



Centre: Oxford University Museums Centre (The Ashmolean Museum, the Pitt Rivers Museum, the Oxford University Museum of Natural History and the Museum of the History of Science.).

Adviser(s): Nicola Bird

Level: Bronze (8 other young people achieved a Discover Award)

Context

This Bronze Arts Award project took place at the Oxfordshire Hospital School at The Highfield Unit (an acute Mental Health Unit for young people aged 11-18yrs). The young people who participated in this Bronze Award are all inpatients at the Unit. During their admission young people are generally unable to attend their home school; this is often a cause for concern, particularly around exam time. Fortunately, all young people have access to a full education programme through the hospital school based at the Highfield; this also includes the opportunity to sit their exams including GCSE and A levels.



Oxford University Museums Partnership (OUMP) has established and maintained a long standing relationship with the Hospital School and has been supporting the unit since 2011. In 2013/14 staff from the OUMP Outreach team and Oxford University Museum of Natural History successfully delivered Bronze and Discover Arts Award to a group of 15 young people at the Highfield during *Project Dinosaur*. This was the first time Arts Award had been a part of collaborative project work. Building on the success of *Project Dinosaur* we decided to make Arts Award part of the Ashmolean based *Me, Myself and Manet* project.

Approach

The project *Me, Myself and Manet* centred on a pop-up museum visiting The Highfield Unit over 11 weeks developing work around the *The Portrait of Fanny Claus*, Manet (1868). The Ashmolean Museum acquired the painting in 2012, with significant funding support from the HLF, and from which the funding for this project derives.

This case study focusses on the five Bronze Awards that were achieved but it should be noted that eight young people also gained their Discover Award during the course of this project.

Working with young people who are inpatients presents particular challenges as all of them are unwell and vulnerable to the effects of their illness and medication. The young people were unable to visit the museum in person so we developed innovative strategies to bring the museum experience to the young people.

Key to the success of this project were the staff at the Highfield Unit who supported the young people with their Arts Award work between sessions and allowed the young people to extend the arts practice they were enjoying and felt motivated by.

Each week, the outreach education officer created a pop-up museum at the Highfield. The project lasted for 11 weeks and covered the following themes and arts skills:

1. Meet the Ashmolean
2. Meet the sitter: who is she? Sketching the sitter
3. Paints and Pigments: creating paints as 19th Century Artists
4. & 5. Portraiture: 19th century celebrities meet 21st Century
6. Music: instruments and lyric writing
7. & 8. Digital art and animation
9. & 10. Jewellery making
11. Young person lead: creative corners and teaching artists skills to others

Each weekly session was designed to stand alone and be completed within the afternoon session. This enabled all young people to have a sense of achievement and success by the end of the workshop and also ensure that if a young person missed a session or joined part way through the project they did not feel left behind or excluded.

Young people were able to work directly with a variety of artists who delivered sessions at the unit:

Angus Dick – Digital Artist
Isabel Knowland – Musician
Kate Coker – Jewellery Designer

Kerry Angus – Actress
Catriona Harding – Painter



Young people covered the following for each part of their Award:

Part A: Young people took part in a whole variety of arts activities and learnt new skills and developed their practice. Activities offered covered – drawing, portrait painting, creating paints and pigments, jewellery making, animation, documentary making, editing, musical composition and lyric writing

Part B: Experience the arts as an audience member: each week the outreach officer created a pop up museum within the Highfield containing objects and images from the Ashmolean's collection to allow activities such as object handling, interactive presentations and discussions to happen.

Part C: Research the work of an artists or craftsperson that inspires them: Young people chose their own inspirational artists for this section – they ranged from well-known artists to local musicians.

Part D: Pass on new skills: Young people worked one to one to share new skills with a friend within the unit or with a member of staff. Some young people shared skills from the project such as jewellery making and others chose to share other skills they had such as teaching the drum beat to 'We Will Rock You'.

Young people created A3 sized paper based portfolios which were flexibly designed and compiled to include a variety of work and a variety of styles of working. A lot of the collection of evidence was facilitated by the adults working on the project, for example taking photographs during sessions. Staff

and the outreach officer spent a lot of time planning how and when evidence would be collected. As the project gathered momentum the young people began to want to collect their own evidence and begin to organise it into a personal presentation: moving it from something abstract to something tangible. The last two sessions were devoted to ensuring portfolios were completed.

Impact

Delivering the *Me, Myself and Manet* project with an Arts Award focus had a huge impact on the young people taking part:

- Arts Award is an accredited qualification and this is really important to young people whose formal education has been interrupted by their time in hospital.
- The Arts Award is about them as people not about the circumstances they are in whilst in hospital. It is something positive.
- The portfolios allow young people to create a personal response that gives them a tangible sense of achievement. They are able to feel a huge sense of personal pride about what they have achieved.
- The project was blogged about online and parents and carers could follow the project and see the positive benefit it was having.
- Projects like this give a positive image for all the parties involved.

For one young person in particular this project was a turning point. Highfield staff observed someone who was extremely withdrawn and shy – unable to make eye contact - grow in confidence during the project. By the end, they were able to guide their advisor through their portfolio, asked for extra support to develop new skills and evidence for their portfolio and lead a skill sharing session on jewellery making. Transformative.



Comments

I most enjoyed making the canvas of a modern day figure and drawing and animating an elephant...

The most interesting session had to be " Meet the sitter" when I learnt how to play the violin.

I think the musicians did a terrific job. It sounded incredible for an impromptu session! It was inspiring!

I really enjoyed learning about the way paint was made using just three ingredients and reflecting on how much this simple compound has evolved into an array of endless shades and colours.

It was great fun creating the rap!

We have all looked forward to Thursday afternoons ... Thank you to everyone who worked on this project. It's been truly inspiring. I am already looking forward to the exhibition in June.

Date: June 2015