Inspiration Africa!

Using tangible and intangible heritage to promote social inclusion amongst young people with disabilities

By

Dr. Viv Golding
University of Leicester, Dept of Museum Studies
vmg4@le.ac.uk

Paper presented for ICME at *Museums and Intangible Heritage*
ICOM 2004 general conference, Seoul, Korea. October 2-8, 2004

Acknowledgements

Abstract

How can meaningful connections between diverse museum audiences, tangible artifacts and the intangible historio-cultural traditions from which they sprang be progressed? Does the anthropology collection have a productive role in the UK government agenda on social inclusion for children with disabilities? What is the value of employing new theoretical perspectives and partnerships at the frontiers between the museum and the school? This paper explores these questions and the deeper issues surrounding them through 'Inspiration Africa!' a two year £72,000 Department for Education and Employment (DfEE) funded project involving twelve schools and the African Worlds Gallery of the Horniman Museum in South East London; an area of rich cultural diversity but one suffering from extreme levels of economic deprivation.

Introduction: aims and structure

In the socio-cultural landscape of the twenty-first century the museum has power. The museum has the power of sanctuary, shrine, place of knowledge, forum and a vital role in democracy. This paper will focus on the power of the anthropology museum, the tangible and intangible collections, as a forum for democratic exchange to promote social inclusion and community cohesion amongst young people with disabilities. The museum, as it will show, has the potential to function as a 'frontier': a zone where learning is created, new identities are forged; new connections are made between disparate groups and their own histories. In some cases, tangible and intangible collections will be shown to have a new and more positive power: to help disadvantaged groups of young people with disabilities to raise self-esteem.

The paper is structured into two main sections. First, a definition of key terminology and the theoretical underpinnings of the 'Inspiration Africa!' project are provided. Then the creative work of young people involved, from two of the twelve schools, illustrates the value of constructivism informing museum/school partnerships. Finally some concluding remarks and recommendations for future project work at other locations are made.

Terminology

a) Intangible heritage and tangible heritage

In October 2003, at its 32nd General Conference, UNESCO produced a working definition of intangible cultural heritage, which highlighted:

> … the practices, representations, *expressions*, knowledge, skills - *as well as* the instruments, *objects*, artifacts and *cultural spaces* associated therewith – that communities, groups and in some cases individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage. This intangible cultural heritage, transmitted from generation to generation, is *constantly*

recreated by communities and groups in response to their environment, their interaction with nature and their history, and it provides them with a *sense of identity* and continuity, thus *promoting respect for cultural diversity and human creativity.*
(UNESCO, 2003: 4) [my emphasis]

I emphasise three main points from this definition. Firstly, the importance of tangible objects *as well as* the practices associated with their production and use. An idea, which seems to mark a 'both and' feminist approach, as distinct from the 'either or' of dualist thought (Golding 2000). Secondly, the notion of *constantly recreating* is vital, as creativity and creating something new is central to this paper. The paper does not speak of the sterile processes involved in any simple reproduction of cultural objects and echoes Fanon's warning against the desire of colonized societies to preserve 'mummified fragments' of culture (Fanon 1993: 41). Finally, it is argued that embedding both tangible and intangible aspects in a complex peopled domain strengthens an individual and community *identity*, while pointing to a wider shared humanity, which promotes *respect for cultural diversity* or intercultural understanding at a global level.

My thesis here also leans on Giovanni Pinna's paper for ICOM News (Pinna 2004). Pinna notes the 'indefinite boundaries between': expressive objects, the language and the oral tradition from which they emerge, as well as the symbolic and metaphorical meanings attached to objects that derive from their histories and the interpretations to which the museum contributes through the exhibition process prompting the visitor's individual interpretation. Pinna's comments helpfully raise the perspective of the museum visitor and their personal meaning making alongside curatorial intentions. While the visitors' initial interpretations, according to constructivism, are based on prior knowledge, personal background and the socio-cultural group they belong to, Pinna reminds us that the museums' strategies of display and operational practices are also inevitably influenced by wider socio-philosophical factors. (Hein 1999; Macdonald 1996). Since the 1970s, motivated in part by the postcolonial demands of previously subjugated people, museums in the West seem to be moving from their traditional position of temple of cultural authority to a more dynamic forum of dialogical exchange and debate. In this new location museums are increasingly engaged in self-reflexivity and raising 'questions about knowledge and power, about identity and difference, and about permanence and transience' (Macdonald 1996: 1-2).

In the light of Macdonald's questions this paper will explore a creative zone between tangible and intangible cultural heritage. Specifically the personal responses of learning disabled pupils, to a new framing of knowledge on African objects, Horniman's *African Worlds* exhibition, which privileged perspectives from Africa and the Diaspora.

b) Special educational needs. Medical and social models

Four of the twelve schools involved in the 'Inspiration Africa!' project were exclusively for pupils with learning disabilities and two of the mainstream secondary schools were located in Educational Action Zones (EAZ) where almost one third of the pupils had learning disabilities. 'Inspiration Africa!' pupils had a range of learning disabilities and throughout the projects team leaders worked in 'effective partnership' to facilitate activities disabled pupils might 'do with support', rather than focus on 'what they can't do' (Valuing People 2004: 14). As team leaders we developed educational programmes for disabled pupils that were characterised by high expectations for all. We recognised that pupils with disabilities may take longer to learn new skills and grasp complex information but were determined that as much choice and control over their project work as possible should be enabled.

The Horniman partnership worked with the social model of disability, which points to the social construction of disability and false ideas of normality within the creation of capitalism (Barnes 2002: 5). The social model highlights social barriers and environmental issues, and locates problems and prejudices within the minds of able-bodied people, individually or collectively (Oliver 1996: 82). This model is distinct from the medical or individual model, which is influenced by biological determinism and focuses on medically orientated control, 'care and cure' agendas (Oliver 1996:31).

Employing an appropriate model and terminology was regarded as crucial to the success of the project. Since language work was central to many project activities disabling labels were interrogated and terms such as 'handicap', derived from earlier periods of history when disabled people went begging 'cap in hand', were avoided as denoting passivity.

The language activities were enjoyed by the pupils who simply wanted to be included in ordinary activities and not always seen as 'special' (Valuing People 2001: 11).

In the UK 1 in 4 families have a disabled member and 8.7 million disabled people or 15% population, are covered by the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA). The DDA was passed in 1995 to enshrine the rights of disabled people to social inclusion and highlight the responsibilities of employers as service providers. By October 2004 the DDA requires 'reasonable access' to buildings, and institutions such as museums will need to ensure their policies, procedures and practices enable access for all members of society. Horniman was concerned to offer a range of auxiliary aids and services including ramps, loops and braille labels as far as possible throughout the 10year period of my work there from 1992, including 'Inspiration Africa!' Therefore Horniman was reasonably well prepared to address the new Labour Government agenda based on 'social inclusion, civil rights, choice and independence' (Valuing People 2001: 14).

c) Social inclusion, social exclusion and community cohesion

In 1997 the Social Exclusion Unit established by the New Labour Government defined social exclusion in holistic terms. The 'shorthand term' Social Exclusion was intended to replace the concept of 'poverty' to encompass holistically 'what can happen when people or areas suffer from a combination of linked problems such as unemployment, poor skills, low incomes, poor housing, high crime, bad health and family breakdown' (www.socialexclusionunit.gov.uk/, 17, September 2003). At the time of writing this paper, the latest government report *Tackling Social Exclusion* importantly returns the discussion to the earlier emphasis on the economic basis of social exclusion, as passed through families from one low income generation to the next and effects certain high risk groups, including people from 'ethnic minorities' and people with 'disabilities', which the 'Inspiration Africa!' project targeted www.socialexclusionunit.gov.uk/tackling, 10, October 2004: 4)

While 'Inspiration Africa!' cannot claim to have alleviated the wider problems of economic deprivation the participants certainly developed a range of skills, which is one key factor highlighted by the government documents. Horniman also became the sort of location that David Fleming helpfully attached to the government definition of social inclusion in the museum context, one "that inspires and uplifts people, that confronts them with ideas, that helps them understand a little more about themselves and their surroundings" (Fleming 2002: 224).

I further argue that 'Inspiration Africa!' enabled Horniman to utilise cultural objects, 'things of quality', to progress social cohesion (Smith 1998: 37). Social Cohesion, according to Chris Smith, New Labour Minister for Culture's recommendation is dependent upon two factors. Firstly making available '… cultural experience and activity … to the many not just the few' (Ibid). Secondly, linking these cultural experiences to an understanding that certain aspects, which determine identity construction, are shared in common across cultural divides. As Smith noted.

> . … developing our own individual sense of identity through cultural experience, and touching *a sense of shared identity* through shared cultural emotion, must be achievable by everyone, no matter what their circumstances or class background or location may be.
> (Smith 1998: 37) [my emphasis]

Smith later contends it is exclusion from a *sense of shared identity* that weakens communal bonds and leads to a fragmentation of society. During 'Inspiration Africa!' Horniman was able to illustrate British society as a 'community of communities' through creatively connecting its African cultural artefacts and the intangible oral traditions with the lived experience of UK pupils (Parekh Report 2000: 3). 'Inspiration Africa!' was a proactive project that emphasised the responsibility and role of the museum as agency on the Government's inclusion and cohesion agenda.

d) Learning disabled pupils access the National Curriculum

In reaching out to excluded audiences and developing innovative ways of progressing intercultural understanding, it was crucial to work within the access guidelines of the National Curriculum for England. The guidelines state three principles that are essential to developing an inclusive curriculum. 'Setting suitable learning challenges, responding to pupils' diverse learning needs and overcoming potential barriers to learning and assessment for individuals and groups of pupils'. Imaginatively adhering to these guidelines enabled the key aim of the National Curriculum, to 'provide opportunities for all children to learn and to achieve' a high degree of 'success', by offering 'varied teaching approaches' that build on 'diverse interests and experiences', matching 'challenges of work to the pupils' skills' and ensuring a degree of 'success' (National Curriculum 2000).

'Inspiration Africa!' project work aimed to promote four key skills. Firstly, 'communication: speaking and listening, reading and writing a range texts'. Secondly, 'working with others, contributing to discussion, valuing different perspectives, cooperating and meeting challenges together'. Thirdly, 'creative thinking, extending ideas and using imagination' Finally, 'evaluation, valuing, have confidence in judgments.' The project work outlined in the next section will clarify the relationship of communication in the English curriculum to the museum context.

Stories, histories and a Benin plaque

The 'Inspiration Africa!' team-leaders at Marjorie McClure School (SEN) included Sola Oyelele (writer/storyteller), Tony Minion (artist), Jacqui Callis (ICT specialist), and my self (museum educator). I had deliberately selected a multiracial team, who all felt a strong resonance or personal affinity with the museum objects, as well as a determination to employ them as part of an educational agenda, to challenge racism in contemporary multicultural Britain. The composition of my team follows research findings, which demonstrate that if the curriculum and the people who deliver it positively reflect multiracial society this has a positive effect even on the most disaffected audiences, who are too often African Caribbean boys (Golding 2000).

Marjorie McClure School is situated in the London Borough of Bromley and the school population is predominantly white working class. Research shows there is an even more urgent need for antiracist-multicultural education in areas such as this, where media stereotypes and misunderstandings persist partly because diverse communities never actually meet. Working in partnership a Benin plaque from Nigeria was selected as the key object for the creative work with Marjorie McClure pupils in Year 7, who are aged between 11 and 12 years old, and the word 'Stories' was chosen as their key

theme.

Throughout the *African Worlds* exhibition at Horniman and on a website link, there is an excellent text accompanying the objects and providing valuable new research information, which was written by the 4-person Anthropology Advisory Panel (AAP). The AAP comprised African, Caribbean and UK scholars: Emanuel Arinze, Joseph Eboreime, Catherine Chan and Anthony Shelton. In their Benin text the AAP highlight positive features of the socio-cultural background in which the object was made. For example Benin is described as 'a powerful and sophisticated West African Kingdom, founded in the 11th century by the Edo people', which 'commanded great respect from the early Portuguese visitors in the late 15th and early 16th centuries'. The text also traces the purchase of the plaque to events in 'the late 19th century when British soldiers destroyed its capital' and 'looted the city of its rich art traditions' … which, 'tragically and ironically, first alerted Europe to the level and range of achievement of Benin artists'. This text, written at a reading age of 16+ years was not immediately accessible to our pupils with learning disabilities and so the 'Inspiration Africa!' team leaders developed achievable language activities to build on the pupils 'diverse interests and experiences' (National Curriculum 2000).

At Marjorie McClure 'Inspiration Africa!' team leaders introduced the project on day one through the concept of naming. At the outset, just under the header the museum text explains the plaque was made by an, 'unknown' craftsperson, but later in the third paragraph of the text panel a 'Chief' is mentioned by name, 'Uwangue'. Using this information the pupils began to learn about the importance of naming for all cultural groups, including the Edo speaking people of Benin City in Nigeria who made the plaques. They were able to draw similarities between the histories of the UK and Nigeria, which record the most powerful people and the events of their lives. Then Sola spoke about her recent visit to Benin City where the oral tradition of storytelling with musical performance is still strong and she led a name game where name sounds were invented.

Sola started the game by using her own name 'Sola' and asked the group to imagine wind whistling through the trees calling her name, shhhhhoooooollllllaaaa. Everyone enjoyed practicing wind talk around Sola's name and soon felt confident to try experimenting with their own names, which included: Chris - biting apple, Sarah - ssssnake, Thomas - steam train and Viv – vruuuuuu vacuuuum cleaner! This initial work established a fun framework for the project and set all the participants at their ease, since enjoyment and feeling comfortable are vital factors necessary to promote learning (Hein 1999).

Next the group mind-mapped the name of the project 'Inspiration Africa!' and decided inspiration means excitement or being interested in something. Then individuals and small groups of pupils played musical instruments, part of the African Worlds 'hands on' collection, which always arouses 'minds on' interest (Hein 1999).

Minds on activities with museum objects are designed to extend quality looking and promote critical thinking on the contextual information attached to the object and the wider socio-political world of past and present times from which the object emerged. For all pupils, including those with learning disabilities, understanding of the past is never complete but always partial and never instantaneous but takes time. During 'Inspiration Africa!' work at Marjorie McClure the team-leaders developed creative work that would enable pupils to extend the period looking, thinking and connecting their increasing understanding of objects originating from the ancient Benin Kingdom, Nigeria with their everyday life experiences in London, UK. Creative writing consistently proves a fruitful means of achieving this.

For example, working from musical instruments Sola encouraged the pupils to think of words that expressed music and they wrote acrostic poems. To write an acrostic poem, a word is written lengthways down a page and each letter is used to start the first line of the poem. This simple structure is a helpful way of working on language activities with all pupils in the museum context and is especially productive with learning disabled groups. The pupils wrote a joint acrostic poem on the whiteboard before writing their own poems. They used their names to describe favourite things in their own lives, to begin making personal present day connections with objects, which aids understanding of the past. Two examples of Majorie McClure's 'name' and 'things I like' poems illustrate this work.

> Charli likes football
> Harry Potter is my favourite book
> Arsenal is my team
> Riding my bike is fun
> Lots of toys are great to play with
> I like my friends in G3B and G3A
> Nigel
> Is twelve, he
> Goes to school, he
> Eats fish and chips and ketchup at
> Lunchtime

In the afternoon of day one the pupils used the school's excellent Internet facilities to look at their Key Object, the Benin Plaque, which they would be seeing at the museum on day two of the project. According to the museum text the plaque shows Chief Uwangue 'wearing ceremonial dress of coral headdress and necklace, pea bell anklets and highly decorated

skirt'. At this time the pupils also explored a modern museum plaque made especially for the handling collection, which represented Oba Ohen with similar ceremonial dress and mudfish legs. Mudfish, commonly denoting the supreme power of the Oba, over the land as well as the watery sea realms of the God Olokun, was employed by Ohen to explain his stroke and the need to be supported in movement. This plaque enabled everyone to feel the textures and discuss the features of a possibly 'tall story', which prompted their own imaginative writing and was vital for one blind pupil to access the curriculum (Picton 1995: 399).

The museum object and the text prompted the team leaders to provide original African garments, specially purchased from Markets in Brixton London, Lagos, Nigeria and Kumasi Ghana, which permitted the pupils to literally 'try on' aspects of another culture. Whilst the children were dressed up Sola gave them parts and told the story of "How music came to the world". This story, from the Yoruba people of Nigeria, is about a talented young man who was the drummer for his village and whose family name is prefixed by Ayan, which Sola explained means he comes from a drumming family. The story ended with the whole class playing music together again.

After break Year 7 looked at the materials and technologies of Benin plaque production, the complex 'lost-wax method', which the pupils saw illustrated in a video. The pupils drew the musical instruments and representations of the sounds that they made. Hands were waved to form the shapes made by the instruments before they were drawn. Then Tony demonstrated the screen-printing process and the pupils worked from their drawings simplifying, enlarging, cutting out shapes and placing them onto fabric to create their own banner. Raffia and wool were also used to create patterns that represented the sounds from the instruments. The screens were placed over the images and pupils painted freely through the screen. The banner was printed twice with the first print using cold colours and the second print using warm colour, work which offered an opportunity to discuss the colour of the metal that the Benin plaques are made from, a warm 'red', the colour of life-blood that the Edo people specially prize. This dialogue was prompted again by part of the museum text on the plaque material, 'brass', a material 'reserved for royalty … enduring and permanent, and its 'red' and shiny qualities were believed to be protective of the king and the kingdom'. At the end of the session the class posed in front of their banner.

When Jaqui documented this day she asked the class to suggest some captions for the photographic record that the team leaders were in the habit of making, since images of individuals and groups with the handling objects are seen to prompt memories and further creative activity. The pupils made some lively comments that Jaqui recorded on tape. The following are taken as illustrating the variety of feelings.

> In this picture I am playing the drum - it is called a talking drum. On my head I am wearing a brightly coloured hat. Sola put the cloth on my head. It felt BAD! playing the drum.
> It sounds like music boom, boom, boom, boom, boom. Nice. Noise. The stick moves bam! The strings moving boonder! boonder! boonder! la, la, la, la, la, la. I WAS EXCITED, LOOK AT ME!!!!!
> I like the African hat from the Horniman museum. In this picture I look pretty and I'm enjoying myself. I think I will enjoy the project.
> My friend dressed up as a Queen and wore some very colourful clothes. Then we played the instruments after, I played the shaker.
> Tony is holding the screen-printing. We printed a shaker - blue, red, orange, yellow. I like Tony - because I JUST DO.

There was a strong sense of irritation in this last remark, which shows a pupil, at the end of a long tiring day, exasperated by the effort of extended dialogue and the work of evaluation demanded by the National Curriculum. This provided a salutary lesson for team leaders, who reminded themselves that, just as museum text can be too long and prevent successful communication, so can museum activities.

On day two of the project the school visited Horniman Museum and the pupils talked about the 'stories' on the Benin plaques as illustrations of important events from the history of the Benin people. 'Stories' was their key word and Sola talked about where you can find them. She also asked about their favourite stories and things to draw and write about, reinforcing the work on favourite things started on the introduction day. Taking every opportunity to reinforce learning has proved especially important for pupils with learning disabilities and the desire to repeat the pleasurable experiences triggered by the object handling made this a simple task.

At the museum Sola told two stories from memories of her family life in Nigeria, called 'Pepper Soup' and 'The Bike Ride', which led the class to discuss: where stories can come from (Africa, around the world, Bromley, home, brain or imagination and memories); where you can find stories (in books, comics, magazines, from parents, grandparents, other family members, artists and teachers); favourite stories (Cinderella, Goldilocks, Pokemon, Lion, Matilda, Witch and Wardrobe); favourite things, buildings, pets (cats, dogs - dalmation, beadle) and people. At the end of the session the pupils were asked to bring in a funny story from home to work on in the project.

These stories were developed throughout the week and read out at the beginning of day four. Some were written and some recorded onto audio tape. The stories were later illustrated and transferred onto screens to be printed and also scanned into computers to be worked on digitally. Two stories are provided below as representative of this work.

Mrs. Doubtfire
One day it was my brother's anniversary and my nan had some curlers in her hair and I said "I got a nickname for you nan, Mrs. Doubtfire!" My brother had a camera and he sneaked round the door and he took a picture of her and her face dropped down to the flooooooorrrrrrr....

The Flower
About four years ago I was a bridesmaid for Mrs. Cox. I had to wear a nice dress that was cream and light green. I also wore cream shoes. I got dressed and ready at my home, and then I went to Mrs. Cox's home to meet her and the other bridesmaid.
I had really long shiny curly hair, they put a big fresh flower in my hair. When we were all ready we got into the very posh car and drove to the church. On our way there Mrs. Cox had to keep placing my flower back into my hair, because it kept slipping down as my hair was so shiny. In the end as it did not want to stay in my hair, Mrs. Cox tucked it into my waistband.

On day four of the project Sola also did a "too big for" frame poem. A frame poem provides a structure for pupils to complete their ideas, in this case 'I'm too big for …' First Sola asked: "What are we too big for?" The class answered: too big for chocolate, too big for sitting on the potty, too big for sucking dummies. Then the team leaders pointed out that we are never to big for museums, just to amuse the group and everyone made up a line for Sola. Finally Sola talked about language and how we say things like 'you know what I mean' at the end of sentences. From this Sola made a poem song/game up and all of the class did a round.

> Person 1 says 'I'm too big for sucking my thumb.'
> Person 2 says 'I'm too big for Bob the Builder.'
> Person 3 says 'I'm too big for lower school.'
> Then all together say:
> 'You know yeah, you know yeah,
> I'm too big for that yeah.'
> I'm too big for that you know,
> I'm too big for that yeah."

All pupils involved in 'Inspiration Africa!' had the opportunity to evaluate each day of their project work through interview or specially designed forms provided on the internet. Some worksheet forms gave pupils the opportunity to choose a photograph, write a caption for it and send it to Cloth of Gold. The following comments tell about their favourite part of the project and something they would like to have been different.

> The screen-printing was good and the writing was good. It was hard writing the poem because I had to do something personal and I only tell people that I trust.
> My favourite part was doing the drawings and screen-printing with Tony. I have really enjoyed this project, I wish it didn't have to end but mum says all good things come to an end.

This pupil's family, along with the families of her classmates in Year 7, became regular visitors to Horniman, despite living at a considerable distance in Bromley. It could therefore be argued that while one project ended for one school group, the positive project experiences were a motivating factor in cultural inclusion for their wider family groups. Motivation, with reference to another school project will be considered in the next section.

Facing fears with artefacts: inclusion and motivation

A Midnight Robber Carnival Mask was selected as the key object by the 'Inspiration Africa!' team leaders, for a project on the key word theme of Bravado, with Year 9 boys from Mallory Secondary School. Mallory is situated in an Education Action Zone (EAZ) in Lewisham. EAZs are a geographical focus of special effort to improve achievement in the UK and at Mallory the underachievement of African Caribbean boys was a particular cause of concern for the schoolteacher, Mary Mabey, which determined her decision to work exclusively with these boys on 'Inspiration Africa!' I offer some student voices to describe their project.

> We used the Midnight Robber's hats [in Horniman] to inspire an exploration of bravado. We looked at the use of metaphors and similes. Then we developed our own boasting poems and raps. We worked in two groups developing our own Midnight Robber character, looking at the alter ego of the Robber - the face behind the mask.

In dialogue with the team-leaders at the planning stage of this project, bravado emerged as an appropriate key word, since it accurately described the aggressive and disruptive face that the boys presented to the school world. Before 'Inspiration Africa!' the boy's bravado behaviour was destructive. It often led to exclusion from school, which resulted in a downward spiral of poor academic performance, uncontrollable bravado, exclusion and worse academic performance.

The 'Inspiration Africa!' team-leaders decided to explore the root causes of the boy's negative school attitude with them as a group, rather than simply treat the symptom with exclusion. In 2000 the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) report attributed the multiple levels of deprivation, which the boys suffered as at least partly responsible for the poor performance

in the Standard Attainment Test (SATs). The school role also showed a higher than average number of newly arrived students who were learning to speak English as an additional language. Mallory's Midnight Robber project therefore aimed to present a range of new learning opportunities at the museum/school frontiers, for the students to creatively express bravado in ways that were not destructive and did not depend on Standard English for successful expression.

Csikzentmihlyi's and Hermanson thought on motivation can be employed to support praxis on this point. In devising innovative learning opportunities, the team-leaders vitally based project work on the key object in the museum, the Midnight Robber Carnival mask. Looking at this spectacular mask powerfully engaged the sense of sight and provided a fundamental 'hook' to arouse the student curiosity and provoke 'situational interest' (Csikszentmihalyi and Hermanson 2000: 149). Situational interest describes the sense of wonder, which is aroused in the visitor by the 'novelty, surprisingness, complexity and ambiguity' inherent in an object, but this may have been of short-term significance unless some connection was made with the visitors 'individual interest' (ibid). Individual interests are characterised by Csikszentmihalyi and Hermanson as a 'relatively enduring preferences for certain topics, subject areas, or activities' (ibid).

The individual interests of the Mallory students revolved around music, especially rap music and the Inspiration Africa! work harnessed this interest in the literacy, ICT and artwork. A useful strategy, which Horniman educators often employ to improve literacy is the use of a simple frame format for the students to organise their ideas around. Midnight Robber characters in Trinidad provide a rich source of poetic rap frames, which use imaginative metaphors to shock and to amuse their audience. The Mallory students particularly admired the examples they found during ICT work on the web with Jaqui, such as this extract from the Satellite Robber album.

> I am the Agent of Death Valley. From the day my mother gave birth to me the sun refused to shine, the earth began to tremble! Terror hit the city streets! At the age of one my toys were cannons and machine guns. At the age of two I had met and slain all mockmen like you.

This notion of boasting about origins impressed the Mallory students who were inspired to create their own bravado rap poems around a simple frame, 'at the age of ... I ...' The rap frame can continue until imagination is depleted, but the team-leaders were mindful of the boys limited attention span and restricted the length of the poem to six lines, beginning with the creation of a name for the character, spoken in the Robber persona 'I am ...'. This example of a rap frame poem illustrates this work.

> **I am The Angel of Darkness**
> From the day my mother gave birth to me I ... could kill people with my acid tongue and the foul breath coming from my lung. The sky became dark, the stars became black,
> At the age of 1 I ... was as fast as a bullet flying through a gun, I was as hot as the sun, I became master of all evil, firing machine guns, cannons and missiles with lots of style.
> At the age of five I ... ate five bears alive, I took a dive, the earth split into four pieces and I created a new species.
> At the age of eight I... had robbed and assassinated everyone in Tony Blair's government, because they wouldn't pay the rent.
> At the age of twelve I ... could dig and delve my way out of any difficulty. I was ruler of my country and brought terror to the streets by trampling my enemies with my feet.
> Now I ... am thirteen I look very mean and clean. Now I am killing other Midnight Robbers who try to control the city, for them I have no pity.

In this way the team-leaders ensured that the 'challenges' of the task matched and extended the person's 'skills' and one condition for 'flow' learning was satisfied (Csikszentmihalyi and Hermanson 2000: 150). Flow is characterised as a state of 'intrinsic' motivation, which denotes deep pleasurable engagement in a task undertaken entirely for its own sake and no external reward (ibid). Csikszentmihalyi and Hermanson usefully distinguish between intrinsic motivation and extrinsic motivation, which is marked by an external reward of some sort, such as good examination results. Artistic activity, chess, mountaineering are cited as examples of activities that induce flow in the participants questioned by Csikszentmihalyi and Hermanson and the strong desire to continue art, language and ICT activities during 'Inspiration Africa!' confirm their findings. Following the Rap work Mallory pupils readily developed a series of metaphors around the printing experience and I offer a selection here as evidence of this claim.

> When I print I am as powerful as a lion and as talented as Michael Jackson.
> When I print I am as proud as punch and I thought *it was the best.*
> When I was printing I was as nervous as a fox in the middle of speeding traffic.
> But *my print came out brilliant.* I was very relieved.
> [My emphasis]

These metaphors also highlight a mixture of powerfulness and nervousness, which is probably part of our shared human experience. No one is really all-powerful and it seems important for young people to develop a repertoire of appropriate character tools to lead fulfilling lives. Developing techniques of dialogical exchange permit a range of feelings and fears to be acknowledged and verbalised. On this point I extend the remaining conditions necessary for the state of flow. In addition to skills meeting tasks, Csikszentmihalyi states that individuals need to feel free from anxiety, fear and other 'negative'

states to experience flow learning (Csikszentmihalyi and Hermanson 2000: 151).

My Horniman experience demonstrates that a supportive environment can be nurtured at the museum frontiers and in this safe space individuals might share certain fears and anxieties. Before 'Inspiration Africa!' the Mallory boys were trapped in limiting self-defeating modes of interaction at school, constantly playing the role of hard man and ignoring the softer sides of their personalities. The project vitally enabled them to explore this softer side and ultimately to engage with the school community as more rounded individuals, who were willing to return to learning tasks, again and again. According to Csikzentmihalyi's thesis, the desire to return to the learning situation is attributed to the flow learning process. Flow learning is of long term benefit since the pleasurable feelings encountered during flow incur a desire to repeat the learning experience.

Another frame rap task will demonstrate these points. The following example of the Robber's Alter Ego task is selected as typical.

> I am HARD LIKE metal ... I am *soft like* water in a kettle
> I am HARD LIKE steel ... I am *soft like* orange peel
> I am HARD LIKE iron ... I am *soft like* Diane
> I am HARD LIKE wood ... I am *soft like* a coat hood
> I am HARD LIKE a chair ... I am *soft like* hair

For the Alter Ego task the boys were divided into two groups, HARD and soft. They worked in pairs with one HARD lad working with a *soft* lad. The partners were encouraged by the rap poet/musician Andrew Ward to use their bodies and especially their voice to enhance the words of their poems and really enter into the Robber characters. Because the writing skills of the students were weak Horniman volunteers were enlisted to act as scribes. The scribes were importantly able to assist the movement of suppressed feeling into speech and then into a written form. This experience provided evidence that even the most 'troublesome' [school phrase] boys could be motivated and could achieve a degree of success, if they were offered the opportunity to engage at a more personal one to one level with a mature person. Perhaps Horniman staff could be said to act as listening guides, facilitating a student 'apprenticeship in thinking' here (Rogoff 1990).

Conclusion

In this paper I made a strong case for the museum to facilitate the use of tangible museum objects *and* intangible oral tradition as triggers to creative dialogue for pupils with learning disabilities, who are among the most socially excluded groups in the UK (Valuing People 2001). This *both/and* approach to the curriculum was viewed as an appropriate learning pathway for everyone regardless of age or ability levels to access culture and promote intercultural understanding, although the paper demonstrated that an object-centred dialogical work was particularly motivating for pupils who were underachieving academically or in danger of becoming disaffected since it offered a high degree of academic success.

Success was achieved during 'Inspiration Africa!' through the social experience of opening pupil's minds to critical thinking based on an idea of learning that included: close multisensory work with African objects; discussing ideas alongside feelings to interrogate what is considered 'fact' about Africa in the contemporary museum and the media, and most importantly making creative connections between the communities the objects emerged from and the daily lives of the pupils. Overall 'Inspiration Africa!' work at the museum and school frontiers provided a symbolic forum space to affirm positive new identities for individuals, as well as a notion that aspects of cultural identity and values are shared in common amongst people of the world.

In practical terms, other museum sites concerned with extending socially excluded pupil's communication skills and literacy levels are recommended to use the key word, acrostic poem and sentence frame techniques outlined in this paper. These simple, low cost and effective techniques have been developed in a creative partnership, which opened the museum to a range of alternative voices and positively affected cultural inclusion in South London. Other museums at other locations are advised to engage in museum/school partnerships, to develop other ideas and to disseminate them via their museum websites, their local universities or the professional journals. We all benefit by pooling good resources.

Finally, this short paper was only able to outline some main points but further information can be found in three sources. Firstly the independent qualitative evaluation, which confirmed the success of the project work in terms of raising the students self esteem and achievement (Clarke et al 2001). Secondly at the website clothofgold.org.uk/archive, where a wealth of images and details of all 12 projects can be found. I would be very pleased to share ideas and enthusiasms by email at vmg4@le.ac.uk since I believe the museums of the world have a role in increasing democracy and progressing social equality amongst global citizens. Let the pupil's comment in the paper, 'all good things come to an end', actually mark a series of fertile new beginnings. I thank you.

Bibliography

- Barnes, C., G. Mercer & T. Shakespeare, 2002, *Exploring Disability: A Sociological Introduction*, Polity Press.

- Clarke, A. et al (eds.), 2001, *Inspiring Learning*, Research Centre for Museums and Galleries (RCMG), Leicester.
- Csikszentmihalyi, M. and Hermanson, K. 2000, 'Intrinsic motivation in museums: why does one want to learn', in Hooper-Greenhill (ed) *The Educational Role of the Museum*, Routledge. London: 146-160.
- Department of Health, *Valuing People: A new Strategy for Learning Disability for the 21st Century*, *A White Paper*, 2001, The Stationary Office
- Fanon, F., 1993, *Black Skin, White Masks* , Pluto Press, London.
- Fleming, D., 2001, 'Positioning the Museum for Social Inclusion', in Sandell, R., (ed.) *Museums, Society, Inequality*, Routledge, London.
- Golding, V., 2000, *New Voices and Visibilities at the Museum Frontiers*, unpublished PhD thesis, University of Leicester
- Hein, G., 1999, *Learning in Museums*, Routledge, London.
- Macdonald, S., 1996, 'Theorising Museums: Introduction', in Macdonald, S., and Fyfe, G., *Theorising Museums*, Blackwell, Oxford
- Oliver, M. 1996, *Understanding Disability: From Theory to Practice*, Macmillan, Basingstoke
- Parekh, B., 2002, *The Future of a Multi-Ethnic Britain, The Parekh Report*, Profile Books, London
- Pinna. G., 'Intangible Heritage and Museums' ICOM News 2004, No 4
- Picton, J., 1995, 'West Africa and the Guinea Coast' in Philips, T., (ed) *Africa Art of a Continent*, Prestel, Munich and New York
- RCMG, 2000, *Learning Through Culture*, University of Leicester
- Rogoff, B., 1990, *Apprenticeship in Thinking: Cognitive development in social context*, New York, Oxford University Press.
- Smith, C., 1998, *Creative Britain*, Faber and Faber, London

Websites:

http://www.clothofgold.org.uk/archive
http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/reports
http://www.re:source.gov.uk
http://www.socialexclusionu.gov.uk/ Tackling Social Exclusion: Taking stock and looking to the future, 2004, Office of the Deputy Prime Minister

http://www.valuingpeople.gov.uk/ Valuing People: A New Strategy for Learning Disability for the 21st century, A White Paper, 2001, Department of Health