

Grace

Skills Exchange Programme participant

When Grace joined Creative Crawley's Skills Exchange Programme; part of the Cultural Ecology Development strand, she was looking to deepen her storytelling practice, broaden her skills and confidence and explore where a multi-disciplinary creative path might lead.

What she didn't anticipate was just how much she'd grow as a collaborator and leader - and how strongly the experience would reconnect her sense of creative identity.

Since leaving the programme, Grace has modelled in a Creative Crawley fashion show, been mentored by award-winning comedian/theatre maker Victoria Melody, and developed her own comedy routine.



“ The exhibition was one of my biggest challenges - and I'm proud I made art that wasn't performative

“ I'm taking away confidence in learning new things and a willingness to jump into things I've never done before

The following section explores Grace's experience through Creative Crawley's four strategic pillars:

PILLAR 1: ON THE DOORSTEP

From the outset, Grace found herself in a cohort that was welcoming, supportive and diverse in practice and perspective. Used to working mainly with theatre-makers, she stepped into collaborations with people who had completely different outlooks and disciplines, discovering how much they could learn from one another.

The group's generosity built friendships that continue beyond the programme, reducing isolation and reinforcing a sense of belonging.

PILLAR 2: BIG PICTURE

Workshops with professional theatre-makers Rob Watt and Chris Thorpe expanded Grace's storytelling practice and gave her the chance to lead and guide peers across artforms. Delivering the end-of-project exhibition stretched her beyond familiar, performance-based work; producing non-performative art for public presentation became a milestone in her development.

The programme also strengthened transferable skills valued widely by employers: learning agility, confidence to try new things and collaborative leadership.

PILLAR 3: PEOPLE AND PLANET

Grace's experience re-energised her wellbeing and creative identity. A moment that resonated came via her sister at Free Shop Crawley: 'I feel like I've got my sister back'.

This reflection affirmed the programme's role in reawakening her creativity and underscored the positive impact that shared making, support and purpose can have on personal wellbeing.

PILLAR 4: VALUE IN ACTION

Grace leaves the programme with clearer professional momentum: confidence with new tools and contexts, leadership experience and practice presenting work publicly.

She's balancing employment with creative projects and feels better prepared to transition income toward creative roles. Looking ahead, she's open to opportunities across disciplines while nurturing an ambition to become a mixed-media theatre director.

“Hearing my sister say she felt like she'd got me back, that my creativity was reawakened, was a moment I felt proud of



“I want the creative industry to start paying the bills - and being a mixed-media director would be my ideal job

IMPACT SUMMARY

Grace's journey through Skills Exchange demonstrates the programme's capacity to build confidence, leadership and cross-disciplinary collaboration, while reconnecting artists to their creative identity and wellbeing. She strengthened confidence and learning agility, developed collaborative leadership across diverse artforms, delivered a public exhibition and created non-performative work, broadened professional readiness to shift income toward creative roles, with a clear interest in mixed-media theatre direction.