

## **Transcript: Art Fund Interview with Avery**

Speakers:

Ana Baeza Ruiz

Avery (pseudonym)

Ana Baeza Ruiz [00:04.980]: Great, okay so thanks so much Avery for coming to this interview. The purpose is to ask you to reflect on your experiences of taking part in the project as a whole. We're looking here for honest reflections, there's no right or wrong answers we just want to know what you think, and this will also help staff at the museum in the future, if they want to do other iterations of the project, so we will be finishing just before half past, so it will be just over 20 minutes or so that will take for this. Okay, so I'd like to start with a very general question it's an opener and it's a space for you to broadly reflect on the project and the question is: how would you describe your participation in the project?

Avery [00:50.490]: I would say that my participation was a very collaborative, because the whole project was...you weren't doing individual work, but you were working with other people and so part of that process was and you had to take ideas from everyone, it wasn't just something that you would yourself, like you would have your own views, but it was all about, for me, it was all about listening to other people and coming together and creating something that we would all be happy with.

Ana Baeza Ruiz [01:40.620]: Thank you...and I will ask later about collaboration, I think that's a key aspect of this project, clearly so we will get to explore that in more detail, but before we do that there was another question that is about what have you learned in this project, whether this is about technical skills, what we might call more soft skills, what do you feel that you've got out of this project as a learner.

Avery [02:03.000]: And I think in terms of technical skills the main thing that I learned was how easy it is to create content using online websites because before normally, I would just like, I never really thought about the kind of process that goes into making content, but when you're given the opportunity you kind of, for me opened my eyes open. I realized, you know, there is a lot of work that goes in, but it can be the process of actually making it can be quite easy. Yeah, and the other thing that I learned was just about wide range of roles there are in Digital from the videos that we were shown as well. Just you know isn't just that there isn't like one specific role that you know you could really be working within anything.

Ana Baeza Ruiz [03:10.560]: Great, thank you is that is that is there anything else that you'd like to add to, maybe some of the reflecting on some of the specific experiences that you've had in the project, maybe around teamwork, for example, or other areas of the project... areas where you feel you've built a skill set that you wouldn't have had before.

Avery [03:45.360]: Oh, I would definitely say teamwork because I was with because, especially because I'm not from Middlesex, I was introduced to people who I've never met before, and I didn't know anything about them, and then you know you're put into a team with them, and you have to kind of get to know each other and the project through the different iterations that we did... I was getting to know more about the people that I was working with and I was able to build a relationship with them as well.

Ana Baeza Ruiz [04:22.020]: Great and I think this leads to the next question, which is precisely about teamwork, in one way and it specifically around communication, so I wanted to ask you what your thoughts are on the way everyone communicated and collaborated during the project. And here, you might want to comment on your group, but also, and what you observed other groups, and perhaps also on the project leaders that were guiding you through this experience.

Avery [04:49.980]: And so, in terms of the project leaders, they would communicate over Teams and that's where you know if they had like any updates to tell us like that's where we could find it and I thought that was quite easy to access, I mean for me first it was I had a bit of some technical issues, but once I sort them

out like if I needed resources or if I had to check any information I could just load Teams and I would find it straight away. And in terms of my own team, we would communicate, we would meet every week outside of the out like the regular weekly meeting hours and, but we would also talk as well over messaging to so we were communicating quite frequently. Yeah I would just say from doing that it was like a very easy process, because we were yeah we were meeting you know over Zoom, but I think having the messaging alongside it made it a bit easier because there was it wasn't as formal as work is presented to be as?

Ana Baeza Ruiz [06:12.180]: That's interesting, was the professional sphere bleeding into the personal sphere, is that what you're hinting at there?

Avery [06:22.770]: I think in terms of... within my group, like we did have a professional level, a professional relationship, but the way that we communicated I would also say, though, is a very personal aspect as well, because we got to know each other and we weren't from the same university, so we got to know about a you know what we wanted to do in the future, or like what we were studying, so I would say, from there, like there was a personal connection that developed as well.

Ana Baeza Ruiz [06:55.980]: And then there's this aspect, as well as communication there's the aspect of collaboration and I wonder how you would judge that in the way that it worked for you in your group. And if you consider that collaboration flowed well, what do you think made it made it work, what were the kind of ingredients that made it work.

Avery [07:16.470]: I think for my group the collaboration was quite an easy part of the whole project just because. What we did when we first were put into the group, since we spoke about the kind of aspects of social media that we were interested in as inspiration. And when we did that we found that we had very similar interests, so I think that made the collaboration process easier because, because the fact that we had similar interests, we were able to kind of round up upon a certain iteration quite quickly like because we both knew what we wanted. We weren't really struggling about we weren't we didn't have to fight about you know Oh, I want this or I want this, like we both listened, we all listened to each other, and from that we kind of implemented different ideas, but at the same time, because we had very similar interests, it was very easy to come to a conclusion.

Ana Baeza Ruiz [08:26.550]: Thanks for that. And right so obviously there is also the broader framework of this project, which is inspired by the Let's get real experimental model, so I wanted us to spend a bit of time on that and I wanted to ask you how you would explain that model of working and experimenting that was using the project, how did you find it and what do you think you'll take away from it, if anything.

Avery [09:00.030]: It is that is that, like the iteration thing?

Ana [09:04.260]: Yes.

Avery [09:06.390]: And I never really... in terms of like a professional level, I never really considered like the whole process of iteration to be used in a sector such as Digital because I've always thought of iterations of being scientific. But like I understand why it was used and I thought that it was like an interesting process to to kind of experience. When we were first explained about it, and I was really confused I didn't really get like what the whole point of it was, but I think as the project went on it did make sense to me and like so by that by the end of the project, I definitely understood, you know, the whole process a bit more, and like what the whole point of it was I would say. And I think in terms of what I took from it, I think now if I'm ever looking at social media and how it's used by people, and I think I'll always have that, in my mind like "are they testing, you know certain colour" or "are they testing out a caption". I think like that will always stay in my head, because I feel like by doing this project I've definitely thought, more broadly, about how social media is used by companies now, and you know how they use it to like get their message across.

Ana Baeza Ruiz [10:45.630]: Yeah that's interesting and actually not something that has come up in any of the other interviews, the way that your own participation in the project is now making you read social media in quite a different way, having much more literacy in that sense I think it's really important for all of us concerned, given the ubiquity of social media so that's really interesting to hear. I wanted us to have a little spend some time thinking about your input in the project and how you feel your contributions as a team member have been valued and incorporated in the project, could you give one or more examples of this?

Avery [11:27.960]: And so I think in terms of in terms of doing the iterations and I think doing the last one for me was it felt like that's when I was giving my most because normally for the iterations I was just doing the background aspect of it, so you know writing up the captions or researching about the collections, but I would just oversee the post being made, I wouldn't actually do it. But for the last one I was able to actually take part in making it because my group we used a different platforms, so that meant we could all have a goal trying. And I think, by doing that, like because now, I was actually making the post, I felt like I was taking the burden off the other people in my group and, at the same time, because I wasn't just doing the background things for me, I felt like I was contributing a lot more because I could show my creative side and not have to explain it. Like I could show it to them and see what they thought about it, and I think in general, when we have those weekly meetings I think, as well, my they what I liked about them is if they if the if you are asked for your opinion on something they, like everybody in the meeting would really take it to heart and they would understand what you mean, and they would agree with it and I thought that was a nice touch as well, because I feel like... I don't know how to explain, but it was just like nice to be recognized, you know I don't know how to explain it...

Ana Baeza Ruiz [13:35.730]: Maybe it doesn't need more explaining, I think, maybe that's you know, the fact that you have that recognition, that you will be heard in that space, I think, and it sounds from what you described that everyone had an equal share in that space.

Avery [13:50.580]: Yeah...

Ana Baeza Ruiz [13:52.890]: And that's quite also an unusual thing, I'm wondering if you want to say anything more about that, how do you think you achieved that as a group, did you have any sort of ground rules or how was it that you managed to have that sense of equality within your group?

Avery [14:08.790]: I think within the group there wasn't there wasn't one person that was dominating, and I think that by not having that there, there was an opportunity for everybody to have a say and for everybody to listen to one person.

Ana Baeza Ruiz [14:31.860]: Great and I'm going to move on to a different set of questions now, which is more about how this project relates to the industry of cultural institutions broadly speaking, and throughout the weeks of the project there's been a number of guest speakers from different cultural and arts organizations how well do you think it worked as a way of bringing different perspectives.

Avery [14:59.580]: I thought it works really well because before watching the videos I didn't really know like the extent to which digital was used in cultural heritage sites and museums, like, I thought it was just a way that they would just post photos and saying come and have a look at this, but when they had the videos and they had like an analyst who looked at the numbers from websites, or somebody who worked at Google, I didn't even know Google had an arts and culture sector, so that was something that I learned as well, so I think in watching those videos I just for me, it opened up my eyes how these institutions are starting to use digital, and how seriously that it's being taken that we've got so many roles for people...

Ana Baeza Ruiz [16:02.160]: So you found this input useful overall I'm hearing this, but is there something that you think could have been done differently in the way these perspectives were brought into the project. You said very positive things is there anything that's maybe also engaging critically with the way in which it was done, maybe if the answer is no!

Avery [16:28.620]: yeah I don't think so, I feel like the way that they did it was good because they would show the video, and then we would have a discussion about it so like having the discussion afterwards we were engaging critically with the video straight afterwards, and we were able to hear, like the people, the other people on the call, and I could hear what they were saying too. And sometimes they would say things similar to what I was thinking or sometimes they would point something out from one of the videos that I wouldn't have picked up on and. Yeah I would say, like, I think, by structuring it that way it really helped me understand just you know, their roles, their impact yeah, just like they help me understand, like the digital world and, like what their role is in that world.

Ana Baeza Ruiz [17:34.740]: The idea behind this project, like in other work experience projects, is in one sense to increase your knowledge about this sort of industry and also to enhance your confidence when you think about applying for jobs that might be in the sector. Do you have any comments about this aspect of the project and how it has worked for you or I guess, I should say rather what comments do you have on this aspect?

Avery [17:57.780]: And so I think I said before, having the videos, and acting the whole iteration process has shown me, you know the different types of jobs that are available. And I think for me as well, because I have been looking for jobs to I bought because of my degree I've always felt like. I've been limited to having a certain profession, but I think, by taking part in this project and seeing the different degrees that everybody else is doing it showed me that you don't have to have a certain degree, or a certain qualifications qualification to work in that field, and I feel like now, when I'm applying for jobs I'd definitely apply for jobs that are like this because, like now I have the experience, but I also know that you don't need experience to apply. It's just...like because before, when I first applied for this like it didn't have experience it was just something that I thought would be interesting, so I think if you have an interest in it you should definitely go for it like, and that's what I learned as well from one of the leads on the project, where, when she was talking about networking, she said you know if you're interested in something or someone just reach out to them, and I feel like that applies to this type of field as well if you're interested, you should just reach out.

Ana Baeza Ruiz [19:35.340]: Well it's great to hear that it's given that sort of you know it's fuelled that determination to do things that maybe you wouldn't have done or not, in that way, prior to this. That's great I have one more question, which is a closing question and MoDA might want to do projects like this in the future, so if they were to run a similar project again next year would you recommend it to a friend, why yes or why not just the first part of the question and the second part is, are there any changes that you would suggest.

Avery [20:11.370]: Oh, I think, in the first part, I would definitely recommend it to a friend that just because firstly because it's so different to the normal part-time jobs that students tend to pick up, but also because it's just I think it's very flexible in terms of the way that you work, so you meet for two hours but there's also like an individual aspect that you do by yourself and I think, especially if it's the students having that kind of balance is good, when you have other priorities such as deadlines or essays. I think in terms of changing it I would probably say just sometimes it can be a bit hard in terms of technicality and might be a bit hard to access certain files if you're not from the institution. I really struggled with that and even now, if I want to look at something I have to get my app and approve it so many times before I can actually see it, so I would say, maybe having using a platform where it's not like locked by an institution or, just somewhere where it's a bit more accessible to people I would say, I think that would be my only change by the document.

Ana Baeza Ruiz [21:45.630]: Great well thanks so much every I think that's been really comprehensive and rich or the answers that you've given, we do have a couple more minutes left if there's anything that you'd like to share that is relevant and that you feel as the left unsaid so far.

Avery [22:04.140]: And I think just to round off, I would just like to say thank you for the opportunity like I had a really nice time and I got to know people who I would probably never have not got to know if I didn't

do this type of project. And the two leads as well, they were really friendly and easy to reach and I just had a really nice time doing this whole project.

Ana Baeza Ruiz [22:28.320]: Great I'm so happy, I'm so pleased to hear that. I'm going to stop recording now.