

BEN URI ART THERAPY PROJECT

PICTURING MEMORIES

<http://www.benuri.org.uk/public/?wellbeing>

BACKGROUND

'Ben Uri is founded on a world class collection of predominantly British and European art, reflecting the work, lives and contribution of émigré artists and their journeys to London. With its themes of 'Art, Identity and Migration', one of The Gallery's stated aims is to 'make a real difference to people's confidence and lives through engagement, creativity and wellbeing'.

In July 2014 Jane Landes, Art therapist came together with Ben Uri's Director and Learning Programmes Manager to discuss how The Gallery could best engage with people living with dementia. The *Picturing Memories* project evolved organically from this initial meeting.

Picturing Memories has involved forming a partnership with a local NHS day centre for people with dementia. One year on, its considerable success is down to the vision and hard work of Art Therapy Trainee Elaine Homer, the enthusiasm and shared values of the day centre manager and the ongoing support of The Ben Uri Gallery's Wellbeing Team. Perhaps most importantly the success is due to participants who have embraced the opportunity to engage with the art works, responding with boundless humanity and creativity. Ben Uri's unique collection has proved a remarkable resource for people to safely explore their shifting identity, as well as internal sense of migration progressively caused by dementia.

As Ben Uri celebrates its centenary this year it has been an exciting and auspicious time for art therapy to become involved with The Gallery and its wonderful collection.

PROJECT

This is an ongoing art therapy project which aims to improve the quality of life for older adults with dementia. Jane Landes, Art Therapist works in an advisory capacity with Ben Uri's Well Being Team and the project currently provides a placement for art therapy trainee Elaine Homer from The University of Roehampton.

The Ben Uri collection provides the focus for two art therapy groups that take place in a local NHS daycentre and are facilitated by Elaine. When possible participants visit the gallery. Thereafter selected reproductions are placed in the day centre and provide an ongoing connection throughout the week to weekly group art therapy sessions. Gallery catalogues are on hand for referral. Participants also have the opportunity to curate and exhibit their own work.

MAIN POINTS

The Gallery space (extended by proxy to the day centre) provides the context for group art therapy

Ben Uri collection provides impetus for participants to tell their own stories, create their own art work, to feel connected to each other, the gallery and wider cultural life

The gallery provides a placement opportunity for an art therapy trainee

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