

Why We Do the Work We Do/
Thinking Towards a National Charter for the Arts and Health.
Workshop facilitated by Malcolm Learmonth November 2011
Arts and Health Southwest Annual Conference and AGM.

This workshop sought to explore these themes visually. 18 AHSW members worked in four groups. The starting point they were offered was to think about, imagine and create symbolic trees, whose Roots were in the core values of our work, whose Trunk reflected the structures we need to bring those values into the world, and whose Crown reflected how that manifestation might look.

What is most striking about the images is the sheer energy and vitality they embody: they are enthusiasm made visible! It is the nature of images and words that they are not ultimately translatable in terms of one another, and that visual (and convivial) reasoning is not necessarily logical. Humour, associative thinking, and, I would say, the unconscious will all have their say too.

Image one



Roots: equal, honesty, integrity, healing, love, holding, light, containment.

Trunk: Earth, air, fire, metal, practical, group.

Crown: balanced, partnerships, grounded, diversity

Image two.



Roots: compost corner: rot and renew, tears, the underworld, (Hades), fully connected fully alive, dancing makes my life sing, what it means to be alive, creativity is the root, creative expression breaks down boundaries between us.

Trunk: the trunk of support, voice, good ear.

Crown: apple of my eye, and ample hope, be inspired, elitism of art is challenged, art available on the high street, courage, expression, empathy, starlings gather and soar, spirit, understanding, something in your smile, let it be, courageous heart.

Image three

Roots: trust, creativity, imagination, research, commitment, confidence, humour, knowledge, unity, support, understanding, open-minded, non-judgemental

Trunk: Team, feedback, time, confidentiality, freedom of expression, respect, support, energy.

Crown: health, surely, openness, balance, health, individuality, support, positivity, pleasure, awareness, creativity, energy, car, confidence, pleasure, self-sufficiency? Freedom, validation, unity, individuality, healing, balance, support.

Image Four

Roots: planting, question everything, inner contentment, growth and learning, loved ones, change, relationships, home, addictions, family, inner strength, baby by the sea

Trunk: break the mould, challenge the status quo, alive, sex, the grass is greener, fruitful, courage, breath, love and peace, hope, strength, creativity, hope, dreams, experience life, feel no fear, will and passion, be true, stay true.

Crown: fruitful, arts, dance, pain and joy, just be, money, bee the change, be present, fulfilment, enjoyment, love, self-esteem, confidence, tension and, truth, actualisation, smiling, confidence, sowing seeds, overcoming.