



STO UNION



[STO Union](#) is a multidisciplinary company bringing together artists from a variety of mediums in the creation of original contemporary theatre, installations, live art and video since 1992. Distinguished by an un-spectacular approach to staging, focusing on the simple human interaction in all its complexity.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

[Sarah Conn](#) of STO Union is creating a theatre piece entitled “Trophy”, which is structured around a life-size board game. Sarah is working with clients of Hospice Care Ottawa, the Ottawa Mission and senior citizens to create the various elements of the game, which audience members will navigate through during the performance. Each of the elements in the game represents a key life event that most people tend to go through, such as a first love or a first job. Sarah helps the participants to build a creative expression that can take the form of a story, a drawing or a video, amongst others.

PARTNER SITE

The [Ottawa Mission](#) is a non-profit, faith-based ministry, meeting the needs of the homeless and those at risk of being homeless in the Ottawa region.

ABOUT ART PLACE

Art Place is a community outreach program of AOE Arts Council, funded in part by the Ontario Trillium Foundation. In its inaugural year, the new social practice professional artist-in-residence program will enable six jury selected artists and groups of artists the opportunity to offer unique free-of-charge artistic services in collaboration with community sites across the city of Ottawa. Each artist or arts group will be paired with a non-profit organization for a period of 5 to 8 weeks. The artists will work with a designated site partner and its participants to create an artistic project. Art Place will bring together different participants to work collaboratively and generate awareness for socially-driven issues.

GIANT BOARD GAME INSPIRED BY TRUE LIFE STORIES

February 10, 2015

Sarah Conn of [STO Union](#) is creating a theatre piece entitled “Trophy”, which is structured around a life size-board game. Sarah is working with clients of Hospice Care Ottawa, the Ottawa Mission and senior citizens to create the various elements of the game, which audience members will navigate through during the performance. The full STO Union production will be presented in 2016. Each of the elements in the game represent a key life event that most people tend to go through, such as a first love or a first job. Sarah helps the participants to build a creative expression that can take the form of a story, a drawing or a video, amongst others.

Here is a summary of one of Sarah’s creative encounters.

Alistair is a retired architect who immigrated from Scotland as a young man. In our first session together, we talked about the challenges he has faced in his life, which included everything from dealing with the mean streets of Glasgow (where he was born), to crossing the Atlantic by boat in 1953.



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One of the most fascinating things for me was hearing about how many times he had to start over. From starting over in a new country, then a series of new cities and provinces, to starting over in his career multiple times, and struggling

with being self-employed, Alistair learned the value of new beginnings, frequently the hard way. Now at 85, Alistair is beginning a new part of his life – he has just moved out of his longtime family home, one that he redesigned with great care himself, and is now living in a seniors residence that doesn’t yet feel like home.

We sat together, and I asked him if he wanted to help design a board game. Eventually he started to draw, and this is what he came up with:

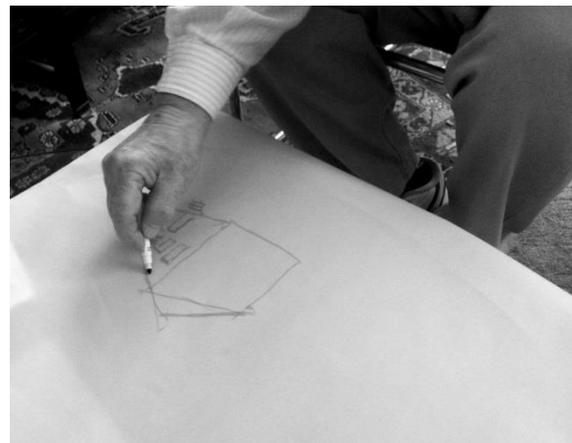
There is a standard board that looks kind of like a checkers board.

It is on a platform with arches underneath it. Players walk underneath the board and then all of a sudden they pop up into the board.

When they pop through the board, they start throwing one dollar bills around.

Then they get a meal of meat and potatoes.

The end.



© STO Union

I loved the fantastical quality of his game, and seeing his brain work its way through each step with such delight was inspiring. He drew cautiously, and felt self-conscious about his shaky hands. He told me that I should find a young ‘whippersnapper’ to do the drawing, rather than him. He told me he would rather provide feedback on drawings than do them himself any more. He said “no one wants to see an old man’s drawings or hear their ideas”. I

told him that his ideas and his drawings were exactly why I was there.

What spoke to me the most about Alistair was the resilience and determination with which he had handled the upheaval in his life. He trusted that even when everything fell apart, that someone would come by and save the day. And it did. When he was down to his last dollar, someone would show up and a solution would be found. I wonder if this is a result of his deep trust that everything would work out, or just the way things used to be.

As we work on the various squares of the board game, Alistair and I will be designing the “restart” square. This could be similar to the “Go back to Go” square that you find in some popular games, or it might be like the “Go to Jail” square. It’s exact content and look is up to Alistair. But either way, it will represent a part of life that we all go through – starting over and facing new beginnings.

By Sarah Conn of STO Union

MEETING WITH TOM.

February 20, 2015

“Seeing people who are struggling to fulfill their basic human needs make time for art (which some might consider a luxury) made me look again at the value of art in today’s world.”

– Sarah Conn (STO Union), Art Place Artist

“It’s important for me to move on, continue and push myself a little bit in spite of the fear because that’s where courage comes from. It’s taking action when you are afraid”

– Tom, Art Place participant



“If I find myself being uncomfortable, that’s an indication that I am pushing myself into something different, something that I am not familiar with. It’s kind of scary, but I recognize that that is ok. I need to push through that because there is nothing to fear except being stuck and that’s the part that I am getting better at; moving on.”

– Tom, Art Place participant

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