### Forms of writing

Prison literature in the narrower sense includes the common literary forms such as poetry, narration, novels, audio drama, theatre and essays, but also less shaped texts in the form of diaries or documentary accounts on daily prison life. Letters are another form of writing that can be added here, them being the most common form of written texts circulating in prisons. Finally, journalistic texts are to be included which can be found in prison magazines in which the other mentioned forms of writing can also be found. By taking into account prison literature in its entire scope, the significant role of writing in prison becomes apparent. Isolation, open or hidden censorship or the fear of the possible consequences of writing too openly may lead to forms of adaptation, to coded ways of writing or even to self-censorship. Nonetheless, honesty and authenticity predominate in all forms of writing.

The topics of the inmates are those of everyday life in prison in its entirety: food, work, recreational activities, visits, relationships, sexuality, cell allocation, hygiene, facilitations of imprisonment, ease of detention conditions, different detention forms, participation, dealing with complaints and so on. In this respect, prison literature is to be read as a kind of documentary literature. At least as important as the concrete, sensual account of the facts is the description of the impact the detention has on inmates. This is the main topic of prison literature in all its forms. It is the psychogram and sociogram of the life of the inmates.

In the mid 1980s, the penologist Schüler-Springorum examined, which feelings prison triggers in the writing prisoner. The dominant feelings he is pointing out are: "resignation, anger, indifference, misguided love, melancholy, desire, distrust, hostility, self-punishment, fear and hatred." This observation is valid up to today.

### Effect and functions of writing for prisoners

In general, writing in prison has a double function. On one side it is directed against the destructive effects of detention on the own personality, on the other side it points positively to self-discovery, the search for one's own personality and its consolidation, and finally successful communication. ... In so far as literary writing in its various forms turns against destructive instances in the biography and in detention, one can talk of *writing to survive*. When the writing contributes to the positive development of the person, one can talk about *writing to live*.