Our presentation
We would like to have a 30 minute session for an oral and picture presentation, including 5 minutes for discussion. The pictures we shall use as illustrations are taken from earlier workshops.

A description of the method itself.
The method takes the form of a workshop for one or more groups of people under the guidance of a facilitator. Works of art are used as an “impulse”, or point of departure for the working group. An optimal setting would be for the workshop to be held at an art museum but reproductions in the form of postcards can enable the workshop to take place anywhere. The art can be presented thematically and the sort of art chosen can also be dependent on the aims of the workshop - the goals to be achieved, or even the profession of the working group. For example, portraits of Archimedes, Leonardo da Vinci, Newton, Isambard Kingdom Brunell, or the Swedish engineer and industrialist Polhem could be useful, if working with a group of engineers.

We are using art as an “impulse” and also try to work through a framework of artistic endeavour but we are still using art as an instrument to realize goals that lie outside art. The group is asked to work together and to discuss and decide upon:
A - which portrait they shall choose as a starting point
B - their aims or goals in the respect of a final, artistic product
C - their way of working to achieve their goal or goals.

The group may decide to create a picture as close to the original as possible, or perhaps to comment upon or paraphrase the original portrait in some way. A comment, perhaps with tongue in cheek, on gender, or with the use of humour, irony perhaps. What is important, is that the group define their own goals and the way in which they should be reached.

Work then commences with the help of materials provided. We use a diverse selection of art materials, from tempera/gouache paints for background work to facial make-up, textiles which may be pinned, folded, draped or even taped in place, to the making of temporary and very improvised props. Safety pins, rubber bands, tape, string and glue, all these things may be of use. The idea being that the group must playfully improvise while working towards and creating an artistic end-product. This end-product – albeit only a temporary illusion - is then photographed. Perhaps even some basic form of spotlighting may be necessary.

While the group is working toward their goal(s), the actual work and its progression is documented by the facilitator with the help of a digital camera. The pictures will enable the group to review, reflect upon and analyse their work process under the guidance of the facilitator.

In order to achieve a lasting development, we focus more on the work process than the actual result achieved by the group. With the help of questions and answers, the facilitator leads the group through a viewing and reflection of the documented work process in a chronological sequence. This allows for both a qualitative and quantitative analysis of important factors concerning the wellbeing of the group, and allows us to focus on formal and informal internal relationships, roles, structures, etc within the group.
The individuals comprising the group receive an explicit picture of strengths and weaknesses, of both themselves as part of the group, and of the group itself, as a functioning and professional entity. This then can be the starting point for the group to question ingrained values: how they view themselves, their roles and expectations, but also to help them find new ways of working towards a more healthy and creative way of organising their work life.

With the use of metaphore: a journey starting from home – travelling into and through strangeness – to return home, hopefully enriched – a bit like the tale of Ulysses perhaps.

We are: Helene and Keith Chirgwin, who both live and work in Norrköping. Helene has a masters degree within Human Resource Management and Work Sciences and works now as a consultant within that field. She also has a degree as a music teacher. Keith works for Linköpings university at the teachers training program in Norrköping as an art teacher/lecturer. Together, we have started a business which tries to promote both creative processes and well being in the workplace. “art of work” is the result of “pooling” our respective fields of work.

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