



the british association of
art therapists

Art Therapists working with museums and galleries

Do you want to:

- Reach people who would otherwise find it hard to engage in arts in health activities in your venue?
- Use your museum/gallery as a resource for psychological therapy?
- Build on the potential of your collections for visitors' emotional learning?
- Tap into the expertise of artists who are also trained clinical psychological therapists?

Art Therapists (or Art Psychotherapists) are trained in a type of psychotherapy that uses art media as its primary mode of expression and communication. Art Therapists work with people of all ages in a variety of settings including the NHS, schools, community organisations and care homes. Clients may have emotional, behavioural or mental health problems, learning or physical disabilities, life-limiting conditions, neurological conditions or physical illnesses. In the UK, Art Therapists complete a Masters level training and are registered with the Health and Care Professions Council.

Art Therapists are skilled in:

- group facilitation
- understanding the needs of vulnerable people
- assessing and managing risk
- dealing with emotional distress
- working safely and ethically
- understanding the emotional impact of art and artefacts
- understanding how engagement with cultural resources can contribute to wellbeing
- a wide range of art practices.

This means that Art Therapists can:

- plan and manage Arts in Health projects for vulnerable people (including ensuring the appropriateness for the client group, recruiting participants, and assessing/managing risk)
- provide training, supervision and mentoring for artists, museum/gallery staff and others involved in delivering Arts in Health projects, ensuring safe and reflective practice
- use your setting and collections as a resource for psychological therapy, including facilitating personal meaning-making as a way of exploring the self

- work in partnership with museum/gallery staff to harness the potential for emotional engagement by members of the general public, including contributing to the development of exhibitions and resources and facilitating workshops
- give advice on access for people with mental health difficulties and other vulnerable people, including helping to develop funding proposals
- act as a bridge between cultural organisations and the health sector, helping museum/gallery staff to have a better understanding of mental health and mental health staff to become more aware of museums and galleries as a resource for recovery.

Examples of partnerships...

Animate workshops for adults with learning disabilities and mental illness drew inspiration from an exhibition at the Baltic and were facilitated by an artist in residence and an NHS Art Therapist.

Art B was a therapeutic art project at Oriel Ynys Môn which offered a progression route for people referred by GPs, Jobcentre Plus and charities. It was devised and delivered by an Art Therapist: *“[The Art Therapist] has stretched me far beyond the limits I thought I was capable of... I have looked and seen things from an entirely different angle.”*

Art & Soul, a member-led organisation which celebrates mental and emotional wellbeing through the arts, runs weekly artmaking sessions in Orleans House Gallery facilitated by an Art Therapist.

Art Psychotherapy Groups for adults with severe and enduring mental health difficulties are delivered in Gloucestershire museums by NHS Art Psychotherapists: *“Holding the group in a museum was so much better and not so clinical. I could be a person, not a patient.” “The museum objects make you think more and surprise yourself.” “I hated museums before and now I love them!”*

Combat Stress collaborated with The Lightbox to enable veterans on an Art Therapy programme to participate in bespoke gallery-led workshops exploring the interplay between inner and outer landscapes.

Picturing Memories aims to improve the quality of life for older adults with dementia; an Art Therapist advises Ben Uri Gallery’s Well Being Team and the project provides a placement for an Art Therapy trainee.

To find out more about these projects and others, please visit www.atmag.org (the website of The British Association of Art Therapists’ Museums and Galleries Special Interest Group).

To find out more about Art Therapy, please visit www.baat.org.

To find an Art Therapist to work with you:

- visit www.atmag.org and send an email via the contact page
 - contact local organisations (including, for example, the NHS, schools, community organisations and care homes) to see if they employ an Art Therapist.
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