

International Newsletter From L'Arche

A publication of L'Arche International

Take another look, reveal the beauty

■ Jean-Christophe Pascal, International Coordinator



The film 'Wasteland' took three years to film. In it, Vic Muniz introduced us to the life of the "Catadores", workers in a colossal rubbish dump - the largest in the world, at Jardim Gramacho, Rio de Janeiro: 7000 tonnes of rubbish finds its way there each day.

Inspired by classic photos, the film director invited some of the workers to pose as subjects. These shots are projected very high up, into the interior of a hangar. Right in the middle, the Catadores then create a work of art out of the junk salvaged from the tip. Their own faces are magnified to vast proportions, and assume the colours of everything that we chuck out each day. These resulting 'artistic creations' are simply mind-blowing. They have taken the world's great art galleries by storm.



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But what is truly moving is to see the men and women, living and working in a dump, suddenly become recognised as world-class artists. Irma and the others have not only conquered the world, but have re-found their dignity. From being unknown and cast aside, they have become success stories, 'celebrities', people known by name.

And just like the artists, aren't we all called whenever and wherever we are, to reveal the beauty of creation? On each day granted to us, to create and re-create, and so participate in the work of our Creator, who invites us into the workshop. Do we really see the beauty of each person around us, of our environment, or our communities?

I am now heading home after spending a weekend with 90 assistants from Trosly. We shared about L'Arche and all that is taking shape, in the knowledge that our community life only takes on its full meaning when we are fully engaging in the world, witnessing to our values, the quality and beauty of our people. And you know what? I found the people at Trosly really very beautiful!

www.wastelandmovie.com or www.youtube.com
(search for 'wasteland vic muniz')

Appointments

Regional Coordinators

Sylvie Morin, Regional Coordinator for the L'Arche communities in Quebec (Canada)

Community Board Presidents

Agota Rozsalyi, L'Arche Hungary

Other

Erik Thouet, at-large member of the International Board

Community leaders

Cécile De Quay, L'Arche Gouda (the Netherlands)

Anne Shaw, L'Arche Inverness (UK)

Kevin Coogan, Manchester Project (UK)

Kathleen Boyle, L'Arche Lambeth (UK)

Jacquelyn Box, L'Arche Brecon (UK)

Lynda St Pierre, L'Arche l'Etoile (Canada)

This list is not exhaustive; we welcome updates you are aware of at the address bdd.international@larche.org (database managed by L'Arche International in Paris).



Commitment and Belonging – International Reflecting Group Tirol, Austria January 2011

■ Tobias Gerken, Chair of the Commitment and Belonging steering committee

Tirol in Austria was the venue for the mid-January meeting of the steering committee on Commitment and Belonging, this time gathering with the International Reflecting Group and an international Group of People with a Learning Disability. We had two tasks to accomplish: first to synthesise the reports from stage two from National Reflecting Groups, isolated communities and individual contributions. Secondly, to discern how L'Arche International will respond to the difficulties and challenges of the next stage of Commitment and Belonging.



What have we heard from the Federation? What is L'Arche International already learning through this process? And how does L'Arche intend to respond over the coming years? What are the next steps for both communities and countries? The magnificent view of the Tirol Mountains and the warm hospitality offered to us by St. Michael's Retreat House and L'Arche Tirol created a good atmosphere, which aided our concentration on these questions.

We took two full days to synthesise the difficulties and challenges around Commitment and Belonging in L'Arche today. The Reflecting Group summarized the reports from countries and isolated communities as well as individual contributions. And out of this material, together we created "Archie"! Archie is a fictional character, who lives in the world of commitment and belonging. "Archie" has certain expectations, obstacles, needs, support and fears related to commitment and belonging (see picture). This represents what our members in the federation are living today. By increasing our awareness of what our members are telling us and broadening our horizons regarding new concepts and ways of understanding commitment and belonging, we were able to draw conclusions about some inevitable consequences for L'Arche – both internationally and

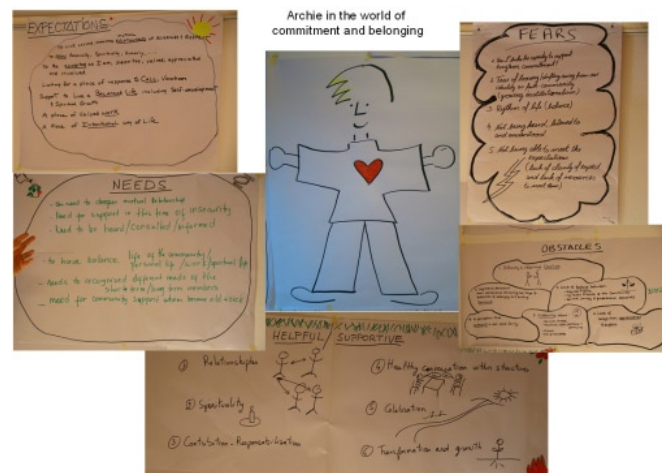
on country level. And building upon this, we were then able to discern how to go forward with the next stage.

Sharing in our work was the "Number One Group", comprising members of L'Arche with a learning disability: Richard Keagan Bull from Lambeth, Anne-Laetitia from l'Olivier, François Baily from Brussels, and Marjanca, assisted by Mattea, both from Slovenia. This group, animated by Stephan Posner, inspired us with their thoughts and feedback about the difficulties and challenges around this topic from their own point of view. We also learnt from their reflections on "what makes me happy to be in L'Arche".

Here, François shares his view on how he lived these days:

"Excellent work, which each person in the group shares with the others. And then, we had a plenary session with everyone where we put questions to all the groups. Our work was much appreciated and enriched the work of the Reflecting Group. A good moment of prayer, a very beautiful scriptural reading, prayers of petition and good singing. The Reflecting Group praised our excellent work, the fruit of which will surely be felt in the different communities."

The report on stage two is currently in the pipeline and will be presented to the Federation Council in Krakow, in March, at which point news of stage three will be also be made known.



"Archie"



See ability, not disability

Members of L'Arche Lambeth went on a trip to China

■ Jim Cargin, International Communications Coordinator



Mindy, Derek, Pauline and Rachel

“Nothing is impossible!” So says Pauline McQuade, the Day Opportunities Manager in L'Arche Lambeth, UK, following her stay in China last October with Derek Williams, a member of the community with a disability. The whole trip, involving four people, was arranged and paid for by Epic Arts, (<http://www.epicarts.org.uk>) which works with L'Arche and others to promote creative self-expression of people with a disability through dance, drama and the arts. Their motto is ‘see **ability**, not disability.’

Why China? Epic Arts' focus when going to Xining in China was to run high quality arts programmes for children with learning

disabilities, with work exhibited where possible. Training of teachers occurs during these sessions but on this occasion the training was on a more formal basis. For example, they created a resource manual with explanations of the philosophy, teaching methods and practical arts projects.

The visit to China included working with an orphanage for 250 children, as well as two schools for children from 7-16 years old with learning disabilities. The children and staff were especially impressed by Derek. Derek has a strong artistic streak, and he immediately came into his own as a role model, “a star”!

After two weeks of success with chopsticks, they landed back in London, but somehow, it doesn't feel like the end! Pauline plans to go back at some point to China. What really impressed her about the teachers she met was that they were clearly so positive, committed and excited about their work, despite having precious few resources and opportunities (no pictures on the walls, 15-30 children to one teacher...). This is a telling contrast with life at home in the UK, with its much higher level of both resources and complaints. In Pauline's words: “[In Lambeth, ed.] we have a lot to be thankful for.”

The artists of Kana-no-ie, Japan

■ Masashi Nishida, Community Leader



From November 25 to 30, we put on an exhibition of our art works at a gallery in Shizuoka. It was entitled “Artists at Kana-no-ie.” Our art teacher, Sumiko Sasaki, visited us and taught us twice a month on Wednesdays. We had been preparing for this

event for the last 6 months. At first, the members said, “I don't want to draw any pictures.” However, Sumiko Sasaki praised each of their works and that gave them courage and confidence in themselves. They finally came to enjoy drawing. Their finished work was beautiful. It was a very important experience for us to discover new talents and hidden possibilities in our members.

Many visitors came to the exhibition from inside and outside of the city. An article on this exhibition along with pictures was printed in the local newspaper, and some members were very happy to see that. Their colourful works expressing their diverse personalities delighted the visitors. We received many compliments. From the bottom of my heart, I am thankful for the members of the volunteer groups, Ms. Hamamura (the gallery owner), and family members for their help and support. Thank you very much!

Béthanie productions presents... a new film: "What's new, doctor?"

Marie Brunette, assistant at L'Arche L'Olivier, France



In our community, L'Olivier, one fruit of the film L'Epreuve des mots, and the workshops that L'Arche International has run on the participation of people with a disability in our reflection processes, is a short film aiming to give voice to people with a disability.

When the medical chaplaincy service of Ille et Vilaine asked to come to L'Olivier, to discuss the professional relationship between a doctor and their patients with a disability - and especially how best to conduct medical appointments- it was immediately obvious to us that this meeting couldn't happen without hearing from those most involved, i.e. the disabled people themselves.

But speaking in front of a group is not easy! So how to make this happen, without obliging anyone to speak in front of the group, given the overdose of stress and practical difficulties that can involve. So... we hit on the idea of... using a camera!

Giving time for the words to come, so that each person can say what they need to, in their own way, whether by word, gesture or silence...all this takes time...and each person has the right to scrap their first attempts and do a re-take from scratch.

In the end, three hours of filmed discussions were edited down to a final product of 25 minutes! But to do what we did, it doesn't take a professional film-director, trust our experience; it's worth it! All you need is a little camera, a few questions, an editing programme, and a bit of time! It is worth it!

The people welcomed surprised us with the depth of their sharing, their simplicity, and their humour. As assistants we were invited to really listen, without trying to answer for them... it was powerful to see the pleasure they took in being listened to in depth on such a serious subject. And the doctors were not only very touched by what they heard, but quickly grasped the usefulness of this tool in treating people with a disability, for their colleagues and their pupils as well.

Update from Egypt



Stan Dubourg, Delegate Coordinator for Egypt, has contacted us to say that the community house has now re-opened, and the workshop is also open for a short time during

the day. Mamdouh, the community leader, phoned Stan, and said that they are very grateful for all the prayers and support from the Federation during a time of great tension in his country. The community is being very careful to ensure the welfare of its members. We expect another update next week.



2011

MARCH

Federation Council
International Mission Council
Krakow – Poland

March 23 (e) to March 27 (m)
March 27 (e) to March 30 (m) / March 31 (m)

Companions Covenant Retreat*
Poissy – France
Coordinator Chantal Macabeo: chantal.macabeo@aliceads1.fr
Speaker: Michèle Dormal

March 27 to April 2

JUNE

International Board Meeting
Edinburgh – Scotland

June 16 (e) to June 19 (m)

SEPTEMBER

The Gospel of Saint John
The Farm at Trosly – France
Session 1 – English only
5 years + in L'Arche
Speaker: Jean Vanier
Contact: George Durner: george.durner@larche.org

September 13 to September 23

OCTOBER

International Mission Council
Ivory Coast

October 19 (e) to October 27 (m)

NOVEMBER

International Board Meeting
Toronto – Canada

November 16 (e) to November 20 (m)

* More information about the different types of Covenant Retreats can be found in the International Meeting Ground n° 9 (April 2009)



See you soon on www.larche.org and www.jean-vanier.org!

In the menu, '**News & Events**' on the www.larche.org website, you will find more information on the situations in Egypt, Ivory Coast and other countries. Drop in now and then to get the latest!

And on the www.jean-vanier.org website, you can access Jean's letter from January – in 8 different languages!