

Co-creation: Artistic Creation with Children and Young People.

Name of the organisation

BRONKS theater

Website of the organisation

www.bronks.be/en/

Location of the organisation

Varkansmarkt 15, 1000 Brussels, Belgium

E-mail address of the organisation

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Good practice aspect(s)/themes of youth work

- Arts and culture

Good practice category

A practice of processes and methods

Good practice aim & purpose

Co-creative art is often viewed as the younger sibling of “High Art.” In the realm of performing arts, especially when working with specific demographics like children and young people, questions persist about whether this qualifies as art. This often leads to inquiries about where the artistic ends and the social/educational begins.

If the motto “art for art’s sake” still holds, do the arts relinquish their autonomy when serving a purpose beyond themselves?

We argue that the strength of co-creative journeys and projects lies in their ability to provoke precisely these questions. Co-creation sharpens the relationship between art and society, addressing issues vital not only to its own functioning but to the entire performing arts landscape.

The value lies in participants not just being addressed on a rational level, as in education. Artists adopt a different strategy, fostering insights and experiences that generate a different kind of knowledge. Participants have the space to explore assumptions and shape new images or identities leading to valuable conversations between artists and young participants about shared questions concerning the world we live in—a captivating quest for artistic innovation. This encapsulates the essence of the organic symbiosis between the participatory and production facets of BRONKS.

Good practice description

School Projects:

BRONKS deems it essential for all children in Brussels to engage with art, both in experiencing and creating, believing in its emancipatory and community-forming power. Project workshops, held within school hours, aim to transcend the school context, offering a space where students can appreciate each other’s work without immediate grading. These workshops foster a different mode of reasoning

and appreciation, distinct from the binary of 'right' or 'wrong,' high or low grades. BRONKS sees these as vital spaces where students learn to value creativity outside the conventional academic framework, preventing the narrowing of perspectives restricted to mainstream entertainment platforms like Netflix or the gaming industry.

****Free Time: Workshop Activities:****

This comprises both short and long-term engagements.

Short-term: Initiation and Exploration

During school holidays, BRONKS organizes workshops lasting up to 5 consecutive days. Participants, alongside an artist, explore and delve into a discipline of performing arts. These holiday workshops span from beginner to masterclass levels. Artists are selected based on their expertise to guide participants for 6 hours daily, immersing them in their vision, methodology, style, and technique. The week concludes with a 20-minute presentation. This not only introduces participants to the diverse realms of performing arts but also serves as an introduction between BRONKS and the children/young people. This encounter forms the foundation and prerequisite for a long-term commitment if spots become available in the weekly workshops.

Long-term: Co-creation Meets Art Education in a 15-year Journey

Children and young people aged 4 to 20 can embark on a trajectory at BRONKS (and also in our workshops at Pianofabriek from 8 to 12 years old). For those under 10, the focus is primarily on exploring various parameters within performing arts: spatial awareness, audience awareness, physical awareness, ensemble vs. solo performance, text and repertoire, scenography, and visual theater.

From the age of 12, participants engage in a full-fledged co-creative journey with artists, working towards a performance once a week for a season.

****You(-th) Take Over****

Is an excellent pluralistic vehicle to initiate a dynamic dialogue within an urban context, questioning, adjusting, and deepening the understanding of communities and the shared importance of a place like BRONKS.

Since 2013, BRONKS has established a shadow cabinet comprised of a dynamic and eclectic group of young individuals aged 15 to 23, actively engaging in the operations of BRONKS. They have the autonomy to organize peripheral activities for XL performances (shows for ages 12 and above), curate the Carte Blanche evening (a showcase for young Brussels talent), and will collaborate on curating the VOLTAGE festival. These Ambassadors undergo intensive guidance with a focus on fostering independence.

The YTO-group holds the keys and alarm codes to the BRONKS building. BRONKS sees the YTO group

as representatives of the Brussels youth, constituting a full-fledged entity within the operations of BRONKS. Essentially, the Ambassadors form a team of experts in “youth,” providing valuable feedback and unique input for the entire functioning of BRONKS.

Good practice result & concrete effects

1. Self-Expression: participants discover and express their creative voices.
2. Personal Development: participants develop not only their artistic skills but also their self-confidence, problem-solving abilities, and critical thinking.
3. Collaboration and Social Skills: Co-creation requires collaboration and sharing of ideas. Participants learn to collaborate effectively, listen to others, and understand how diverse perspectives contribute to a collective artwork.
4. Inclusivity and Diversity: participants have the opportunity to explore and embrace the diversity of their community.
5. Artistic Skills: Participants acquire practical artistic skills, that can serve as a stepping stone for further (artistic) development.
6. Self-Reflection: The creative process encourages self-reflection. Participants explore their own ideas and emotions.
7. Bonding: Co-creative projects create a connection among participants. Sharing an artistic journey strengthens interpersonal bonds and leads to lasting relationships.
8. Empowerment: participants experience a sense of empowerment. They discover that their voices and contributions are valuable and have an impact on the final artwork.
9. Critical Thinking: Co-creation provides the opportunity to use art as a means to explore and address societal issues, encouraging critical thinking.
10. Artistic Satisfaction: Participants experience satisfaction and pride in creating something unique and valuable. It can foster a lifelong appreciation for art and creativity.

Good practice chapter of the European Charter on Local Youth Work

Organisation and practice