

CHAPTER THREE

The Imbali Street Children Art Programme – an introduction

Background

Imbali ran an extensive workshop programme around the exhibition '*Blank_ architecture, apartheid and after*' curated by Hilton Judin in 2000. Judin felt very strongly that museums, and particularly his exhibition - which was about the history of urban space and apartheid - needed to talk primarily to the people who were alienated and marginalised by the urban architecture of apartheid. He encouraged Imbali to include inner-city dwellers, amongst others, in the workshops. The street children¹ groups who attended demonstrated enormous enthusiasm for making art and engaging in discussions around the exhibition and their lives. This enthusiasm was echoed by street children who attended the workshops offered by Imbali as part of the *Joubert Park Project (JPP)* at the Johannesburg Art Gallery in 2001. Imbali presented a series of art making workshops for these young people that engaged with the contemporary art on display in the gallery. Children continued to come to the gallery and ask where Imbali was for many months after the workshops had ended. Imbali perceived a need to provide these young people and others like them with further opportunities to explore their creativity and engage in processes that allowed them to express themselves in various ways. The idea of offering street children a longer, more sustained programme was important to Imbali. There was a sense after both the *Blank_* and JPP projects that something had been started and then abandoned; this is so often the case with short-term workshop interventions. (Ruth Sack, personal comment)

Bringing street children into museums in the city, an idea initiated by Hilton Judin, was something that resonated with Ruth Sack. She felt strongly that these public spaces and

¹ The term street children is defined by the United Nations as “boys and girls for whom ‘the street’ (including unoccupied dwellings, wasteland, etc.) has become their home and/or source of livelihood, and who are inadequately protected or supervised by responsible adults” (Black 1993). Life on the street has specific kinds of problems (drug addiction, sexual promiscuity and abuse, work exploitation, involvement in criminal activities, and violence inflicted by police, other adults, and rival gangs) and attractions (freedom, adventure, peer solidarity). No term has yet been coined to capture both the peculiar nature of street life and its interconnection with other aspects of vulnerability (Volpi 2003). Thus for want of a better label, this report will keep using the term street children. After the age of eighteen the term “street youth” is perhaps more appropriate. Some participants in the programme were over eighteen, the oldest being twenty-eight. However, for convenience the term “street children” in this report includes them too.

resources in the city should be accessible to all people, particularly those who live in the city and were denied access to these spaces in the past. Sack saw the potential to use these resources “to change people’s lives”. “For me, access to museums and art and libraries and cultural institutions is just inherently enriching and a process of growing, learning, feeling more empowered” (Ruth Sack, personal comment). Sack’s conviction articulated here typifies the liberal/democratic ethos underpinning much of Imbali’s work. This position assumes that having access to museums, and engaging in a meaningful way with their displays and exhibits, is going to benefit street children (a group that is denied access to so much). Is an assumption like this valid, particularly if it is made without knowing much about the street children, who they are and where they come from? Maybe access to museums on its own is not enough: maybe this access has to be mediated in a way that precipitates some concrete change in the lives of street children. I return to this question in the final chapter.

The beginning

In 2002 Ruth Sack secured funding for a year-long visual arts programme for street children from the National Lottery Board. In the proposal the intention was stated as follows:

This proposal addresses the need to provide a structured and meaningful programme that would accommodate the growing numbers of street children and children of homeless families living in the inner cities. It is our conviction - based on our experience with such children in previous Imbali programmes - that constructive, structured and creative intervention (especially in the form of art workshops) leads to a renewed interest in learning, as well as to a radical development in self-esteem, that may change the course of young lives which are currently at profoundly serious risk. (Ruth Sack, 2002)

The notion that developing self-esteem and encouraging renewed interest in learning are important for street children is not new. Elena Volpi in her paper ‘*Street Children Promising Practices and Approaches*’ (Volpi 2003) distills the main lessons learned from eighteen programmes worldwide that have attempted to meet the special needs of

street children. It comes across in Volpi's report that developing self-awareness, self-confidence and self-esteem is perceived, by a number of these projects, as being critical if street children are to go on to lead constructive and positive lives. Children and young people with a developed sense of self-esteem and confidence are more resilient, and this resilience enables them to enjoy life, and survive pain, sadness and disappointment. (Brooks and Goldstein 2001). But it is also argued (Kester 1998) that the development of self-esteem, confidence and a renewed interest in learning is not enough to justify the existence of these types of programmes. Grant Kester (Kester 2004, 2005) theorises on contemporary art practices that involve the artist or arts collectives facilitating dialogue among diverse communities. Departing from the "object based" traditions of art making, the artists/groups that Kester presents have adopted performative, process-based approaches. Kester looks at how many of these projects work with "sociopolitical relationships" - these replace traditional art material and working methods (Kester 2004:3). The collaborative, consultative approaches towards making art that Kester discusses open up new ways of conceptualising, understanding and evaluating interventions like the *Imbali Street Children Art Programme*. Kester, for example, would contest Sack's comment about access to museums being "inherently enriching". It is exactly this kind of well-meaning statement that Kester feels imposes particular values and assumes a position or authority and power. I will return to Kester's views in chapter four when I present a number of art programmes that are similar to the *Imbali Street Children Art Programme*.

Ruth Sack selected the writer of this research report, (a current employee of Imbali), to co-ordinate the programme and facilitate, along with Tessa Abramovitz and Nkosana Ngobese, the majority of the workshops. A number of other facilitators also worked on the programme on an ad-hoc basis. Planning meetings were held frequently in the beginning, and less so as time went on, to decide on the content of the workshops week to week and discuss difficulties and unexpected issues arising. These were attended by the facilitators, other members of the Imbali team as well as guest facilitators when appropriate. There was not always total agreement among all parties on all issues; people involved came with varying backgrounds and experience, so this was to be expected. These elements of dissonance, particularly in relation to what the programme could and should achieve, will be looked at in chapter six using illuminative evaluation (this methodology will be outlined in chapter five). It is important however to note that

the Twilight Shelter, which was one of the key role-players in the programme, along with Imbali and the participants, were omitted from the planning phase of the programme. This was a strategic error and one that will be exposed further when the varying perceptions around what the programme would do are discussed in chapter six.

Aims for the programme

Numerous meetings were held to plan the workshops and formulate its aims. The general ethos of Imbali informed the majority of these aims; individual facilitators also contributed. The aims were broad and wide ranging, and span a number of rationales for art education, but perhaps at the foreground is the notion that art making can contribute to personal and social transformation.

The following is a summary of the aims put forward in the initial proposal and added to by the facilitators involved:

- Create an open and non-threatening environment that will generate immediate interest and willingness to participate.
- Provide structured workshops that give participants a strong sense of security, focus and purpose.
- Encourage, through the workshops, a sense of achievement, increased self-esteem and confidence.
- Allow participants to expand thought-space, express their dreams, hopes and wishes.
- Develop participants' concentration spans, perceptual skills, problem-solving skills as well as a range of technical skills.
- Provide space and materials for individual expression. Also focus on the meaning or content being expressed by the maker as this opens communication and interaction which is vital, as issues faced by street children need addressing on their own terms.
- Develop participants' capacity for collaboration, to work in groups and develop social and communication skills.

- Encourage participants to develop a sense of empowerment, control and ownership over their own lives, an ability to make choices that extends beyond the art-making activities and workshops.
- Encourage participants to develop a critical awareness of their physical context (e.g. the city) and how and whether they can have an impact on it.
- Create a supportive environment where participants can develop a sense of what art is, develop an aesthetic appreciation and learn about visual literacy.
- Through conducting the workshops in museums and galleries, encourage participants to feel comfortable in these spaces in the city and feel a sense of ownership of them.

It is acknowledged that a number of these aims articulate areas that are very difficult (if not impossible) to measure. How do you measure empowerment, increased self-esteem, increased access or individual expression?² Understanding these issues is part of this research report and will be addressed in chapters four, six and seven.

Rationales

As is already apparent from the introduction to the *Imbali Street Children Art Programme*, the rationales for initiating a programme such as this are complex and multi-faceted. In part they stem from Imbali's belief in and understanding of visual literacy, art making and creativity and the power this holds for all individuals. Imbali's beginnings in museums and galleries positioned it to recognise the importance of accessing these spaces, and the potential they hold for engaging with visual literacy and art-making in furthering social transformation.

The rationales also reflect Imbali's recognition of the numerous dangers that street children are exposed to. In the funding proposal these are identified as: hunger, drug abuse, sexual abuse, physical abuse and disease (Sack 2002). By creating a non-threatening environment in the space of the workshops at the museum Imbali hoped that "at-risk youth" would develop a sense of security and purpose. It was hoped that this in

² There are self-esteem and self-concept measuring instruments developed by psychologists, but these tend to be reductive – they simplify responses to yes/no or multiple-choice answers, and are not particularly helpful for developing the kind of understanding that I am seeking.

turn would help them gain a sense of empowerment over their lives – developing a critical awareness of their context (i.e. the city) and their place in it. Increased self-esteem and confidence would accompany this, helping these individuals to become better adjusted and positioned to effect change.

A concern raised in the proposal is the fact that street children do not go to school, which “precludes most of them from any hope of a reasonable job or dependable income in their future” (Sack 2002). The urgent need to “create steps towards a solution which is sensitive to their particular circumstances and past histories, and which is one that will draw their genuine interest and attention, while at the same time setting out to develop a healthier and more directed focus for their lives” (Sack 2002), is also recognised in the proposal.

The many areas mentioned in the proposal are echoed by other organisations working in various ways with “at risk youth” (Volpi 2003). But it is acknowledged by a number of these programmes that the many needs of street children cannot be addressed separately. This is an area where the *Imbali Street Children Art Programme* needed additional support.

Assumptions

There is the underlying assumption in both the aims and rationale of the *Imbali Street Children Art Programme* that street children exist in unacceptable circumstances – transformation of some sort is what is needed. Imbali, as a service provider of such a programme, puts itself in a position to contribute towards this transformation by engaging street children in “constructive, structured and creative intervention in the form of art workshops” (Sack 2002). It is claimed that this will help, among other things, to increase self-esteem and confidence. Is this in fact what these individuals need? If asked, would they pin-point these issues as needing address? Kester (1998) strongly criticises claims that are made about what other people need without first consulting them. These and other assumptions that have informed the delivery of the *Imbali Street Children Art Programme* cannot go unquestioned. These issues will be addressed in chapters five, six and seven after presenting and discussing a selection of other art education programmes in chapter four.

Key role players

The Participants

The participants ranged in age from nine to twenty eight. About sixty of them were involved in the programme, which was implemented over an eighteen-month period. Some remained committed throughout while others only attended on occasion. The Twilight Shelter worked in partnership with Imbali in co-ordinating the groups and providing transport for them to and from Museum Africa, where the workshops were held twice a week.

In 2003 there were two groups: a group from the Twilight Shelter and an “Outreach” group (this is what the group chose to call itself³). In 2004 only the Outreach group continued. The facilitators found the Outreach group very enthusiastic about the programme probably because there is little else offered to them, while the shelter group has many extra-mural activities. This research report focuses on the Outreach group.

Most of the Outreach group have “chosen” their lifestyle on the streets, in the sense that they have run away from or just left (often repeatedly) situations that are difficult, desperate, or impossible - whether actually so, or perceived to be so (Swart 1990; Volpi 2003). They have refused to be accommodated again, even in the safe, relatively comfortable surroundings of shelters; rather they prefer the “families” of other boys on the streets (also, some of the “boys” are too old to be accommodated by shelters – after the age of sixteen the shelter will not take them). The Twilight Shelter provides one hot meal a day for these young people as part of their outreach programme. The fact that many of these young people have chosen their lifestyle is significant. In many instances they perceive there to be more opportunities in Hillbrow than where their families are.

³ The group probably chose to be called “Outreach” is probably because that is what the Twilight Shelter calls them. It is important to note however that this term is currently contested. It has connotations of condescension and charity. Many privileged, formally white, schools in South Africa who in the past ran “outreach programmes” are now referring to these projects as “community partnerships”. This change is an acknowledgement of the two-way process that these programmes involve; they are not just about providing charity but rather creating dialogue and developing an ethos of sharing and understanding of differences. The term “outreach” does not connote this two-way process.

“The people in Hillbrow give us money, they give us clothes, they give us cosmetics to wash ourselves” (participant). These individuals are on the whole free-spirited and highly independent people, and for various reasons they do not conform to society’s norms, values and requirements. Elena Volpi echoes this when she describes street children as “resourceful human beings, many of whom have decided to seek a better life” (Volpi 2003:11). This is an important factor that will be returned to when interrogating Imbali’s assumptions about the need for such a programme and its reasons for offering it. (See appendix three for interviews with participants.)

Although the young people involved in the programme have to varying degrees “chosen” their life on the street, the risks involved in street life are numerous. Crime, drugs (particularly glue), gangsterism, sexual and physical abuse, HIV/Aids as well as a lack of basic health care and nutrition characterise life on the streets of Hillbrow (Swart 1990). Many of the youth involved in the programme suffered from poor concentration and learning problems – at least in part as a result of glue sniffing (Swart 1990).

The extreme challenges of working with these young people should not be underestimated. A number of facilitators spoke to me about the incredible struggle and even desperation involved in engaging with these young people.

I remember that shock of the arrival of the first group that first time they came, the intensity and that overwhelming wildness of it, but also getting the sense that they were really there, they were speaking in very intense language about why they were there, but they certainly wanted to be there. It was overwhelming, their presence. Ruth Sack – Director of IMBALI

I can remember that very first session, what they were like when they stormed in, I think I was really really scared. I didn’t know if they had knives in their pockets. I think what was so interesting for me was when I got to know them; they started to appear as individuals. I lost that fear. Sally Clark – Facilitator

Often you got the sense that they were completely unpredictable, just the physical manifestations, that smelliness, the rags. Sometimes I thought it was almost as if they were from another planet, especially in the beginning. It was very startling, quite shocking in a way to be in such close proximity to a group of people whose life experience was completely different from mine. Stacey Haahjem - Facilitator

The facilitators

The facilitators were all selected by Ruth Sack. I have a background in fine art and education - after completing a bachelor of fine art degree I did a higher diploma in education specialising in visual art and guidance teaching. I have been working with Imbali since 2000 and have been involved in a range of activities – arts and culture teacher-training, craft skills training, museum education and materials development - during this time. My particular interests are in the developmental and therapeutic role that art can play. I think that arts processes present unique opportunities for transformations on both an individual and social level.

Tessa Abramovitz trained as an art therapist and a peer mediation counsellor. She combines these skills in her work with children and youth. She also makes art herself and believes strongly in the creative potential of all human beings. Abramovitz feels that if people are given the space to explore their creativity and express it they can become more in touch with who they are -their “humanness”. Abramovitz played an important role in the *Imbali Street Children Art Programme* by introducing peer mediation and listening skills. She facilitated many of the discussions and “sharing” of artworks.

Nkosana Ngobese studied ceramics at the Imbali craft centre in Kagiso for three years; he then attended an Imbali teacher-training course and has since been co-facilitating various Imbali programmes as well as at the Creative Inner City Initiative (CICI), where he was responsible for convening the sign-writing course. Ngobese’s specific interests are in sharing his skills and knowledge and in helping people to see “what is possible”. He sees the spirit of Ubuntu as strongly influencing the way he works. Ngobese’s role in the programme was crucial - he often had to act as interpreter between the other

facilitators and the group as some of the participants had a poor knowledge of English. He also commanded respect and authority from the group and frequently fulfilled the role of mediator and peacemaker. Many of the participants saw Nkosana as a role model.

These three main facilitators brought a high level of expertise and experience to the programme. Between them they offered a range of skills in art-making and creativity as well as counselling, peer mediation and listening.

Sally Clark, Ruth Sack, Stacey Haahjem and Kennedy Sonono, the four other facilitators from Imbali who worked on the programme, did so for shorter periods of time. Haahjem was not involved from the beginning; she stepped in when Abramovitz went overseas for three months at the end of 2003⁴. Clark, Sack and Haahjem all have art education backgrounds; Clark and Sack also have strong interests in visual literacy. Sonono is a ceramicist who, like Ngobese, studied at the Kagiso craft centre and attended an Imbali teacher-training course. (See appendix one for interviews with Imbali facilitators.)

A number of guest facilitators also worked on the programme. Their positions differed from the Imbali staff in that they brought with them a range of expertise from different disciplines. Oupa Nkosi is a photographer and facilitator from the Market Photo workshop and Nhlanhla Ngwenya is the educational officer from the Standard Bank Gallery. Both worked with the group extensively. The other guest facilitators, among them Roz Monat (a drama expert), Stompie Selibe (a music expert), and Brenda Shafir (a shadow puppet expert) worked with the group for shorter periods. (See appendix two for interviews with guest facilitators.)

Twilight Shelter

The Twilight Shelter, another key role player in the programme, is situated in Hillbrow (31-37 Van der Merwe Street). They provide a “home” for up to sixty boys at a time.

⁴ Haahjem’s arrival did cause some disruption to the workshops. Although Abramovitz had told participants she was going away for a few months but would return, they initially were quite hostile towards Haahjem, thinking she had come to replace Abramovitz for good.

Boys are accepted into the shelter only if they commit to attending school and abiding by the rules of the shelter; these include helping out with chores, returning to the shelter before 5pm, and not taking drugs or engaging in criminal activity. A number of boys from the Outreach group who attended the Imbali programme had in the past stayed in the shelter but not managed to keep to these rules. Some, as mentioned previously, were also too old for the shelter. As well as providing the outreach group with one hot meal a day and transport to and from Museum Africa for the workshops, various care workers from Twilight accompanied the group to the museum for the Imbali workshops. Twilight also employs an outreach care worker to attend specifically to the needs of the outreach group. Walter Idayaphiri took up this post mid - 2004. His predecessor Solly Mthaka passed away mid - 2003; he had been like a father to many of the participants and his death had a lasting effect on the group⁵. They made it very difficult for anyone to replace him. Various people attempted the job but Idayaphiri was the first person who had the qualities necessary for the position and was acceptable to the group. (See appendix four for interviews with Twilight staff.)

Museum Africa

Ruth Sack approached Deon van Tonder, the Director of Museum Africa, at the end of 2002 about the possibility of running the *Imbali Street Children Art Programme* from the Museum. She told him about her ideas of drawing this disenfranchised group into museums and galleries in the inner city so that they could become comfortable in these spaces and begin to feel ownership of this collective heritage. Van Tonder agreed to the Museum being used as a base for these workshops and provided a storage place for art works and materials. The *Imbali Street Children Art Programme* was in line with the purpose of the museum which, according to Carolina Geldenhuys (the Museum Designer), “is to be a non-profit organisation that aims to amuse, inspire, inform and educate the community”.

⁵ The participants trusted and were very attached to Solly, and after his death they felt neglected and deserted – feelings that many of them felt initially in relation to their families. Without Solly they felt no one was looking out for them and this effected their behaviour in the workshops. They were notably in worse shape when they arrived; many had colds and coughs (they said there was no one to accompany them to the hospital) and many were high on glue. They also argued and fought more. This behaviour diminished with time but Solly’s stabilising influence was definitely missed by all.

Workshop structure

At the outset of the workshops the group devised a code of conduct for working together. Tessa Abramovitz facilitated this process. The “rules” they came up with included: no stealing, no glue at the workshops, no fighting, no swearing, no interrupting other people, no laughing at each other (see appendix seven for details). When there were discipline or other problems the group was reminded of these rules. I will return to this process of developing a code of conduct for working together in chapter seven as it presents an important opportunity for collaboration, participation and creativity.

Each session began and ended with greeting and parting rituals (games or songs); it was found that participants responded well to this routine, it helped to ground them and remind them that the space of the workshops was different to that of the street. The introductory song or game would be followed by a “group sharing”; each person would have the opportunity to say how his or her weekend and past week had been⁶. This would be followed by an introduction to an art making activity; sometimes this involved introducing a new technique with a demonstration, other times a group discussion on a topic or a re-motivation of something they were already working on. The session would end with group discussions or presentations of the artwork produced. Individuals would get a chance to stand up next to their work and talk about it.

Although the initial intention of the *Imbali Street Children Art Programme* was to work very closely with displays and particular objects in museums - particularly Museum Africa where the workshops were run - once the nature of the group was established these plans changed. Instead it was decided that it would be more appropriate to start with each individual where they were artistically and emotionally. This in most cases meant providing opportunities for the participants to become familiar with art materials and techniques through activities based on their own direct experiences. The projects included painting and drawing self-portraits and body tracings, constructing houses and a city, using clay to make their own personal mug and an animal that said something

⁶ Participants spoke of police abuse and how other gangs of boys had beaten some one up or how older people had mistreated someone; sometimes also about the difficulty they had finding a safe place to sleep. But they also spoke about the fun they had had playing soccer in the park with their peers over the weekend, movies they had watched at the Steers in Hillbrow or a trip home to visit family.

about who they were. Only when exhibits or displays in the museum closely related to what participants were doing in the sessions were they incorporated.

The art activities were carefully structured to facilitate learning, growth and development and a variety of materials and techniques were engaged with. In different ways all the activities tried to address aspects of the workshop aims mentioned earlier. In the planning of these activities the background of participants was always taken into account, and attempts were made to provide them with opportunities to speak about themselves, who they were and what they wanted⁷. For example in the body tracing activity participants were encouraged to tell the story of how they came to Hillbrow using the space around their body image. Many individuals took this into the realm of fantasy and aspirations – they drew themselves wearing Nike, Loxion, Fila and other trendy brands and some made up stories around their “characters”. One participant told me the following about his drawing:

You see my jacket and my gloves; I hold the money and a gun. The gun is to protect the money. That’s the security part of it (indicates the right hand side of the drawing), underneath there is a dog, so I can send the dog to catch whoever takes my money, then I can shoot. That is the transport that I came with, a train, that’s me running towards the train so I can come to town.

Q: What about the tree? It’s to rest with my dog under.

As with the body tracing project a number of other activities were taken up by participants in unexpected ways; the construction project based on the city is another example. This project will be discussed in some depth at the end of chapter six.

What follows is a summary of all the activities (in chronological order) covered in 2003, the first year of the programme. I have also included selected images to give the reader a sense of the richness of the process.

⁷ It should be noted here that although at the time of running these workshops most facilitators agreed that participants backgrounds were being taken into account I now think that there could have been a much more concerted effort to really find out about these backgrounds. An initial phase to such a programme involving consultation with participants, listening to their needs and observing their contexts would have helped do this. I will follow up on these ideas in chapter seven.

Activities

April – December 2003 (year one)

Introduction – The session began with participants jointly establishing rules and a contract for working together. They then drew pictures describing something about their lives. (See appendix seven for field notebook reflections on this session.)

Stick and Ink self portraits – Using found materials, ink and mirrors, participants depicted their own faces.



Plate 1 Stick and ink self-portrait

Montage faces – Participants created imaginative faces by cutting out images from magazines and re-assembling them in surprising ways. They then presented these as characters with made up names etc.

The “Shining Me” – After a series of listening exercises, participants made an art work depicting the “good person inside, before any bad things happened.” There was a range of materials available. The art making process was very undirected.

House construction – Beginning with a visualisation activity around the spaces they inhabit in the city, participants then constructed these buildings/spaces using waste materials.

Embellishing constructions – Participants decorated their constructed buildings using paint and images cut out of magazines.

Laying out a city – Participants placed their buildings in relation to those of others and made roads, bridges, gardens, parks, rivers etc. They worked in collaboration with each other.

Making dolls – They created “people” to inhabit the “city” using newspaper, masking tape, fabric, beads and sequins.



Plate 2 Making dolls

Clay animals – After listening to an animal story, they modelled animals. They were introduced to the basics of working with clay – i.e. wedging and pinching.



Plate 3 Nkosana Ngobese helping Seun to add the trunk onto his elephant

Animal inspired vessels – Participants made “animal vessels” taking inspiration from the animal they had created in the previous session. Further techniques and skills for working with clay were developed.

Muka drama, dance and music – Muka (a theatre group consisting of some former street children) worked with participants to develop communication and life skills through games and improvisation.



Plate 4 The “car and driver game”- the person at the back “drives” the front person who has their eyes closed. The driver uses signals for left and right turns, stop, go and go faster.

The aim is to keep your “car” from crashing into anything.

Costume construction – Participants constructed animal head-pieces (masks) and body-costumes out of waste material.

Animating the masks and costumes - They created movement sequences to display their costumes and masks, and explore the characteristics of their animal.



Plate 5 The animal masks and costumes

Body tracings – After talking about who they are and where they come from, participants worked in pairs to trace each other's body outlines on large pieces of paper. They then added clothes and worked into the areas around their bodies, exploring their stories. (See appendix seven for field notebook reflections on one of the body tracing sessions.)



Plate 6 Adding clothes to the body tracing

Clay-animal vessels (Part 2) – First they looked at their previous clay work (which had been fired) and discussed areas that could be improved. They then began on a second animal vessel. This time they had pictures of animals to refer to, and we discussed working with details like surface pattern and texture. (They worked with some simple found tools.)

Clay-animal vessels (Part 3) – Participants began by looking at pictures of a range of vessels from around the world for inspiration. They then continued work on their animal vessels. They were encouraged to pay attention to technical details and finish.

Visit to Standard Bank Gallery to see ceramic exhibition – They looked at and discussed the artworks, then drew their favourite piece. This was followed by a discussion of the drawings; each participant presented their drawing to the group, describing their experience of drawing the artwork. (See appendix seven for field notebook reflections on this session.)



Plate 7 Drawing in the Standard Bank Gallery

Designing and making mugs – Participants used the coil technique to create a personal mug based on their own design which they had drawn. (In many cases the surface decoration was inspired by the exhibition visited in the previous session.)



Plate 8 A selection of the mugs created

Colour mixing – In a “colour treasure hunt” participants searched for samples of different shades of the same colour in magazines. They then arranged their colour samples from dark to light against a white piece of paper. Following this they experimented with mixing many different colours and shades from a limited range of paints. They learnt about using paints, washing brushes, applying paint in different thickness, using water to lighten colours etc. They were also introduced to the colour wheel and primary and secondary colours.

Creating group paintings – Participants were divided into three groups (the city, the township and the countryside). One facilitator worked closely with each group. They worked together to create a large painting on their theme. Using colour-mixing skills acquired in the previous session they created colourful imaginative images.

Adding figures and details to paintings – Participants worked individually on smaller pieces of paper. They painted human figures, animals, trees, houses etc. They then cut these out and pasted them onto the larger group paintings. The placement of individual figures was negotiated with the group and things were only stuck down once everyone was satisfied with the composition. In this way, the idea of creating a composition was introduced.



Plate 9 Group painting of the countryside

Constructing hats out of waste material – Participants worked with a range of waste materials to make creative “hats”. They experimented with different joining techniques and combinations of materials.

Painting self-portraits wearing hats – Participants began by carefully observing their faces in the mirror and drawing what they saw with charcoal (they were wearing their hats). They then worked into their drawings with paint, creating self-portraits with a range of self-mixed colours.



Plate 10 Drawing with charcoal first



Plate 11 Painted self portrait wearing hat

Collage self-portraits – Continuing with the theme of self-portraits, participants were introduced to the technique of collage. They carefully observed their faces in the mirror, noticing the light and dark areas. They transferred what they observed in the mirror using very small torn pieces from magazines which they stuck onto white paper.



Plate 12 A selection of the collages

T-shirt printing – After discussing pattern and design, participants used found objects, stencils, and homemade stamps to print their own t-shirt.

Visit to Standard Bank Gallery to see the Irma Stern Exhibition – After hearing about Irma Stern – who she was, when she lived, etc. - participants looked around the exhibition. Everyone chose a painting and told the rest of the group why they liked it. Following this, they created their own artworks based on the work they had seen.



Plate 13 and Plate 14 Looking at the Irma Stern exhibition



**Plate 15 Seun in front of portraits inspired by the
Irma Stern exhibition**

Bleach and ink drawings – Participants were taught a new technique, drawing with bleach into ink. They drew scenes from their life in the city.

Talking with a group of HIV/Aids trainee councillors, shadow puppet show & ending off party – Participants were paired with a trainee councillor, and spoke about their lives on the street. A professional puppeteer, Brenda Shafir, performed two African folk tales in a shadow theatre. The year ended with a party and each participant was presented with some photos of themselves taken during the workshops throughout the year.

It is easy to get the impression from the above descriptions and images that the programme was smooth running, and that there was an easy collaboration between participants and facilitators. Nothing could be further from the truth; there were times of miscommunication, hardship and great despair. Ruth Sack told me in her interview:

There were many times when I wanted to say leave it, let's just stop.

Stacey Haahjem also described how hard it often was:

Yes, it definitely settled down, and I got far less freaked by the immediate things, the glue sniffing and the wildness. There were always some individuals in the group who were a lot calmer and nicer and you could just relate to them on a human level. But there were some, you never seemed to get there, there was always a distance which is horrible. You just got this sense of not being able to connect.

These difficulties will be further explored in chapters six and seven. In the next chapter however, I move away from Imbali and an exclusive focus on the *Street Children Art Programme* to examine a range of other local and international art and street children programmes. In chapter five I return to the evaluation of the *Imbali Street Children Art Programme*.