

Art B

In 2010 an Artist, informed by her Art Therapy training, developed a pilot project, the first of its kind in North Wales. Funded by the Arts Council of Wales and Council run Gallery/Museum Oriol Ynys Môn.



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Inspired by Neil Springham's project 'Arts and minds at the Tate' 2009 (The Independent 10.05.09) and Arts on Prescription, I researched UK Arts in Health initiatives, gaps in local services and sought advice from experienced Art Therapists. A project outline and name evolved.

Aimed at people experiencing feelings of 'redundancy', 'isolation' feeling 'stuck' or needing a new direction e.g. Carer's who no longer have someone to care for, people who have lost their job or recovering from long term illness but do not know what to do next or who's long standing role has changed e.g. retirement, children have left home etc. People over 18 who may not directly qualify for mental health services or 'end of service' users.

A Reason To Be @ Oriol Ynys Môn Gallery - Art B for short.

Aware of the therapeutic values of the project I did not call the Art B Pilot an Art Therapy Group because the Arts Council funding did not fund Art Therapy, the NHS Community Art Psychotherapist referred people from her group as a next step option/bridge. I decided to see what would develop.

Aim of Art B

Use gallery and museum exhibits as a tool for introducing creativity, improving inclusion and reducing social isolation, while having a positive effect on mental and physical health and wellbeing. Future aim: To develop a model for other cultural establishments and secure financial support.

Objectives:

To use the exhibits as a therapeutic tool: engage people; build confidence, self-esteem and self-empowerment while encouraging physical engagement through the use and manipulation of art materials. Stimulating memory and thought through engagement, enthusiasm and being with others.

To encourage the gallery to recognise the role they can play within arts and health.

Project outline:

After an initial Introduction Morning, sessions ran once a week from 10am-1.30pm for 14 weeks (with a break). There was a dedicated art room and participants helped themselves to refreshments throughout the morning.

The sessions:

We learnt about particular exhibits with a guided tour from the Education or Arts Officer.

I then introduced the group to a 'creative, visual arts technique' (inspired by the exhibit). They were encouraged to create their own artwork using the technique and the exhibits as a starting point. Completing the work over one to three weeks followed by another tour. (picture 1, overleaf)

'Next step' speakers were invited to talk to the group and packs developed with details of local creative, educational and recreational resources: Progression being a crucial part of the project plan.

A 14-week project spanned approximately 10 months including marketing, recruitment and evaluation. The pilot took longer. Culminating in an exhibition at the Gallery.

Following the success of the pilot, I was asked by the gallery to run another the following year and later, another.

Recruitment and Retention: *"It's hard for people to get out and do stuff unless its suggested by somebody else that this might be good for you..."* (Participant).

I visited organizations, arranged group meetings at the gallery and talked at GP training evenings. Referrals came from Carers Outreach, Cruise, G.P's, Job Centre Plus, CMHT's, Art Psychotherapist within the NHS, a local mental health charity and Careers service.

"If you hadn't taken all that time to talk me through what I was coming to and what to expect I would not have been able to come" (participant).

I believe the retention rate was high because I kept Art Therapy principals in mind. People felt safe and motivated with a playful, non-competitive atmosphere helping to build trusting relationships.

"Doing that activity made me realise it's ok to take risks, not to be perfect and not take myself so seriously". (Participant) (picture 2)

"Enjoyed experimenting and made me feel able to when I said 'will this work' and Sian answered 'I don't know, try' made it easier to try"! (Participant)

"Scary at first being able to choose, having to make decisions yourself, but was ok! A bit surprised that it was ok!" (Participant)

Examples of conditions: history of Bi Polar dis-

Three-year statistics	Year 1 (pilot)	Year 2	Year 3
Referrals	10	12	16
Most referrals from	Carers Outreach	Carers Outreach	CMHT and G.P's
Number Invited for induction	10	10	10
Retention of 'core' group	80%	85%	87%
Attendance	88%	87%	*78%
Mental Health problems	75%	83%	100%
Physical Health Problems	12%	66%	100%
Other Declared e.g. new direction.	12%	16%	14%
Age	40-60=3 60-70=4 70+=1	50-70+=2 70+=4	20-50=5 50-70=3
Men	1	1	0
Next step outcomes	62%	50%	Pending

* Holidays due to summer group. One dropped out early.
Following feedback: a studio group for all three groups being discussed.

order, Cancer, Social anxiety, Bereavement, Depression, Chronic fatigue syndrome, Stress, Pain etc.

Monitoring and Evaluation: staff observations, questionnaires, comments book/box, practical feedback activities, photographs, regular meetings with core staff and creation of an AIR for each project, edited in my own time.

The AIR seemed to prove the most effective method of marketing and capturing feedback.

After watching the Art B AIR presentation at a regional 'Arts in health meeting', a Museums partnership was formed across North Wales to develop an Arts in Culture service at Museums for people with mental health problems: They are currently developing a model.

Making AIR recordings consolidated my observations. Most participants in the groups talked about themselves (either privately or in the group) and aspects of their lives were seen reflected in their artwork, regardless of the starting point.

The 3 projects evolved and progressed, with the pilot group being less verbally reflective, keeping expressions in the artwork. Group 2 discussed the exhibits (more) in relation to themselves and group 3 reflected on their artwork (more) in relation to the exhibits.

"Some sad and happy memories evoked looking at my drawing". (Participant)

"The Tunnickliff and Kyffin exhibition nearly reduced me to tears". (Participant)

The person who arrived with bags of materials, information and gifts for the group talked about her two favorite pictures in the gallery and how she made friends with animals by feeding them.

One of the people who suffered from social anxiety: while looking at a Tunnickliff painting, exclaimed how the rain in the picture keeps everyone in doors and when that happens they can wonder anywhere they like. (picture 3)

A participant who cared for her mother and terminally ill son, each week brought something

of her son with her in the form of an object or reflected within her work. (picture 4)

While it seemed that some people were unaware of their links to the images. I was also conscious of the benefits of allowing participants to speak without reflections, mindful of the initial project objectives.

Individual outcome examples

"Taking work home has been a distraction and something to take me away from the agro of the day to day routine... mine's an ongoing situation that can only get worse really". (Participant) (picture 5)

While talking about the clay head she had made inspired by a museum piece, a participant explained how: she didn't go out for a cigarette because she tried to train herself. If she hadn't got engrossed she would have gone out. She stopped smoking three weeks into the project.

"...Get rid of all my anxieties, loose myself in what I am doing... instead of everything going through my mind...it's a god send." (Participant)

Mothers expressed how they started making art with their children and an ex carer said her husband was inspired (by her Art B projects) to draw a picture for the first time in their 24-year relationship.

"This has brought me out. Never thought I could do anything. Makes me get up in the morning" (Participant).

People who had previously stopped painting or sewing (due to life events taking over) talked about starting these again.

"Sian has stretched me far beyond the limits I thought I was capable of, and every step has been satisfying and fun. I have looked and seen things from an entirely different angle". (Participant)

"So relaxed and actually laughing!" (Participant)

12 - 24 months on some people are still attending community courses, keep in touch with



each other, have close friendships, are creative at home and one person went on to receive private individual Art Therapy. As one person exclaimed "Art B motivated me".

Art B also fulfilled the New Economics Foundations 5 Ways to Wellbeing (NEF 2008)

I could write detailed case studies and cross reference experiences and outcomes, however, space prevents it here.

Overall, The Reason to be @ Oriel Ynys Môn was to be motivated and be with others in a creative environment.

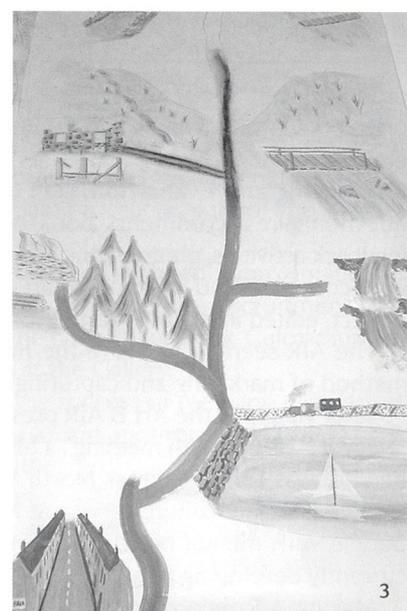
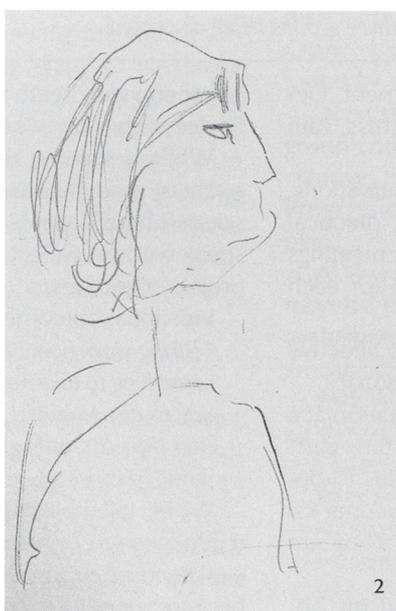
Conclusion

Art B gave me the opportunity to explore possibilities; using Gallery/Museum exhibits as a tool for generating creativity and self-expression to support people's mental health needs, resulting in three projects which evolved making the best use of exhibits while accommodating the expressive needs of the individuals.

Art B gave me an understanding of how exhibits can be used, as a therapeutic tool in different ways and how they could be used to support people to process thoughts and feelings to effect psychological change.

I plan to continue developing Art B and share knowledge by offering training to those wanting to set up similar projects: continuing Art B as a Therapeutic Intervention inside and outside Wales.

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Useful links:

Arts and Minds <http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/art/news/arts-and-minds-at-the-tate-1682307.html>

NEF 2008 <http://www.neweconomics.org/projects/five-ways-well-being>