

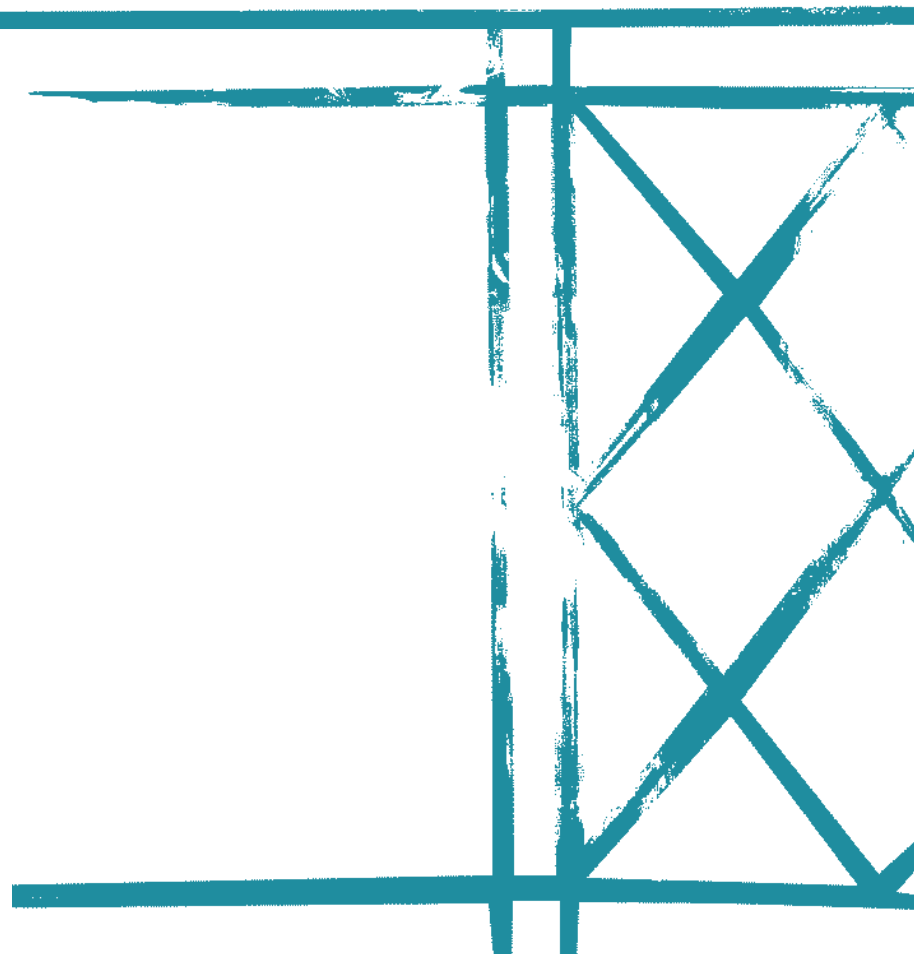
APPENDIX B: BEYOND THE BALCONY

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Flow

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ASHMOLEAN
MUSEUM OF ART AND ARCHAEOLOGY UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD



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OVERVIEW



WHO WAS INVOLVED

Young Dementia UK (YDUK) is a charity focused on providing one-to-one support for people under the age of 65 with early onset dementia. A group of 20 participants took part in the project, many of whom had been involved in the Ashmolean's 'Me Myself and Manet' project the previous year, so were familiar with the Museum and the painting.

Mind provide advice and support to empower people living with mental health issues, and have worked with the Oxford University Museums' community team for ten years. Twelve participants who attend a Mind art group took part.

Arts partnership **brook & black** were recruited to devise and run the sessions. Tiffany Black and Leo Brook specialise in fine art practice that uses digital tools such as sound installation and moving image. They are local to the Ashmolean in Oxford and have experience of teaching art to a wide range of people.

Sarah Mossop managed the relationship between the Museum and the artists on a freelance basis. Her role was to use her experience of this complicated process to ensure that everyone had a chance to contribute to the

development of the project. This included the artists, the community groups, and Ashmolean staff from the education, community, curatorial, programming and communications teams.

Several young people from **Oxford Young Arts Programme (OYAP)** were involved as volunteers, and had the opportunity to shadow Museum staff and artists. This gave them the chance to gain experience of working with community groups on arts projects. OYAP aims to support young people who want to work in the arts but lack the experience or academic knowledge. This also helps to diversify the 'pool' of potential artists that know how to work with museums on community projects.

Helen Ward, the Ashmolean's Deputy Head of Education, and Community Engagement Officer **Nicola Bird** oversaw the project, taking a slightly less hands-on approach compared to Phase 1 projects, but staying involved to ensure the relationships with the groups were maintained.

ABOUT THE SESSIONS

There were five sessions for each group, which took place on Tuesday mornings for YDUK, and Friday mornings for Mind. The approach for each group was slightly different – the Mind group were already an art group, so had more confidence and experience than the participants from YDUK.

The sessions were carefully planned to build up towards the final art piece, by guiding the participants through tasks which would enable them to produce the visual, audio and filmed elements. At the end of each session brook & black would explain the task they would do the following week, and the participants would share a lunch as an opportunity to socialise and informally discuss the work they had completed.

Each week the artists uploaded a blog post describing the sessions and showcasing some of the work that was done. We have briefly outlined each session below, for a fuller description please see the case study which draws from the blog, participant feedback forms, and our observations of some of the sessions.

SESSION ONE - INTERIORS, VIEWS, BALCONIES, WINDOWS

The session started in the education space where the project was introduced and the participants got to know each other. They practiced using iPads which they later took up to the galleries to take photos, capturing details or scenes that inspired them. They saw Mlle Claus's portrait in situ, and discussed the artworks nearby and how they made them feel. One of the more able participants was very moved: 'I got goose bumps, which to me signifies wonderful build up of great group energy.' (Mind participant)

SESSION TWO - BEHIND THE BALCONY

The participants used collage to create pictures of an imagined space which brook & black described as 'the space that lies behind us, or supports us, or perhaps where we are coming from'. They used photos they had taken the week before, mixed with any images they had brought, and other materials and colours. The participants were very absorbed in the activity, and enjoyed this a great deal, chatting and listening to music together.

SESSION THREE – THE PERSON ON THE BALCONY

This session focused on poetry, listening to Baudelaire, Edward Lear and some of the participants' favourite poems before using a Dada-inspired technique of cutting up works to create new ones inspired by the theme of the painting. The artists and participants were pleased and surprised by the results. 'I enjoyed this week because everything was coming through in my head that we had been doing. We were hands on.' (YDUK participant)

'We were all surprised by the intensity, humour and humanity that came through the works...really beautiful.' (brook & black)

SESSION FOUR – BACK IN THE GALLERY

Prior to this session, the team had set up a green screen in one of the public galleries so that the participants could take it in turns to be filmed as if they were standing on the balcony, imagining that they were looking out at the scene in front of them. While they were waiting for their turn they took photos of each other in the adjacent galleries, and of portraits in the collection that they would look at again later, re-framing them to see them in a different way.

ABOUT THE SESSIONS

SESSION FIVE – BRINGING THE LAYERS TOGETHER

This week brought all of the previous work together to create a storyboard for the final film. The groups considered the views they might be looking out at from the balcony, looked again at their ‘interior’ collages from week two that might be behind them, as they imagined themselves sitting reciting the poems they wrote in week three. Everything was laid out on a long table, and the groups made decisions together about how the film would be edited.

BROOK & BLACK - DIGITAL ART PIECES

In parallel to the artworks created in collaboration with the community groups, brook & black created their own artwork in response to the further research they carried out during the project, in which they had contacted a great great niece of Mlle Claus, Sophie Prins Gapinski. The final art pieces included a video of Sophie filmed from behind a sheet of glass that she was painting and cleaning to reveal herself alongside scenes of Paris. The video screen was framed in a replica of the frame on the original painting, and hung in the same gallery. In the same room was the skeleton from an umbrella which was mechanically opening and closing (symbolising Mlle

Claus’s family business), and an audio piece featuring Sophie reading extracts from the diary of her great uncle, the son of Mlle Claus.

CELEBRATION EVENT – 8 MAY

Once the films had been edited together, both groups came together with their friends and families for a celebration in the Education studio and display area, as well as a visit up to see brook & black’s work in the gallery. Their films were shown alongside images of the sessions such as the portraits they had made, and photos of them at work. Museum Director Xa Sturgis thanked everybody involved and talked about the wider impact of the project on the Museum. Each participant was given a high quality print from their work as a memento.

PUBLIC EVENT: FRIDAY LATE – 13 MAY

The education team used the public event planned for the 13 May as an opportunity to showcase both the participants’ work, and the art pieces produced by brook & black in parallel. The Mind and YDUK films were projected into the main atrium, and the upper galleries were opened specifically so that the artists’ work could be seen.



YDUK storyboard their work for the final film

EVALUATION – OUR APPROACH

Our evaluation centres on the evidence of learning outcomes and the potential for longer-term impact, both for the participants, and the partner organisations. As this is the final stage of a project which began in 2012 we are also interested in how previous relationships have been built on, and the effect of sustaining activity over time.

In telling the story of the emerging relationships between the participants and the Museum and portrait of Mlle Claus, we focus on a Narrative Learning Model of the following factors:¹

COMFORT AND ENJOYMENT AS CONDITIONS FOR LEARNING AND CHANGE

- These belong both at the beginning and end of a Narrative Learning Model, to show how the conditions and capacities for learning have both enhanced, and been enhanced by an intervention or experience.

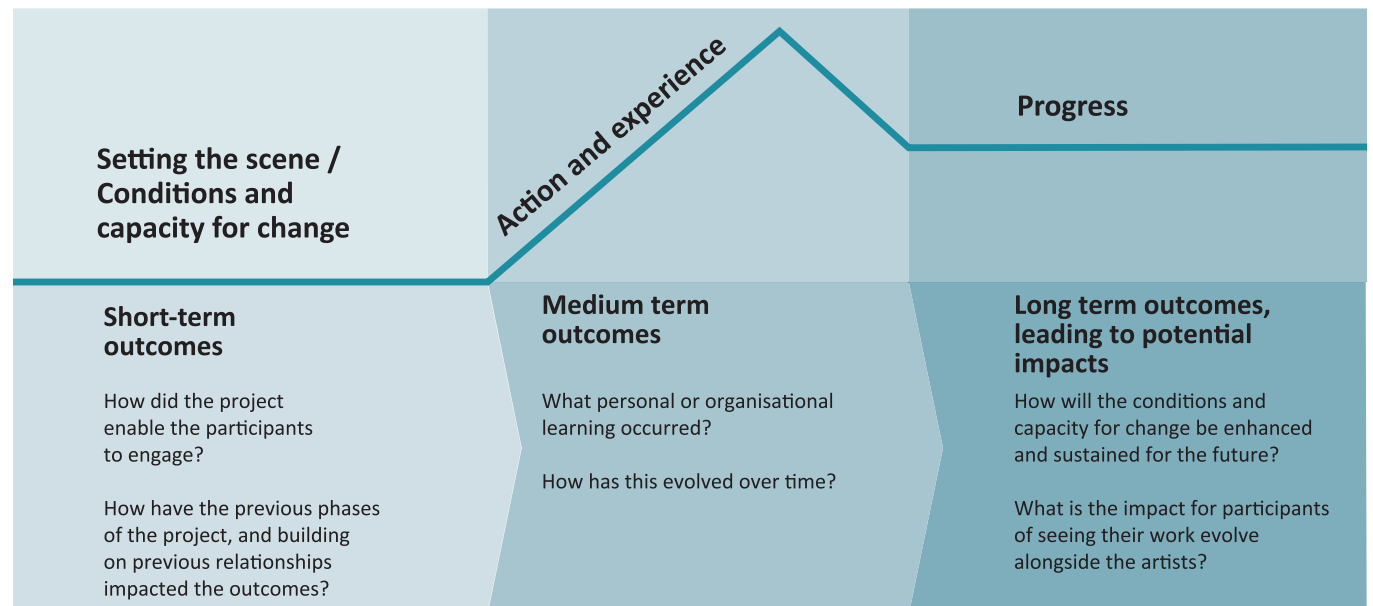
LEARNING OUTCOMES

We have broken these down to three types of knowledge:

- Knowing why (values, meanings)
- Knowing what (facts and contexts)
- Knowing how (skills, how to take action)

Through our evaluation we are telling a story, describing the project as a narrative with a beginning, middle and end. We use the simple model below to organise evidence of learning that has occurred along the way, and describe it in the very simplest terms.

The sections on the following pages outline these elements for the project as a whole. For specific information about each of the five projects, see the corresponding case studies.



¹ Flow's adaptation of the ILFA Generic Learning Outcomes

SETTING THE SCENE

As the culmination of a four year project, Beyond the Balcony had a strong foundation of relationships, knowledge and experience to build on. The team had worked with many of the participants from YDUK in Phase 1 of the community projects, and Oxford University Museums' relationship with Mind stretches back ten years. Evaluation from Phase 1 included several recommendations which were carried through into Phase 2, and the brief for the Digital artists was written with all of this in mind.

BUILDING ON PAST EXPERIENCE – BUT PUSHING IT FURTHER

The brief for the Digital project, and the way the sessions were designed took on board many of the successful elements from the community projects in Phase 1 to ensure they would enable participants to engage with the Manet portrait. These included creative tactics such as using collage as a tactile activity, the use of music in the sessions to evoke a wider context, providing a shared lunch, and displaying the work in the Education gallery space for a celebration. However the real successes and capacity for change happened when insights were pushed even further:

- The use of artists to facilitate sessions was extended to allow brook & black to take a lead on the project, allowing Nicola and Helen to take a back step and concentrate on more strategic elements.
- Building on participants' confidence in exploring the Museum, more of their time was spent exploring the galleries, to the extent that a Green Screen was set up for filming in the public space, something which had not been tried before (see also evidence of progress for the Museum).
- The participants' work was exhibited in the Education gallery space as before, and inclusion in the 'Late' event in May meant it could additionally be displayed in a more prominent space.
- It was suggested that the use of volunteers during the sessions might ease the pressure on the Ashmolean team, which resulted in the involvement of young volunteers from OYAP's Stepping Up programme, who brainstormed ideas and assisted the group.

TECHNOLOGY USED AS A TOOL, NOT AN AIM

While this was a Digital project, the emphasis during the sessions was on the more tactile and multi-sensory approach the participants needed. Allowing technology to take a back step and become just another tool at the participants' disposal stopped it from being a potentially daunting element for them. The participants were reassured that they wouldn't need to understand how things worked, but given the opportunity to find out. For example, they were talked through the storyboarding activity during the last activity, and told how Dave Farnham would be using editing software to put it all together. Instead of feeling anxious about learning how to use new equipment, the participants looked forward to using or seeing the results of the digital technology. 'It's not possible to use digital technology full on as there is such a range of disability in this group. It has to be more varied and active. We bring the digital tools and our skills to them as an aid and an enhancement.' (brook & black)

'It has been a really interesting learning process for me to see how we might use digital in a way that is easy and not frustrating.' (brook & black)

SETTING THE SCENE

BRINGING THE RIGHT PEOPLE IN

As the Ashmolean education team had not worked with artists on a community project before they brought Sarah Mossop on board as a freelance advisor with experience of commissioning and briefing artists. She worked with the Ashmolean team for two days a month, bringing her expertise of working with artists in residence and in particular in supporting them to make new work alongside community projects. She was involved from the start of the second phase, and helped Nicola and Helen to recruit the artists Brook & Black who she had worked with before. Her input was crucial as it enabled the Ashmolean to recruit artists with the right skills and experience for the job. As the project progressed Sarah was able to provide a mentoring role for both the artists and the Ashmolean team, listening and advising at crucial stages to ensure the partnership went smoothly, and enabling all sides to learn more about working with each other.

Both Brook & Black teach and are used to mentoring students, they are local, aware of the local scene and have contacts in other arts organisations. This meant they felt very much part of the community, and their

nurturing approach contributed to the overall success. They carefully juggled the practical development of both the participants' work and their own, which enabled them to focus on the intellectual development of their own work alongside the needs and aspirations of the participants. The open way the artists spoke to the group was mentioned as a highlight by one of the members from YDUK.

INTERNAL INVESTMENT

A wide range of staff were involved, from many departments including IT, Design, Front of House, Curatorial, Events, Education and Community engagement. Having seen the success of the Phase 1 projects they were willing to help, and more able to understand the benefits for their own work, and the Ashmolean's strategic goals.

TIME TO PLAN

Brook & Black were appointed in the summer of 2015, and spent the period between then and November meeting people and finalising their proposal for working with the Ashmolean and community groups. By January 2016 when the sessions started they had had 22 meetings with Mind, YDUK and the Ashmolean team including curators and IT to make sure the participants would get the best results. Taking small steps in this way meant they were able to reduce barriers at every level. This also gave Nicola and Helen time to feed in to the artist's plan, and to reassure themselves that they were sure the artists understood the needs of the group.



Meeting Adam Clayton from Mind

ACTION AND EXPERIENCE

EVIDENCE OF COMFORT AND ENJOYMENT

Due to the complex needs of the participants from YDUK and Mind the main outcomes relate to their comfort and enjoyment, and to 'Knowing why' or feelings and attitudes. It was not the intention to focus heavily on learning new skills or increasing knowledge, however the sessions did increase participants' confidence in trying out new activities and stepping outside of their comfort zone.

To capture some of the responses of the participants we provided a simple feedback form which was used at the end of four of the sessions. We also devised an activity for the participants to vote at the celebration day on a series of statements, and to tell us (on some bunting) what they will miss about the project. The comments gathered indicate that the biggest impact of the project has been on the participants' confidence interacting with people, and their enjoyment of trying new skills.

Learning for the Ashmolean team has been touched on here, but the bulk of this will be covered in the overall project report.

LOOKING FORWARD

The project had a clear focus on an end result, and at the end of each session brook & black explained what the group would be doing next week, which gave the group something to look forward to, and made the task feel less daunting. At the end of session two the Mind group were very much looking forward to the next session, and the poetry they would both hear and make. There was a clear sense of continuation, with comments such as 'using my imagination further', 'developing ideas next week' and 'want to see it through'.

For YDUK the responses were equally mixed between looking forward to the poetry aspects of the next session, seeing the people in the group again, and carrying on with the creative side of their work: 'Exploring poetry -> and bring humour/ laughter into my poetry', 'Approaching a different art form and more work together', 'Working together to create the next stage of the session' and 'To see how it will all come together'.

FEELING OF BELONGING – TO A GROUP, AND IN THE MUSEUM

Many of the responses to the feedback forms focused on their enjoyment of being part of a group and spending time with others. The weekly sessions gave the participants a regular activity that developed into a shared experience. In week one, one of the Mind group was 'Looking forward to going out again and sharing time and ideas with others.' In week three, two of the YDUK participants mention getting to know a new person as a highlight, and in week three, two participants from YDUK said they were looking forward to: 'Seeing everyone again' adding 'Once you share a bond it's nice', and: 'We are definitely looking forward to being in the galleries'.

Tiffany talked about how they had created an atmosphere of trust between them and that the lovely environment of the Museum itself created a feeling of respect and care. OYAP volunteer Tess felt there was a clear sense of community, and commented on the 'calm, open and inclusive environment' that brook & black facilitated.

'There was a clear sense of community that was fostered and flourished within the safe space of the workshops, which was really special to witness and become part of.' (Tess Anderson, OYAP)

ACTION AND EXPERIENCE

EVIDENCE OF COMFORT AND ENJOYMENT

SMALL STEPS TOWARDS 'FLOW'

For the YDUK group in particular, new tasks, new people and unfamiliar places can be a stressful experience. Barriers to engagement can be mitigated to some extent by preparation, but for people with dementia, anxiety and apathy are easily triggered so sensitive support has to be maintained throughout. In week two the collage activity was fairly conceptual, to create an imagined space rather than a conventional image, which some of the participants found difficult at first. However, pushing them in this way paid off, as the small steps towards a more challenging activity, matched with increasing confidence in their own skills enabled the group to achieve more, and even enter a state of flow, which Brook & Black described as the participants being 'absorbed in the activity'. Further evidence of flow can be found in the Mind group's reflection of this activity. When asked what they recalled hearing only two mentioned the music playing during the session and the rest were very conceptual, using words such as 'encouragement', 'inspiration', 'admiration', 'activity' and 'some moments of silent concentration'.

Their thoughts and conversations mostly extended from how the activity made them feel: I thought or talked about... 'Feelings, love of art, colour, texture in general',

'My work in ways I hadn't considered, feeling free to discuss the ideas and feelings'. They also thought about important things in their lives such as 'my children' and some transcended to new heights: 'Climbing the stairs into the light', 'Standing on a pedestal of my achievement'.

For YDUK their experience of the collage activity in session two was more literal, saying that they enjoyed 'The colours, the French music, being creative', or 'The way it stimulated my imagination and working together'. Three were more people focused: 'Taking part and being with everyone and looking at their work', and lunch also got a mention.

OYAP volunteer Tess summed up this feeling of calm inspiration:

'Throughout the workshops, I was struck by the insightful perspectives of the participants and the depth of their responses... I came away from the sessions feeling calm and inspired – an extremely cathartic experience.'



Session 2, Mind



YDYK finding their flow

ACTION AND EXPERIENCE

EVIDENCE OF COMFORT AND ENJOYMENT

SIMPLE BUT NOT DUMBING DOWN

Each week the group explored the portrait in a different way, enabling them to view it from a new perspective and create the building blocks towards the finished piece. This enabled the group to work towards a final outcome without being overwhelmed with the task of creating a finished art piece, or as OYAP volunteer Tess explained:

‘At the end of the workshops brook & black, with the participants’ input, curated the work into an impressive final product, without imposing the stress and pressure that can sometimes come with “we are going to create a film to be shown at the LiveFriday event for the public – ok go!”’.

The poetry task in week three combined many successful elements to engage the participants. The YDUK group enjoyed the hands-on aspect of this session, and that it was a simple exercise that they could achieve easily:

‘It was easier than last week. I enjoyed this week because everything was coming through in my head that we had been doing. We were hands on.’

‘[I enjoyed] Exploring ways of combining words and phrases to create an original poem.’

The activity however was not just a simple word game, it was inspired by Dada techniques, and used sophisticated source materials, which brook & black explained to the group. This meant the group were able to be free with their ideas, and concentrate on their own creative process to produce surprising outcomes. One of the YDUK participants said they talked or thought about:

‘The rhymes within the poems and the thought process to create our own poems.’

‘We were all surprised by the intensity, humour and humanity that came through the works...really beautiful.’ (brook & black)

One of the YDUK members also said that Tiffany and Leo were very clear in their explanations about fairly complex ideas and tasks. This meant that they always had a sense of achievement. They didn’t feel confused, and the tasks were inclusive and enjoyed by everybody. This increased everybody’s motivation.

‘Tom never says he is stressed here as he normally does in other places. I think that’s because it’s manageable and you don’t have to feel embarrassed for example you’re not having to dance in front of

everybody, or anything difficult like that. Everybody is in the same situation. He’s made friends here, and we both feel the benefit from it.’ (Tom’s partner Molly)



Example of a Mind Participant’s work

ACTION AND EXPERIENCE

KNOWING WHY – FEELINGS AND ATTITUDES

INSPIRED BY ARTWORKS

At the end of the first session exploring the galleries, participants from the Mind group were asked to reflect on what they had thought or talked about. They mentioned things they had observed in the paintings such as colour, but more importantly they talked about the artworks more conceptually e.g. 'Paintings and WHY they were made'. One of the more able participants was very moved:

'I got goose bumps, which to me signifies wonderful build up of great group energy.'

Another was inspired to talk about their own art, and said they were looking forward to bringing in their own work to share the following week.

INSPIRING NEW ARTWORKS

All of the artworks produced during the process had great resonance with the painting, including the work produced by brook & black in parallel to the community workshops. The discussions that took place during the workshops lead brook & black's own research down new paths of memory, childhood, present living and future unknowns. The artists were also inspired by their

responsibility towards the participants, the subject of their work, and their own creative practice.

OWNERSHIP OF THE ASHMOLEAN

The Celebration event was planned specifically for the participants, to give them an ending for the project, and a reason to come back together and celebrate what they had achieved. Participants from Mind and YDUK came with their families, and several of them arrived early and spent time in the Museum, an indication of their confidence in exploring the space gained through the project.

The 'Late' event was independent from the HLF project, but gave a great opportunity for the participants to see their work on public display. The film was projected in a prominent position, seen by everyone on arrival, and the participants who attended were clearly thrilled to see their work displayed in this way. A group of participants had gathered to look at the work and take photos, and were able to describe what the project had been about and what they had done to take part. Helen and Nicola commented that it was good that so many came out in the evening as in their experience people from these groups don't normally like to come out so late.

At the community event Mind participant Jackie said 'I feel like it's like my lounge now, I want to go to sleep in the corner and watch'.

Calvin said 'It [the Ashmolean] feels more accessible, I felt before restricted to go into certain areas but now I feel like I can come in and enjoy it more.'

Malcolm from Mind, who was himself a painter, had never actually been upstairs to the art galleries before the project, telling the group that he had thought it was full of Roman crockery.

For both of the groups this project built on their existing relationship with the Museum, and Nicola reflected after the project ended that she felt that the participants now feel part of the Ashmolean's community and were proud of their contribution, an observation which is mirrored by our own.

ACTION AND EXPERIENCE

KNOWING WHY – FEELINGS AND ATTITUDES

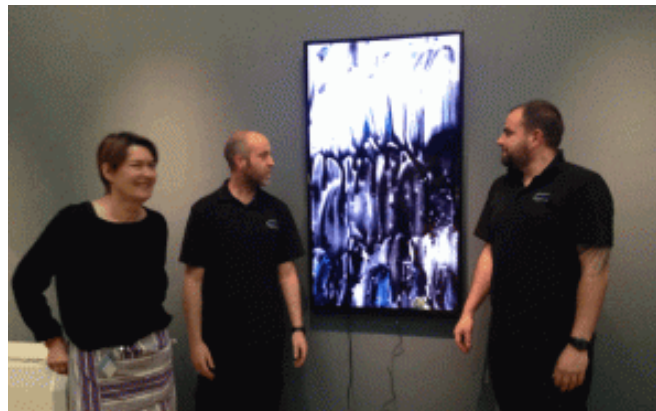
ATTITUDE TOWARDS ART AND MUSEUMS

YDUK participant Liz's carer (also called Liz) said that the project had given Liz the confidence that museums could be for people like her. Carer Liz pointed out that even before Liz's dementia she wasn't highly educated and focused more on bringing up a family than having cultural experiences, so the project has actually advanced her life despite her dementia rather than simply maintaining what used to be 'normal'.

Other participants talked about how the project has helped them to understand artworks better, Jackie commented on how the paintings have changed for her – 'The paintings are more human now, they are people.' The participants will also have benefited from the elevated status that association with professional artists gave the project. At the Late event on the 13 May many of them came up to the gallery where brook & black's art pieces were displayed and spent time looking at the artworks in situ. They may not have had the confidence or motivation to attend an event like a museum Late if their work had not been included and linked to these pieces.

THE ASHMOLEAN'S ATTITUDE TOWARDS COMMUNITY PROJECTS

For the Ashmolean itself this project has put a spotlight on the importance of community engagement, and enabled staff outside of the education and community teams to see how good projects such as this can enhance their own work. The project engaged people within the Curatorial, Design, Building Services, Visitor Services, Events, Communication and IT departments, who would otherwise not have an insight into this kind of work.



Members of the Ashmolean Curatorial team setting up the final exhibition

ACTION AND EXPERIENCE

KNOWING WHAT – FACTS AND CONTEXT

While the project did not have a focus on imparting factual knowledge, Brook & Black ensured they used language that was technical and accurate, and that the participants were told about the context of their final art piece and the way it would be displayed to help them make decisions. They didn't oversimplify or patronise the group, for example in the last session when they were making their storyboard they explained that three minutes is a good length to capture and hold a visitor's attention, and explained how the 'mood' would be important: 'if you think of some artwork its uplifting but some work is introspective and darker.' The group decided to keep it simple, have a mix of dark and light, and to entitle it 'Le Balcon' because as one member put it: 'the art mob would be there' at the public event.

Earlier in the project the Mind group, who were more familiar with artistic concepts and content of the sessions than YDUK, used language during their discussions which reflected knowledge of art and the techniques they were using. In the first week, when they were exploring the photos in the galleries, several participants used words such as 'capture', 'frame' and 'feel' to describe the tasks they were doing.

After YDUK's last session during the discussion at lunchtime Tiffany reminded the group what they had explored, and

asked if they felt they had learned or achieved these things. There was general positivity and agreement. However, they went further to show that they had not just learned from others, but had developed more personal and creative responses. For example, about the concept of inner and outer space, 'We've done that, yes. When we went out to take photos we all had the same choice of paintings but everyone came back with different photos...it was nice to see how diverse we can be.'

THE ASHMOLEAN AND ARTISTS - UNDERSTANDING PARTICIPANTS' NEEDS

While the Ashmolean's education and community teams have been working with both Mind and YDUK for some time, working with artists in a different way has enabled them to reflect on their processes and strengthen their understanding of these audiences. Nicola reflected that she has learned a great deal over the five weeks of the project about supporting people with dementia and mental health issues.

'I would have never have predicted that some changes could have a negative effect (such as a change in meeting place or changing a lunch arrangement) and has helped me in the planning of future projects'. (Nicola Bird)

The presence of the participants themselves in the Museum has also meant that other departments such as front of house department have had to learn how to welcome and cater for these groups. Following an incident one week when the front door to the Museum was blocked, causing a participant to become anxious and confused, the front of house team posted an extra staff member at the door the following week to ensure everyone would find their way to the right place.

The artists themselves reflected that they had overestimated the amount they could get done with the participants in the time they had, but that the prior training they had with Mind and about dementia had been helpful for them to make sure everybody achieved something. They were able to adapt the sessions for the differences in confidence and ability both between individuals and the two groups.

Tiffany also mentioned the importance of evaluation in capturing moments that they themselves could learn from:

'Artists never know what it will feel like for others, for the participants. It is so useful to hear the story. It's good to look back to see what is being captured because throughout the course like this wonderful moments have happened but they're past, they've gone.'

ACTION AND EXPERIENCE

KNOWING HOW – SKILLS, HOW TO TAKE ACTION

There were many skills used by the participants during the sessions, some new, and some building on past experiences. The participants used paint, collage, photography, poetry, drawing and discussion to build elements of the project. They were also exposed to the digital processes used, and made editorial decisions on their own and as a group, using new techniques such as storyboarding.

TRYING NEW SKILLS AND TECHNIQUES

For many of the participants, particularly YDUK, the techniques used were not always intended to teach them new skills, but as tools to enable them to engage and achieve. The poetry session, for example, was designed to help them to express themselves without feeling the constraints of a blank piece of paper, and during the last session they were shown how to use viewfinders which helped them select parts of their collage.

During the collage session, one of the YDUK participants, who had been involved since Phase 1 and had problems with her sight was still unsure of the more visual activities, but enjoyed the tactile elements of the collage activity, and achieved more than she had thought she was able:

‘At the beginning I was a bit confused so I was a bit wary. But the best thing was to choose all those materials. We had such a good choice of colours and texture... I enjoyed it when people came over and said how gorgeous it was.’

REINFORCING SKILLS

For the Mind group, who already constituted an art group, the project gave them the chance to regain some of the skills they had used before, but perhaps lost confidence in. Others were able to push their art further.

Malcolm from Mind is a painter, and felt that the skills and techniques used were different from his previous work, commenting that ‘it has felt completely different, it’s a good experience’ and that it has fed into his own work. He also included a painting of his own into the final film alongside paintings from the galleries.

This was not limited to Mind, after session three, one of the participants from YDUK commented that they had talked about: ‘How I used to write poetry. I was put off and now by talking about poetry has given me the confidence to write my own poems again.’

During one session Calvin brought one of his own paintings in to show the group, of Berthe Morisot from Manet’s ‘The Balcony’ which the portrait of Mlle Claus was a study for.

Maralee, one of the participants was inspired to write a poem by the project, and shared it with the group.

www.ashmolean.org/ashwpress/beyondthebalcony



Mind participant Calvin displaying his painting

ACTION AND EXPERIENCE

KNOWING HOW – SKILLS, HOW TO TAKE ACTION

THINKING LIKE AN ARTIST

Part of brook & black's approach was to view the people as artists rather than as workshop participants, to help them to gain skills and confidence in thinking about art or seeing their work from a different perspective. This also helped to free the participants from feeling they had to achieve specific results. In one session Tiffany said to them:

'If we get into a pickle it doesn't matter because it's art and we can make it up!'

This had the effect of making everyone relax, laugh, and feel that it was okay to experiment and make mistakes. She wanted them to feel that they were artists.

During session two feedback from the Mind group was that the participants had thought or talked about: 'My work in ways I hadn't considered, feeling free to discuss the ideas and feelings' and that they were looking forward to 'using my imagination further'.

Of the whole process YDUK member Helen said: 'It is quite challenging but there's plenty of support and Tiffany takes the pressure off because it's art!'

Mick said:

'When I was first here I was frightened of doing it wrong but you can't go wrong. If there was any fright there it's gone.'

THE ASHMOLEAN – UNDERSTANDING THEIR CAPACITY

The additional artworks produced by brook & black had become a far larger element of the project than the education team had expected. Installing the artworks was an opportunity for them to test something new, and by curating this space and overseeing the installation they learned about their own capacity to achieve above and beyond their expectations. Installing contemporary art without an infrastructure will have been an additional challenge, but they have now set a precedent that this is possible, and beneficial to the Museum.

This project helped the Ashmolean team to feel more relaxed about creating displays of participants work, recognising that the process is as important as the finished piece, and that being lead by the participants rather than attempting to steer them towards a fixed idea of an outcome can produce better results.

They have also learned about recruiting and working with artists, and have a better idea of what they will need from artists, and what the artist will need from them on future projects.

ACTION AND EXPERIENCE

KNOWING HOW – SKILLS, HOW TO TAKE ACTION

THE ASHMOLEAN – THE IMPORTANCE OF MARKING ACHIEVEMENT

Using Arts Awards had been a success in previous projects as a way to mark and celebrate progress, with certificates presented at the celebration events. This was not appropriate for these groups, but the team wanted to celebrate the achievements of each participant, and mark the points at which they had achieved something despite their declining health. To this end the artists created high quality digital prints to present to the participants at their own celebration event, which was very much appreciated by the participants and their families as a reminder of their achievement.

OXFORD YOUNG ARTS PRACTITIONERS – LEARNING THROUGH VOLUNTEERING

The young people involved from OYAP said they found the session they took part in at the beginning of the project extremely useful, for some very practical reasons. These included:

- Understanding the way artists might look for funding and write applications, which one participant mentioned they did not get at university.
- Seeing the structure of how brook & black's projects are developed.
- Focusing on the audience.

One young person commented:

'I found the workshop extremely useful as it mapped the whole process (the ins/outs/panics) involved in a project. And all the boxes we have to tick in order to get funding and be able to do the work itself. Although for us we know it's all about the process, we need to have a product to show. Thank you!'

Another described the session as 'clarifying' and 'thought provoking'.



Celebrating achievements with cupcake mementoes

PROGRESS / LONG TERM OUTCOMES, LEADING TO POTENTIAL IMPACTS

While it is difficult to measure impacts and longer term outcomes for the Museum and workshop participants immediately at the end of a project, it is possible to identify indicators that these are likely to happen. We do this by asking:

‘How will the conditions and capacity for change be enhanced and sustained for the future?’

We are looking for evidence that changes to attitude, behaviour, skills and knowledge will be sustained, and how this will impact on both the lives of the participants, and the organisational capacity for the Ashmolean.

One of the aims of the project was to reinforce connections between the Museum, the artist and the community groups. Both Mind and YDUK have an existing relationship with the Ashmolean’s Education and Community team, and it is clear that this project has strengthened this link, and that all parties would want to continue to work together. The real progress however has been in widening these connections out to the rest of the Museum, by introducing other departments to the benefits of community working and by giving the participants a sense of ownership and confidence in visiting the Museum themselves.

The following sections explore the evidence for these connections, and how they may continue over time.

PROGRESS / LONG TERM OUTCOMES, LEADING TO POTENTIAL IMPACTS

PARTICIPANTS – MIND AND YDUK

INCREASED CONFIDENCE

The sessions were carefully planned to make sure the participants would feel comfortable and safe, both in the room and with the activities. There were many instances where participants spoke of feeling confident exploring the galleries during the sessions, despite their personal difficulties. YDUK member Tom's partner Molly said that they would miss it when it ended:

'At first initially he was very sceptical, because he doesn't do art or anything like that, but I said to him let's just give it one try. But now he loves it. It gives him something to talk about with our family.'

This increased sense of comfort and enjoyment was often because of the long term nature of the project. YDUK member Liz's carer talked about how she trusted Liz to take the lead, despite her sight problems. Liz had previously been involved on the Phase 1 project 'Me Myself and Manet':

'At the start we weren't sure it will work so we thought would come to one. But when we were in the gallery Liz takes the lead sees what she can see. The best times have actually been in the gallery.'

The effects of this were still evident three months after the sessions ended when the groups came back together for the celebration event. Many of the participants arrived early to show their friends and family around the Museum, and they were happy chatting to each other during the event. One of the family members of a Mind participant said:

'Dad has had problems with his confidence, and normally holds on to mum's arm, but then when we got here he was off, kissing his friends.' Daughter of participant (quote from celebration event)

INSPIRED TO TAKE ACTION

While people were sad the project has ended there were several outcomes mentioned in conversation that indicated that it will continue to positively affect people's lives. One participant mentioned a future exhibition of her work, and her intention to finish some of her drawings. Mind have started two new art groups, one 'Impressionist paintings' group at their space on Cowley Road, and one where they take easels outside, both directly because of their involvement in the project.

At the celebration event YDUK participant Mick described how his partner wanted to go to more museums now that she had been attending the sessions to look at more art. He was also pleased to report that he had taken photographs of balconies and noticed connections between them and the Manet painting. He then described how their grandchild had been reading the owl and the pussycat which is a poem that had been explored in this project. He said 'I keep spotting all the connections, everything seems to link up.'

PROGRESS / LONG TERM OUTCOMES, LEADING TO POTENTIAL IMPACTS

ASHMOLEAN

MUSEUM-WIDE INVOLVEMENT

Displaying the participants' work both in the education gallery space and in the main foyer during the public Friday Late has increased the education team's profile internally. This is not just through the project's visibility, but the extent to which other teams have needed to be involved to make it a success. The design team and building services have helped to install the work, marketing have been involved in digital communications and setting up the blogs. Curatorial staff have helped with moving and displaying the artworks. This has ensured that the project has been a Museum-wide success, and will pave the way for future projects to be a joint effort.

The project has also fed into the way the education team plans for other audiences, such as involving artists in sixth-form study days.

CONFIDENCE IN COLLABORATION

Taking the work of the participants and artists out of the education space and into the galleries necessitated a greater degree of collaboration between the education and curatorial teams, which culminated in the installation of the digital art pieces in the same

gallery as the portrait of Mlle Claus. That this was allowed illustrates the degree to which the curatorial department is on board with the project, and that they trust that the education and community teams will value the artworks and do a good job.

Nicola now has the confidence to talk directly to the curators about new projects at the Ashmolean and the other linked museums. She feels in turn that they will trust her to talk about and represent their objects appropriately. An example of this is her recent work with local Sudanese Saturday schools which was instigated by a curator asking her if she had links to the Sudanese community who might be interested in their Sudanese collection. Nicola has made the strategic decision not to work exclusively with the education department but to work directly with curators, for example for a project showcasing local bands within the galleries.

INVESTING IN THE FUTURE

Displaying participants work in the exhibition display area has progressed from the low cost displays of the past, to displays which have obviously been invested in and have the same high profile as the rest of the Museum. Involvement in public facing events such as

the Friday Late event in May has enabled the education team to test and prove the value of investing in displays such as this, and set a precedent for the future. The space has transformed from an ad-hoc display area (which was sometimes used for storage) to a place with an important role in the Ashmolean's procedure for planning and communicating work.

PROGRESS / LONG TERM OUTCOMES, LEADING TO POTENTIAL IMPACTS

OYAP

The volunteers from OYAP who assisted in the project were hoping to gain experience of working in a new setting such as a museum, and to learn more about the role of a facilitator. They were mentored throughout the process by brook & black, which enabled them to maximise their own opportunities to learn, alongside the achievements of the participants. Tess commented:

‘Both artists made me feel extremely welcome and maximised the learning opportunity for myself, by talking through each workshop and the particular thought processes and planning that had taken place.’

Tess also mentioned that the ‘end-point’ was unclear throughout the process, which she identified as a really important learning curve for her. Her learning here mirrored that of the Ashmolean Team in relation to allowing the participants to direct the outcomes of the work they are creating.

‘Throughout my experience of community arts, I continually struggle with the apposition of process/product and qualitative/quantitative evidence – can the learning and involvement in the process be a product in itself, is this sufficient when evaluating and evidencing the quality or value of a project to an “outsider”?’

The process for Tess has been extremely valuable, and her own reflections provide a fitting conclusion to the project:

‘I feel my involvement in the project has given me skills I can take forward in my own practice, and given me the aspiration and confidence to develop projects of the same quality in the future.’



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