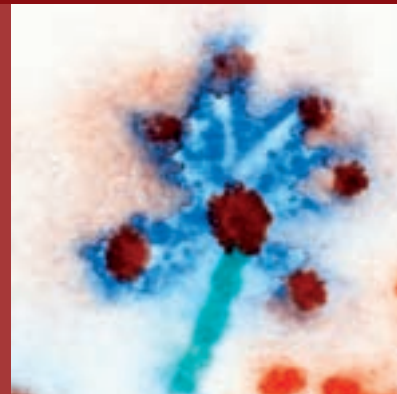
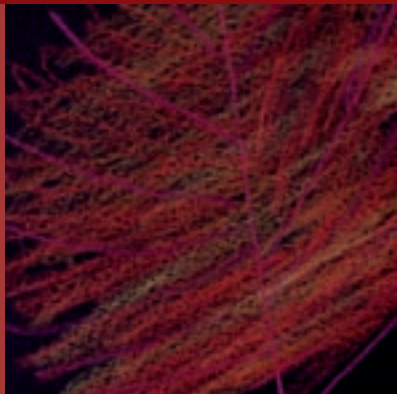




between colours

Mayo County Council Artists' Mentoring & Networking Programme





between colours

Mayo County Council Artists' Mentoring & Networking Programme

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Mayo County Council Artists' Mentoring & Networking Programme



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*Some of these participants are no longer with us and we would like to
acknowledge with fondness, their enormous contribution to the
programme.*

introduction

I am pleased to introduce this publication which documents the excellent work being done in the area of Arts & Health in this county. Mayo County Council Artists' Mentoring & Networking programme is a necessary progression from the work which began over ten years ago, with older people in care settings.

This programme offered supported opportunities for artists, who wished to work in care settings. The participating artists worked with a highly experienced and empathetic mentor, artist Deidre Walsh, who generously shared her knowledge and skills. The programme enabled over 80 older people, in diverse care settings throughout the county, an opportunity to explore their creativity in a safe, non-judgemental environment.

The success of the Artists' Mentoring & Networking Programme is the result of collaboration, partnership and willingness to learn in an innovative atmosphere.

The programme has benefited from the extraordinary openness of all concerned: the mentor, the participating artists, the management and staff in the care settings and above all, older people who set aside their reservations and began learning new skills in later life. Their astonishing achievements are evident throughout this book. Our sincere thanks go to all who have been involved, at every level, with this programme.

This publication is accompanied by a DVD, which looks more closely at the mentoring process. A large collective exhibition is also being organised, to celebrate the work of the older artists arising from the programme.

Mayo County Council wishes to acknowledge the generous support of The Arts Council, Age & Opportunity and the Health Service Executive (Western Region). An arts programme of this scale, could not take place without their support. Furthermore, Mayo County Council, through the elected members and the executive, under the sure guidance of Mr Des Mahon, County Manager, has been unconditionally supportive of progressive arts development.

Cllr. Henry Kenny, Cathaoirleach of Mayo County Council



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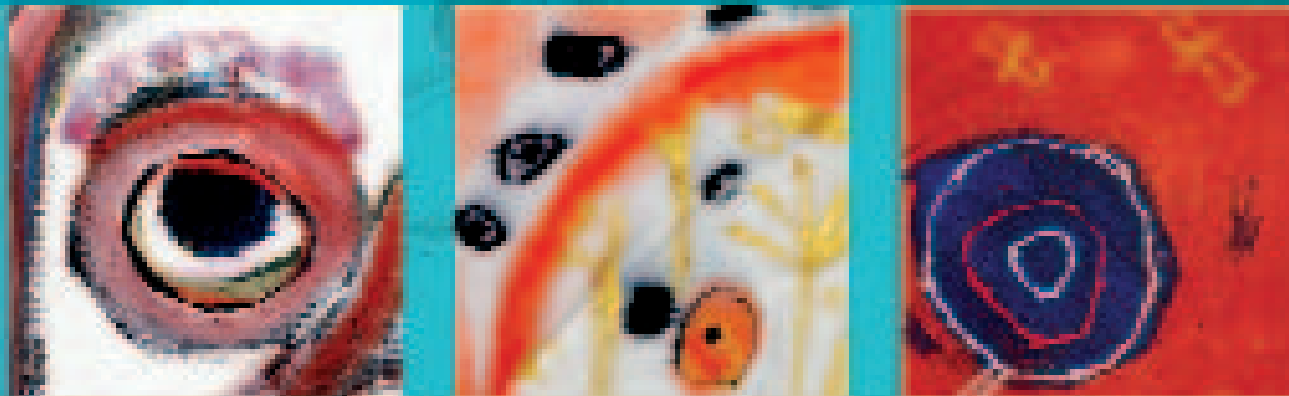
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non-judgemental

free from expectation

history & context

the artist acts as a facilitator rather than a teacher or therapist

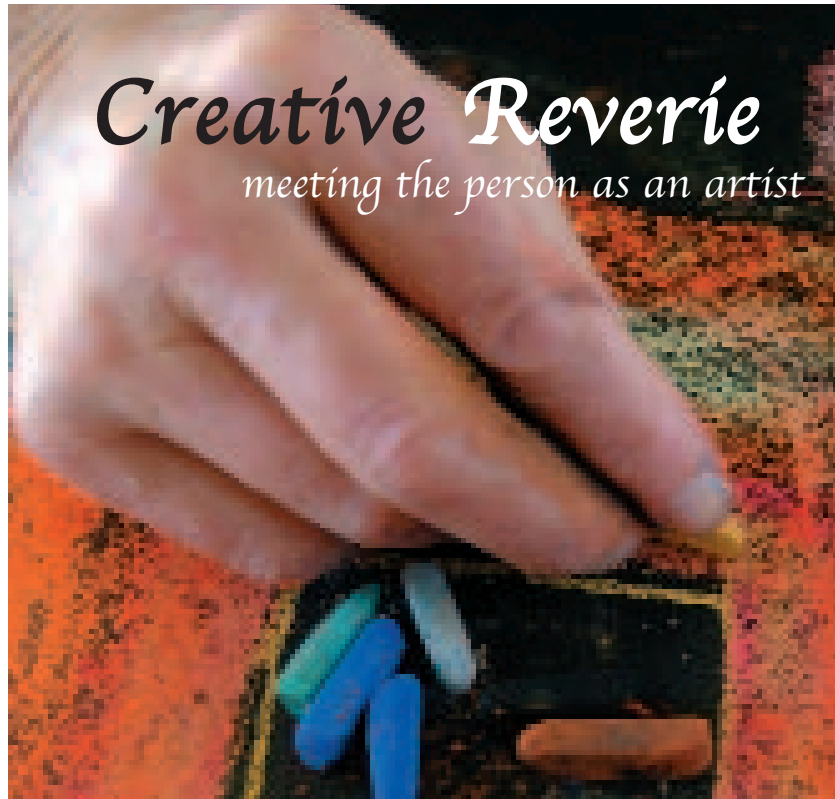


| James Latimer

The principles of access and participation are central to the ethos of Mayo County Council Arts Office, as reflected in the annual arts programme which offers people of all ages and abilities, opportunities to explore their creativity. In 1999, in keeping with this ethos, the Arts Office established a residency programme with Artist Deirdre Walsh, who was based in the Sacred Heart Hospital and St.Anne's Unit for Dementia in Castlebar. Despite encountering some doubt among health professionals, Deirdre succeeded in creating a safe, creative space in the hospital, where residents could explore and express their individual visions of the world, using high quality art materials. The workshops gave rise to 'contemplation, chat and interaction' and facilitated an exceptional level of focus among participants when exploring arts materials and creating work. The emphasis was on the creative process, not on any end product, but staff and relatives were surprised at the high quality work that emerged nonetheless. The completed artworks were framed and displayed in a way that showed 'respect for the effort with which they were created'. An exhibition of the work was mounted and the whole experience documented in a publication entitled 'Creative Reverie, Meeting the person as an artist'.

The success of the Sacred Heart project demonstrated the potential for arts initiatives in care settings, and the particular abilities of Deirdre Walsh in facilitating such work. The residency also raised awareness among health professionals locally, and a number of requests

| Creative Reverie



were made for similar delivery in centres around the county. This gave rise to some difficult questions with regard to resources. Firstly, how to meet the growing demand from care centres while maintaining the type of high quality art experience that was offered by Deirdre Walsh; and secondly, how to ensure that Deirdre's skills and experience were deployed most strategically without putting her at risk of burnout.

With a large pool of visual artists living in the county, the potential for an Artists' Mentoring Programme was recognised at an early stage, but the idea was put to one side temporarily due to lack of time and resources. The impetus to act came when Age & Opportunity approached with a small amount of funding from the Western Health Board and proposed exploring the idea further. The plan for the Artists' Mentoring and Networking programme was developed over

the summer and autumn months of 2003. The bulk of the funding and support came from Mayo County Council with additional funds from the Western Health Board (via Age & Opportunity) and the Arts Council. Once the programme got underway, Deirdre Walsh liaised with the Western Health Board on an ongoing basis, and secured further funding for framing and exhibition in each centre.



| Kathleen Cadden

Aims

The Programme aimed to:

- set up a support network for artists and care staff working with older people in health care environments
- create new opportunities for artists to become involved in this work
- facilitate the sharing of ideas and experiences
- examine good practice
- create and disseminate a record of the experiences of the participants (artists, care staff and older people) on the programme
- explore opportunities for ongoing art work in the participating care settings.

Outline of the Programme

Funding was initially secured for six months and the programme was made up of three elements, all of which were to take place between January and June 2004. *It was planned that:*

- i. *the artists would each facilitate twenty sessions with groups in selected care centres*
- ii. *the mentor would visit each artist and his/ her key staff member four times in their respective care centres*
- iii. *Deirdre Walsh (the mentor), artists and key staff members would come together for four networking meetings, which would be held in venues away from the workplace*

6



| Margaret Rose Canavan

Recruitment of Artists

Recruitment of artists took place between September and December 2003. The success of the programme depended largely on the quality of the participating artists, and it was important to find individuals who could demonstrate excellence in their artistic practice as well as sensitivity and skill in working with both clients and staff in a care environment. An advertisement was placed in the local paper and a mail shot organised to more than eighty visual artists on the Arts Office database. While the response was quite poor in terms of numbers, it was excellent in terms of the calibre of artist who applied. Five artists were chosen on the basis of their artistic ability, experience and suitability of approach: Bernie Garvey O'Mara, Tania Nally, Tom Meskill, Margaret Morrison and Irma van Baalen.

Selection of Care Settings

In order that the programme would reflect a range of experiences, efforts were made to ensure a wide geographical spread and a diversity of settings. Long and short stay settings, social housing units, and centres catering for people with dementia or in need of long term psychiatric care were all considered. Centres were contacted in order to establish whether they would be interested in participating and whether they could provide appropriate facilities. On this basis, a short list was drawn up and five centres were agreed: The McBride Community Nursing Unit in Westport, The Fairway's in Swinford, St. Augustine's Community Nursing Unit in Ballina, St. Coleman's in Achill and the D'Alton Community Nursing Unit in Claremorris.

Guiding Principles:

As outlined in 'Saibhreas an tSaoil, Mayo County Council Strategic Arts Plan, 2003 – 2006' there are guiding principles underpinning the work of the Arts Office and these were particularly pertinent to the Mentoring and Networking Programme.

Quality: In line with the mission statement of Mayo County Council, the Arts Service will deliver a high quality service for public benefit.

Inclusion: The Arts Service respects the creativity of individuals and the community throughout Mayo and operates in an inclusive manner.

Access: Support is targeted at arts activities, events and initiatives that increase access and participation in the arts.

Long Term Value: The Arts Service employs a developmental approach to the growth of the arts sector, focusing on sustainability, while supporting artistic quality and best practice.

Furthermore, there were certain principles which emerged through previous extensive experience in working with older people. These are expressed by Deirdre Walsh

"The potential success lay in the philosophy which had become refined over the years...Each artist must conduct his/her workshop in a space which is safe, non-judgemental, free from expectation.... The artist acts as a facilitator rather than a teacher or therapist. His work is not regarded as art therapy The therapeutic aspect is in the 'doing', the process. Participant's would use artist's quality materials. My role as mentor was to ensure that this philosophy was the starting point for each project. This way of working had already been tried and tested and health professionals were aware of its value"

7



Timeframe

| Noreen Byron

While funding was secured for the initial six months of the programme, it was hoped that, pending a positive outcome from the first phase, subsequent phases could be sustained. It was acknowledged that the first six months would be a set-up phase, where relationships and a rhythm of working were established. In terms of developing a level of familiarity with materials and proficiency in visual art, it was recognised that six months was a relatively short time span and that the work of the participating older people would develop exponentially with the duration of the project. This organic, open-ended approach allowed for a deeper engagement process and treating the project in six to twelve month blocks, lent some security to the work.

Although the initial six-month period yielded more positive results than expected, there was a general consensus that it was a settling in period in the centres. It enabled the artists to build trust with clients and staff, and in some cases, to resolve any difficulties with regard to space and staff support. This period also engendered energy, motivation and enthusiasm to experiment with new ideas and a

commitment to a long-term approach.

Orla Moloney, Arts Participation Consultant, was engaged to undertake a review of the work in June 2004 and the recommendations of her evaluation, provided strong guidance for the programme.

The first year of the programme comprised the most active 'mentoring' phase, with regular communication and visits between the mentor, Deirdre Walsh and the five artists. There were also eight major meetings in the first year.

In the second year, the five artists had attained a level of assurance and confidence in their work in care settings, and the demands on Deirdre were greatly reduced. Four full-day networking & skill-sharing meetings were organised. Now in its third year the programme is more network focused, with the artists benefiting from their shared experiences, knowledge and differing expertise.

In addition to ongoing co-ordination, the Arts Officer attended in the afternoons of all the full-day sessions, in order to discuss progress and any issues arising from the work. This was an effective means of addressing practical issues, ascertaining if sufficient funds/ materials were in place, ensuring reciprocal feed-back and providing support.

The Programme is comprised of three distinct but inter-related elements:

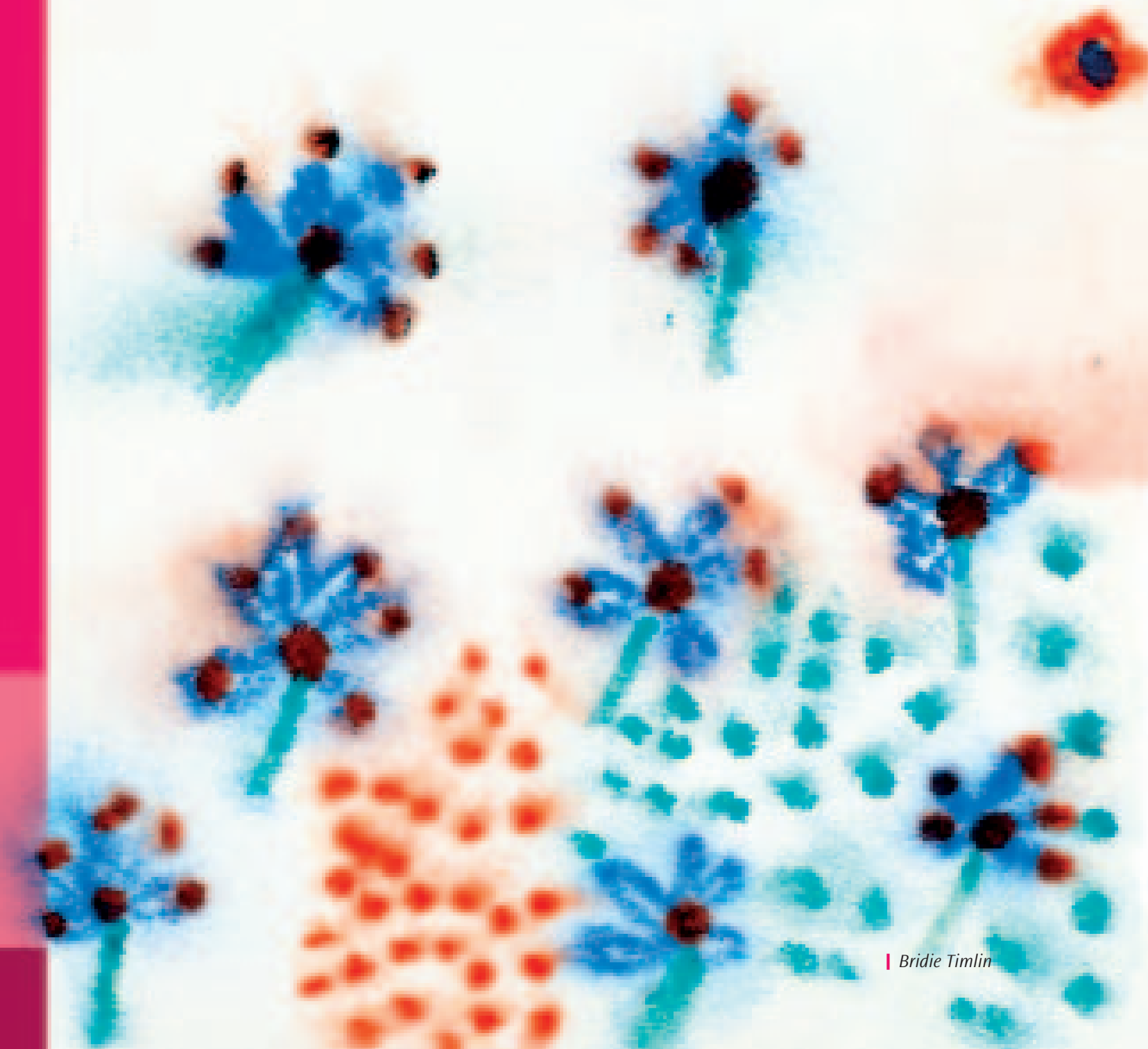
- the Artist's workshop programme in care settings, which impacted on the older participants and the staff
- the Mentoring process
- the Networking process.

| Margaret Cannon



I've learnt how to do clouds
enthusiasm and a sense of accomplishment
a feeling of belonging
the artists'
workshop programme

10



| Bridie Timlin

The practicalities

The five selected artists began work in their respective centres, early in 2004. All were placed in centres close to where they lived. Some of the artists had worked in care settings previously. One artist, already giving art workshops in her local centre, continued with her work there as part of the programme. Similarly, the management and staff in participating centres had varying degrees of experience of art and varying degrees of understanding of the process involved.

The impact of the workshop programme on the artists

In general, the artists found that the work impacted on them to a far greater extent than expected, particularly in relation to their attitudes to older people and their individual artistic practice.



| Achill

Attitudes | The prospect of working with older people in care settings was daunting for some of the artists, who feared it might be depressing, especially in cases where people were experiencing difficulties from the effects of stroke or dementia. Instead, they found themselves inspired and uplifted at times, excited by the freedom with which clients expressed themselves and the individual nature of their creative voices or *'instinctive soul expression'*. For some, generally those with less experience in working with older people, this led to a fundamental review of their attitudes towards ageing and older people. One artist said the experience had given her *'a whole new outlook on age, where the body gets older but the soul has the same requirements and needs'*, an insight that was echoed in various ways by the others.

Individual Practice | Some of the artists found their individual work was inspired and informed by the people they met in care settings. Some reported feeling creatively refreshed and full of new ideas as a direct result of their interaction. The work with older people was more collaborative and more akin to a studio situation than expected, contrasting sharply with the past experiences of some artists, who had been left burnt out in more product-led community art processes.

"I feel I have gained a lot as an artist in this time, I find it inspiring to be with people who create art work without worrying about the art world or what is in vogue. The participants create the work they need or feel like making and enjoy the moment of making. I have learnt from and been inspired by this honest approach to art making."

Tom Meskell



| Kathleen Cadden

The impact on clients

Feedback from clients, artists, staff and managers suggests that the engagement with visual art was new and challenging and that individual participants experienced a range of personal, social and artistic benefits from their participation. While the workshops were non-therapeutic in both aims and approach, they resulted in a number of unplanned therapeutic outcomes. The benefits for clients included:

- increased ability to express themselves as individuals
- increased use of the imagination
- increased ability to communicate ideas, feelings and memories (heightened in some cases by the person's inability to communicate verbally)
- increased sense of control, through the making of creative choices and judgements in the work
- increased ability to face creative challenges
- increased determination to overcome physical challenges
- greater artistic confidence (in some cases characterised by the movement from making a few tentative marks on a page to covering the page with shapes and colour)
- greater freedom to 'play' with different materials and experiment with colour and form
- increased knowledge of artistic materials and techniques
- stimulation of mind and the body (a movement from passive to active)
- improved concentration and focus
- access to something new
- greater consistency in attendance
- pride in their work
- increased self-esteem
- deep satisfaction and enjoyment
- freedom to escape from day-to-day struggles and troubles
- increased sociability and opportunities for friendship



| Westport

Response by participants

While there was, understandably, an initial reluctance by some older people to engage with something completely outside of their experience, the establishment of a safe, non-judgemental environment encouraged relaxation and development.

Reflecting back on the start of the programme, participants remember their feelings:

'I was worried, didn't know what to expect'

'I wasn't comfortable but it grew on me. I learned a lot from others.'

'I only enjoyed it when I got settled with the crowd.'

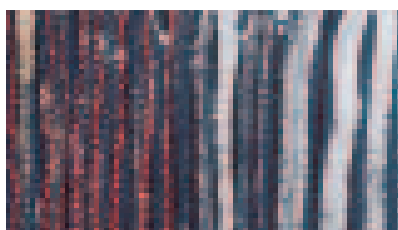
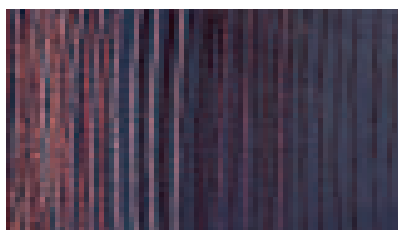
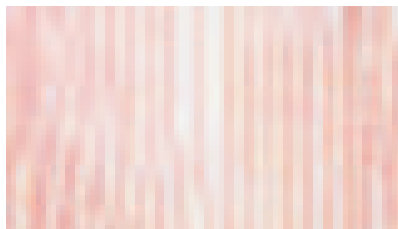
'I didn't want to do it but got accustomed to it.'

'I wanted to learn something.'

'The initial reaction from most is 'I can't draw a straight line' or 'that's for children'. It is necessary to demystify 'painting', to present making painting in a very straight forward manner. To explore colour, or lines or working with two colours. I have found when someone attends on a regular basis they develop their own repertoire of images and are an inspiration to those who attend less regularly.' Margaret Morrison



| Swinford



| Progression

'When I first met John, he did not respond to me. I left some oil pastels in front of him, thinking that unfortunately, he was unable to take part.

Whilst I was working with someone else I hardly noticed John take up an oil pastel and make four short lines on a black piece of paper.

This was the beginning, for John, of a very prolific run of work in which he demonstrates a tremendous understanding of colour, and colour relationships.

At this stage, it is John's primary form of expression. He hardly ever speaks verbally and even facial and body language is at a minimum. Yet with colour,

John speaks volumes, which appeals to the viewer in a way that is hard to describe. When John's work was exhibited at the Linenhall, people presumed he was an artist of considerable experience. Which he is!' Tom Meskill.

Both artists and participants have commented positively on the constructive working and social environment which has been established through the mentoring programme.

'Her work is becoming more consistently focused and less scattered, and becoming more confident. Sometimes, she doesn't remember work she's done the previous week, but it appears everybody understands, and quietly describes it to her, but don't put her under any pressure. Moments like this make me feel extremely humble, and I'm constantly amazed by the members.

They help each other, always positive about each others work, encourage each other and have bonded really well. Newcomers are quickly taken in and they can now laugh at each other and with each other (and I'm constantly being told, that is what it's all about).'

Bernie Garvey O'Mara.

Working with the group – there is a certain comfort, in that there is strength in numbers and with that there is always a safety blanket. Not the type of safety that encourages stagnation, but which stimulates growth in ideas and creative output – knowing that there will be no judgement passed on ideas or work, but will be accepted as a creative flow. And that in itself is enough.

Whether to sit and talk or in silence – the creative process is not always visible. The engaging of time, and moments that are fleeting,

sometimes impossible to capture. But there is a sense of something is taking place in the intensity that is present.

The awareness of a group effort is also important – as artists supporting each other and also group participation in working creatively with the facilitator.'

Tania Nally

'The atmosphere is always good and positive. One particular lady, who had lost her husband a few months previously, turned to me after her first session and said that the last two hours had been the first time in ages she hadn't been thinking about her husband.'

Margaret Morrison

When asked what they liked most about the workshop programme participants said:

'The company. Learning. The buns.'

'There is a good atmosphere.'

'Everybody understands and encourages each other.'

'You can see your progress.'

'They (the workshops) are good. I've learnt how to do clouds.'



| Pat McFadden



| Kathleen Sweeney



| Brigid Ann Patten

Exhibitions

A number of exhibitions, arising from the workshop programme, were an essential means to celebrate the work of all involved. Taking the art work out of the care setting and bringing it to a wider audience was extremely rewarding for participants and staff.

'They are looking forward to the exhibition. I hope they enjoy it and find it an incentive to keep painting. It's a good way to mark the end of a year and start into next year with enthusiasm and a sense of accomplishment. It's a landmark for them – it gives everybody who participates a feeling of belonging. It gives the horizon a clarity plus it will be an education in itself just seeing their work on show and talking to people about it.'

Tania Nally

Exhibitions included:

- D'Alton CNU, Claremorris, exhibited in 2004 in the Railway Station, Claremorris, and in 2005 in the public library.
- McBride CNU, Westport, exhibited in Westport Library in 2005 and in the Custom House Studios in 2006.
- St Coleman's, Achill, exhibited in St. Coleman's Convent, Achill twice in 2004.
- The Fairways, Swinford, exhibited in The Linenhall Arts Centre in 2005.

In addition, in May of 2005, to coincide with the Bealtaine festival, Mayo County Council Arts Office mounted a collective exhibition on billboards around the county. This was a very large-scale, public affirmation of the work produced by older people on the Mentoring Programme. Taking the work outside of the care settings had a very positive impact – the staff and participants felt they were part of something very special. The group from St. Augustine's CNU, Ballina were absolutely thrilled to see something they had made in the 'outside world' on such a big scale, and felt that the work took on another dimension. Some of the groups travelled to see their work in situ; the Fairway's group travelled to Ballyhaunis and were delighted to see one of their images in a public place on such a huge scale.



| Billboard Exhibition, May 2005

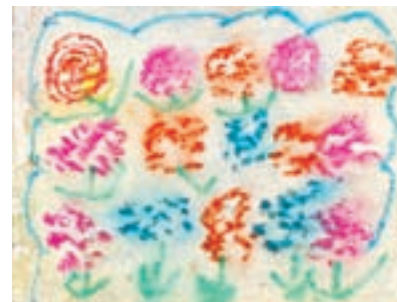
The relationship between the artists and the management and staff of the centres

Overall, the artists were sympathetic to the resource limitations (in terms of space and staffing levels) which existed in the care settings. They recognised the difficulties involved in changing timetables for essential services such as buses and visiting health workers. They found the centre managers to be very positive about the workshops, providing as much time and space as they could, encouraging other staff to value the sessions, and discouraging the unnecessary removal of clients. In one centre, an artist commented on the valuable support available in relation to bereavement.

Members of management and staff who were consulted during visits to the centres also appeared happy with their relationship with the artists. The general feedback was that the artists had brought new energy and creativity into the centres and that the overall environment had improved as a result of their presence. While a small number seemed keen to learn more about the process, it was only insofar as it might equip them to support the artist in their work.

The only negative comments made by staff or management were in relation to their fear that funding would end and that the workshops would be terminated.

| Rita Green



| Mary Hope



| Westport Library 2005

Difficulties encountered

Despite the largely positive feedback, a small number of difficulties arose for artists in relation to their work in the centres. *These included:*

Access to space and facilities | The suitability of workshop spaces varied greatly from centre to centre, ranging from the adaptation of a canteen with little privacy and no direct access to water, to the provision of a dedicated art room with excellent facilities. All workshop spaces were adequate, but difficulties relating to water, furniture, storage and display were common. In some centres, the workshop area had to fulfil a range of different functions on different days (or at different hours of the day), and could be used for visiting relatives or dignitaries. As a result, artists were under pressure to avoid getting paint on the furniture and generally to keep the space pristine. The result was to limit the sense of ownership of the space and to inhibit clients from continuing with their work between workshops.

Appreciating the value and the nature of the art process |

Initially, some staff found it difficult to differentiate between the value of an art workshop (with its potential for individual expression and creativity), and that of Bingo or other more passive forms of 'entertainment'. However, over time, through observing the absorption of participants in their art work, it became apparent that something more meaningful was occurring.

'I personally enjoy visiting the art class to see and hear the participants at work, totally focused on their work in front of them, no sound at all. It can only be good for one, to forget one's troubles or worries, and be totally immersed in the 'creation' they are working on.'



| Mary Hope

'A small group attends the arts workshops but can be graded in 100% consistency in attendance, involvement, participation.

'They look forward very much to 'art-day'.'

Positive changes in the relationship between artists, management and staff

All of the artists identified positive changes that had taken place in the centres over the course of the programme. In the majority of cases, the changes came about through goodwill, good communication skills, and an increased understanding of the work involved on all sides.

'Excellent idea to develop and foster creativity in the individual and perhaps discover a talent which may not have been discovered until now. A wonderful opportunity.'

Positive changes experienced over the life of the programme included:

- greater access to storage space, trolleys for materials, suitable tables etc.
- greater efforts by staff to set up the workshop space and get people there on time etc.
- an acknowledgement of the positive benefits to clients and an increased tendency to differentiate between art and other more passive 'activities'
- an acknowledgement of the quality of the work, especially when framed
- reduction in uncertainty about the value of the arts programme

These positive developments have been encouraging for the artists. They represent steps taken in the right direction in terms of making the space and the working environment conducive to creativity.

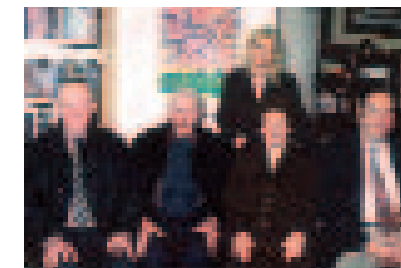
The further development of positive relationships

By virtue of spending time in the centres, the artists are creating change and developing a greater understanding of both the potential of the work and the nature of the process involved. The longer they operate in the centres, the better the relationships they establish. Exhibitions of the work in each care setting have provided an affirming experience for staff, and raised awareness of the value of the work.

'the art workshop gives much pleasure and therefore the staff take delight in this response and seeing the results (the paintings, the satisfaction etc).'



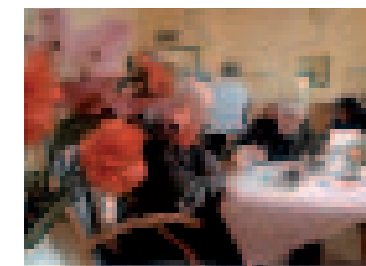
| Claremorris Library, 2005



| Claremorris Library, 2005



| Westport Library, 2005



| Custom House Studios, 2006



| Margaret Cannon

Staff workshop programme

A more structured intervention was clearly indicated at the six month evaluation point, in order to include staff further and convey a greater sense of the power of creativity and self-expression. A practical means of two-way communication was needed to build on and maintain positive working relationships. As one director of nursing put it,

“it would be nice to have a feel for it and to have a greater awareness so that we can offer support.”

Deirdre Walsh conducted a series of workshops with the staff in the care settings. These were carefully researched and developed to maximise the learning experience.

Aims of staff workshops:

- To provide staff with an opportunity for creative expression in a safe non-judgmental environment.
- To create awareness of the need for safe creative space which is free of expectation and judgement.
- To provide a creative experience using high quality art materials.
- To create awareness of the necessity of having small working groups.

All five nursing units participated, with forty staff benefiting in total. Staff members were encouraged to take part in a painting workshop which mirrored the residents' sessions. They had complete freedom to choose whether they participated or not. The setting was the same as the one used by residents and in each centre a maximum of ten people participated.

As with participating residents, nurses and care staff approached the session with considerable caution, but were put at ease when it was explained that the work was process-oriented. Staff were astounded at how quickly the time passed. They gained an understanding of the process, the necessity of small work groups, the use of good materials, and the importance of uninterrupted space for work and storage.

Prior to the workshops, comments included:

‘I haven’t done this since national school.’

‘I can’t draw a straight line.’

‘I probably won’t create a masterpiece.’

| Annie Brown



After the workshops, the following observations were recorded:

‘It was very relaxing to take part’

‘... I felt good because I painted two pictures without any help and they turned out OK... When I went to painting classes once the tutor went around touching up everyone’s painting and they all looked the same’

‘Time went by quickly.’

‘Not being judged was important to me.’

‘I would have been annoyed if someone interrupted me.’

“The workshops held by Deirdre Walsh with the staff really opened their eyes to, not only the difficulties in creating a piece of work, but also to the quality of the work that is being made during a painting session and the importance of respecting each individual’s efforts”.

Margaret Morrison.

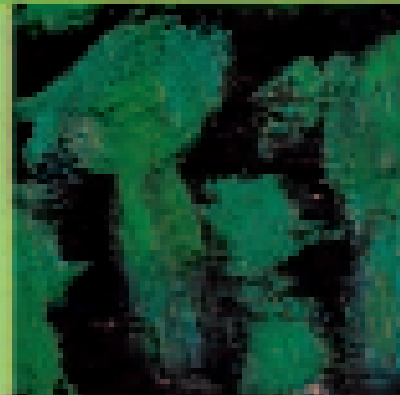
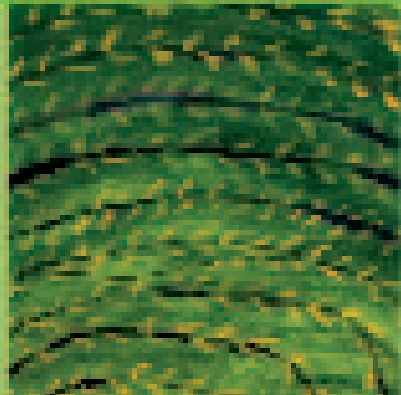
problem solving, skill sharing, new ideas

a learning experience

26

the mentoring process

evolve in a healthy way



Patrick McFadden

“When I was invited to be a mentor to five artists in care settings, I was unsure of what the role would entail. Was I meant to train the artists in a particular way of working? Each artist would, through their own arts training have developed quite individual traits in creative work. I reflected on my own journey as an artist in care settings over the past twelve years and was able to work out from that what was needed. It came down to support and building confidence. I had a very clear view of what was necessary to ensure a successful programme. I acted as a support for the five artists.....showing an interest in their individual styles and interests. In this way it was about the person rather than the programme; creating a sense of security for each artist. We worked together in a trustful way. I had continuous contact with artists through formal visits to centres. These visits were to offer support rather than be over-analytical.”

Deirdre Walsh.



| Achill

The practicalities

In the original planning of the programme, a structured schedule of visits by the mentor was envisaged. In early negotiations however, the group agreed that this might be too rigid, not taking sufficient account of the intimacy of the space, the potential disruption to the group, or the fact that an artist might require greater levels of support at particular times. As a result, a more flexible means of support was tailored to the needs of each artist, which involved a mixture of meetings (in the workplace and in other locations) and ongoing phone contact. The artists found this very effective and feedback was overwhelmingly positive.

The impact of the mentoring process on the artists

The artists experienced a range of benefits as a result of being mentored by Deirdre. These included:

Access to the mentor's positive attitudes and valuable experience –

Most of the artists were already familiar with Deirdre's work and were impressed by her enthusiasm, focus and dedication. They felt that the programme, which offered access to her positive attitudes and experience, afforded them more practical opportunities for learning than any course of formal study. They also felt confident that she could advise them in any situation that might arise in the course of their work.

Effective negotiation of facilities and conditions of work –

Deirdre's role as mentor proved quite powerful in the process of negotiating space and facilities in the centres. As Deirdre is also employed by the Health Service Executive as an arts co-ordinator, she was well-placed to operate as a mediator. The status of 'outsider' also enabled her to intervene more effectively when difficulties arose.

Advice on materials – Deirdre's promotion of the use of quality materials was quite inspirational for the artists. Having worked in other community contexts, where materials were poor and inadequate, all reported that the use of high quality materials made a huge impact on the quality of the artistic experience, enabling clients to create work they couldn't have dreamt of otherwise. The Arts Officer was very supportive in ensuring that this aspect of the programme was properly funded.

“Analysis took place at our mentoring meetings... Everything was discussed openly and the meetings provided a ground for problem solving, skill sharing, new ideas and necessary humour.”

Deirdre Walsh.

“I negotiated with the Directors of Nursing and the hospital manager. The fact that I had already been established as an artist in the mental health/ older people services was a help.” Deirdre Walsh.

“Deirdre Walsh came today. She brought lots more materials like canvasses and oil sticks. She encouraged the group to use them. She was a great inspiration. One of the group started write in colours and then drew a few ornaments, using the new thin chalks that Deirdre brought.”

Irma van Baalen



| Mary O'Boyle

Growth in confidence and courage – Deirdre succeeded in affirming the artists' belief in their own abilities and in the value of their work. She nurtured their confidence through a two-way process of dialogue and skill-sharing rather than dictating what they should do. This created a safe environment in which they could discuss strengths as well as difficulties, and facilitated them to look for advice without feeling compromised.

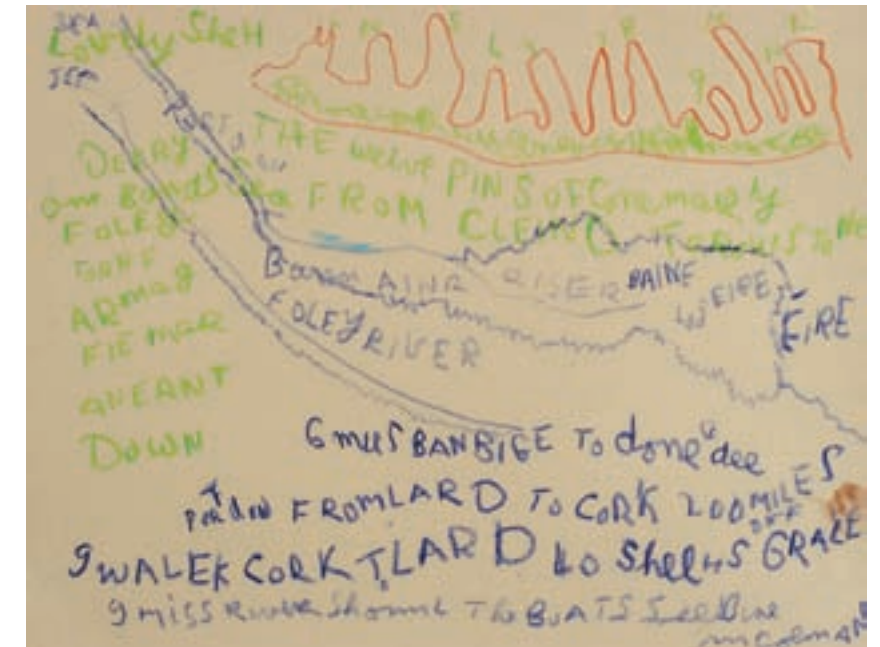
“I have learnt so much from this experience and from the people I have met and worked with: the combination of working as an individual in a care setting and being part of a mentoring team was fundamental in achieving confidence in the participants and in my own abilities as an artist and facilitator.”

Tom Meskill.

Generation of new ideas and approaches – Increased confidence enabled the artists to take more risks and explore new ways of working, giving rise to a fresh creative approach to their work. They reported feeling energised by the challenges that emerged from these new approaches.

“Deirdre came in and mixed wonderful colours of paint.
She brought board and paper from the resource centre.
This means an input of different techniques as well.
I joined Deirdre in experimenting with the paint.”

Irma van Baalen



| Michael Coleman

Increased ability to facilitate individual expression – Deirdre encouraged the artists to retreat into the background in order to facilitate clients to express themselves as individuals. Her support helped the artists to relax with the clients, putting aside conventional expectations and judgements regarding pace, progress and product, and allowing more time and space for people to develop their own way of expression.

Emotional support – Deirdre’s support helped reduce feelings of isolation among the artists, some of whom felt emotionally overwhelmed by the work at times. They found it helpful to know that someone, who understood the difficulties and frustrations involved, was at the end of a phone line. Deirdre was always available to discuss difficulties and suggest solutions, but she was also available to listen. This helped artists to remain calm in difficult situations.

“After a talk with Deirdre this morning, I am becoming more aware of those sorts of happenings, which are a disturbance. I am coping very well. It is definitely a learning experience for me.” Irma van Baalen

Direction – Prior to the programme, some artists felt isolated or ‘lost’ in relation to their work in care settings. The mentoring programme addressed their concerns, helping to clarify what could be achieved and areas which could be explored. It opened up new creative possibilities for both the artists and for the older people with whom they worked, resulting in ‘a much more positive working experience’. Another artist mentioned the difficulty of working in a relatively new area and commented that Deirdre had helped to ‘..keep going in uncharted waters’.



| Mary O'Boyle

“My experience of the artists mentoring programme has been very positive. I had been doing some workshops with day-care groups of older people, but hadn’t really thought about what my aims were or what I was hoping to achieve. The meetings with Deirdre and the other artists allowed me to focus and develop a clear idea of where these workshops could go.”

Margaret Morrison.



| Kathleen Cadden

Understanding and trust – The artists felt reassured by the fact that the Mentor and the Arts Officer both understood the complex nature of their work; that it could be a long, slow process. As a result, they were not under pressure to ‘prove’ the value of the process through the production of finished work (although as it happened, excellent work did emerge).

“Each artist developed their own way of working and were not trying to force their feet into my shoes. The programme was able to evolve in a healthy way with each person bringing their own ideas while remaining within a structure that had been tried and tested.”

Deirdre Walsh

| Pat Kane



The impact on the mentor

Initially, Deirdre was concerned about the amount of time and work that would be involved in the mentoring programme, and whether it would drain her energy and impact negatively on her individual work. She worried about her ability to mentor other artists sensitively, in a way that created access to her experience without suggesting it was more valuable than that of the participants, and which offered advice and support without cramping individual styles and talents. In order to build on the strengths of the participating artists, she developed a mentoring programme that demonstrated strong principles of adult education, including:

- valuing the experience of the participants
- building trust among the group
- creating a safe space for creative expression
- removing conventional expectations regarding pace, progress and product
- demonstrating clarity and flexibility i.e. allowing the programme to develop organically while remaining clear about its aims

Although the work did take a lot of time, even more than she had originally anticipated, she was surprised to find the process refreshing and re-energising rather than draining. The programme exceeded her expectations in terms of its impact on all concerned: the clients, the artists and on herself. Elements of her own learning included:

- more effective management of materials
- new ideas and approaches using a range of artistic techniques and mediums

- greater regard for the importance of time and space to allow people to get comfortable and to feel safe
- greater regard for alternative training approaches that allow individuals to share their experiences and strengths
- greater regard for the value of networking
- greater trust in her own instinct
- more confidence in her ability to mentor sensitively and effectively

Most of all, she found that her work with the five artists reinforced her belief in the power of creative process in care settings. Witnessing their success in repeatedly tapping into the creative abilities of clients and facilitating individual expression, she felt confirmed in her belief that ‘*the process works*’.

being part of something bigger
very fruitful with lots of exchanges
sharing
the networking process

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| Willie Deen

W. Deen

The practicalities

The original plan to include care staff in the networking process was jettisoned at an early stage, as it was seen to be unrealistic in terms of resources. The idea had been generated by an Age & Opportunity/Health Board agenda, but no concrete supports were available to ensure that it would be planned and developed meaningfully and effectively as an integral part of the programme. As a result, the Arts Office decided that the mentoring and networking of artists should be prioritised, and that the training and support of care staff should constitute a separate piece of work, one more appropriate to the Western Health Board remit.

The logistics of getting the five artists and the mentor together in one location posed some difficulties in the early stages. The group held meetings in different parts of the county including Castlebar and Ballina, but the distances involved were prohibitive. The group settled on Westport as a preferred location and this continues to work well, with nobody having to travel more than an hour to attend. In addition, Westport offers a comfortable, well-equipped space in the Custom House Studios. Participants find it useful to come together in a neutral venue where they can leave the day to day issues of work behind.

Over the first six months, the duration of the meetings lengthened to meet emerging needs, becoming full day events, broken by lunch. Participants found this more useful as it gave them more scope to mix discussion with practical skill sharing sessions. The ‘good lunch’ was also appreciated as it offered the group an opportunity to socialise more informally.

The impact on the artists –

Similar to the mentoring process, the feedback from the artists on the networking events was extremely positive and the artists expressed surprise at the extent of the impact it was having on their work. It contributed to an increase in confidence, energy and motivation. Other more specific benefits identified include:

Being part of something bigger |

All of the artists derived great satisfaction from being part of a bigger programme, with the potential for outcomes that went beyond the impact of their individual piece of work. Their growing sense of connectedness was further reinforced when they were offered support to attend Arts and Health Conferences, where they were introduced to other practitioners and exposed to developments in national and international practice.



| Pat Kane

Sharing experiences | The networking meetings provided a safe and empathic environment in which the group could share experiences, both positive and negative. Difficulties were discussed and advice offered which, in some cases led to breakthroughs. This helped build trust among the group and reduced feelings of isolation; individual artists commented that they got great reassurance from hearing other people’s experiences. As the meetings evolved so too did the methods for generating discussion. Artists brought pieces of work created by clients and shared the stories behind them, generating valuable discussion on context, techniques, materials, and the interaction with and reaction of staff members.

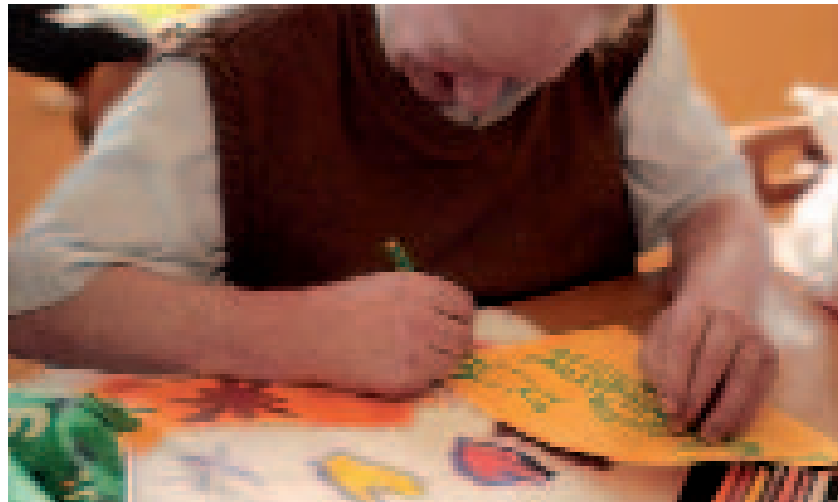
“The nature of doing workshops can be isolating, for you are often the only arts facilitator present and issues that arise of an artistic kind cannot be easily explained to another: being able to share experiences and benefit from the experience of others has been invaluable.” Tom Meskill

Sharing ideas and information | The networking meetings also provided an opportunity to share information about other Arts and Health programmes in Ireland and abroad. It opened up new areas of thought and reflection for participants and broadened their perspectives. As one put it *‘without networking, this work can be like rooting around in your own little handbag’*.

“In the morning, a meeting with Deirdre and the other artists. It was very fruitful with lots of exchanges about surroundings, environment, and around the sessions and staff.”

Irma van Baalen

| Tom Reilly



Sharing skills | The networking meetings evolved to incorporate practical skill sharing sessions, where the artists shared techniques with particular materials. They also exchanged practical tips on the effective management of materials. The strength of these sessions was that the learning came from practical experience, and the artists valued the way in which they circumvented the need to discover each new thing individually. They also interpreted each other’s techniques creatively, giving rise to a whole set of new possibilities for themselves and for clients. Deirdre’s overview of their work was particularly effective in facilitating this, as she could match one individual’s strengths with the groups’ needs.

Influence on individual practice | Some have been inspired and motivated in their individual practice as a result of their interaction with the other artists in the group. One participant suggested that it might lead some of the group to work and/ or exhibit together in the future. This could represent a step towards the day when *arts in care practice* no longer needs to be differentiated from *arts practice*.



| Tom Reilly

Documentation

From the artists' perspective, the work itself is the main form of documentation, speaking more directly than words, and evoking a sense of the individual journeys travelled. Words can be inadequate, sometimes sacrificing the richness of the finished work, especially if clients have difficulties in verbal communication and little or no knowledge of the language of art. On occasions when artists have asked clients for verbal responses to powerful work, they have elicited comments such as: *'Sure, it's alright!'* Too much probing of the 'why' of the creative process can lead some clients to think there is something 'wrong' with their picture.

The artists were encouraged to keep a journal as part of the programme and to take photographs as they went along. For some, the journal has been useful and they have made notes charting the progress of individual clients, and the materials and techniques that have facilitated breakthroughs in creativity. For others, it was more problematic, and entries were intermittent and sketchy. This had more to do with the pressures of time than disinterest. All agreed that the journal could provide a valuable means of documenting the experience if it was kept consistently, and the group were open to recording comments made by clients during the sessions, subject to their permission.

With regard to photography, some of the artists were reluctant to use the camera on an ongoing basis as they have found it changed the dynamic and made people self-conscious. However, a small number of photography sessions were organised with a professional photographer, and the feedback from these was very positive.



The DVD which accompanies this publication was recorded in 2004 and captures the impressions and responses of the mentor and the five participating artists. It also documents the artists at work in their care-settings.



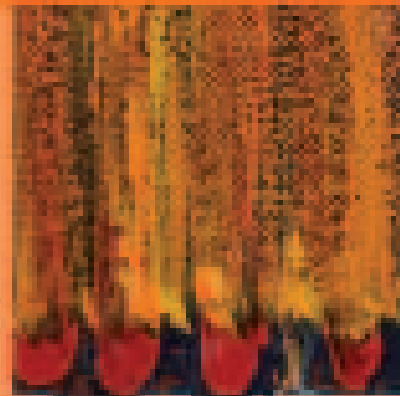
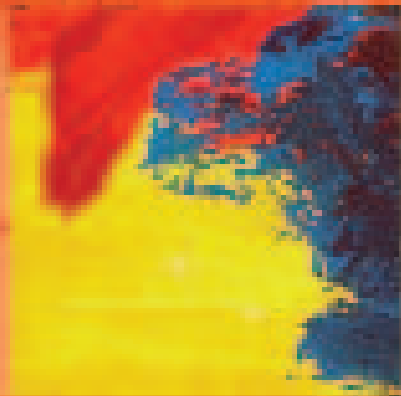
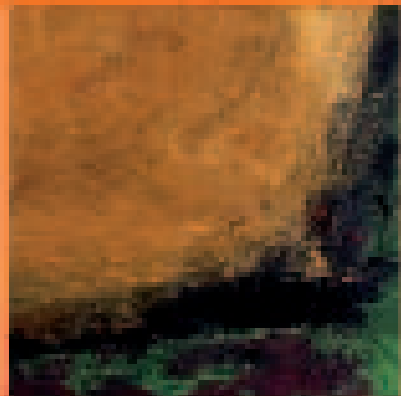
| John Tiernan

shared vision
innovative approach

positive atmosphere

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the OVCEVIEW of the programme



Rita Carney

© Rita Carney

Arts Office support for the mentor and artists

Feedback from the mentor and the artists was very positive on the role of the Arts Office in the support and development of the programme. They found it refreshing to call into the *'positive atmosphere'* of the Arts Office, where the understanding of the creative process allowed the programme to develop organically, rather than having to meet prescribed outcomes. The Arts Officer provided a sounding board for the artists, exchanging ideas and offering advice and practical support wherever possible, including a realistic budget for high quality materials, which was a key element in the success of the programme.

According to the mentor, the successful networking aspect of the programme would not have been developed so fully without the Arts Officer's vision. Acknowledging the tendency of artists *'to operate as lone rangers'*, the mentor felt that she and the other artists would have undervalued the potential for collaboration without this input. The Arts Office also provided the mentor and the artists with a valuable link to broader developments in the area of Arts and Health in Ireland and abroad.



| Bridie Timlin

The achievements of the programme

- The skills and experience of Deirdre Walsh in relation to arts in care settings were harnessed in an innovative way that reinvigorated her own practice and contributed to the skill pool in the county.

- Five local artists received mentoring training while working in care settings, meeting a growing demand for professional artists to work in these contexts (three of the mentoring artists have been employed to do similar work in other care settings including the dementia unit in Castlebar, the continuing care programme in Castlebar and Mental Health services in Ballina and Belmullet).
- Good practice was fostered in care settings. Over eighty clients, most of whom had no previous experience of the creative process, were facilitated to explore colour and form through a range of materials, and to express themselves creatively as individuals.
- Five artists have gained valuable experience in working in care-settings and have enhanced their employment options in this context.



| Rita Carney

- Five care centres in the county cultivated positive working relationships with visual artists and developed new and existing programmes.
- A support mechanism was developed for artists in a way that affirmed their skills and abilities and stimulated a creative response to their work in care settings.
- Individual arts practice was positively influenced by involvement in the programme, contributing to the development of the art form and the arts community in the county.
- Awareness of the value of the arts process in care settings was raised and continues to be raised with planned exhibitions, presentations and documentation.
- Good working relationships were established with funding agencies, including the HSE.

The implications at local and national level

The Artists' Mentoring and Networking programme has provided an innovative approach to the training and support of artists in care settings without going down the formal accreditation route, and it could provide a model for consideration by other local authority Arts Offices and arts organisations. The resources developed in Mayo over the course of the programme (trained personnel, a body of artwork, documentation) have the potential to be of value in a wide range of contexts across the arts and health sectors.

The learning from the Artists' Mentoring and Networking Programme has already been adopted in other contexts:

- The LUISNE project in Ballinrobe, Co. Mayo has used a mentoring and networking approach to its delivery. The programme is based around the provision of an artist's studio to the broader community, particularly to disabled people within that community. Artists with more experience have shared their approach with others and all participating artists have formed a network to support each other and problem-solve collaboratively. LUISNE also receives funding and support on a partnership basis from Mayo County Council, Western Care Association, South West Mayo Development Company, TACU Family Resource Centre and Mayo Artsquad (FÁS).
- The learning of the programme has been replicated through the Arts Office in County Offaly where artist Tom Meskeil has become a mentor for the Anam Beo Artists in Care Settings Mentoring programme.



| Patrick Lavelle

Key elements underpinning the programme's successes:

The success of the programme has been built on a number of key elements. These include:

- the shared vision and good working relationship between Arts Officer and the mentor, who jointly established a culture of innovation, support and trust that underpinned all elements of the programme
- the insight, experience and sensitivity demonstrated by the mentor
- the openness of older people in care settings - to start painting later in life requires courage, tenacity and patience and their participation has been inspirational.
- the quality of the participating artists, who brought artistic ability, people skills and passion to their work and demonstrated qualities such as: experience and ability in their art form, interest in working in care settings, willingness to work in challenging situations, humility, compassion, sensitivity, enthusiasm, respect for others, non-intrusiveness
- financial support from Mayo County Council Arts Office, the Arts Council, and the Western Health board (via Age & Opportunity in the first phase) and subsequent funding through the HSE, Western Region.
- the time spent building relationships at every level
- the enthusiasm shown by Directors of Nursing who provided valuable space, resources and support for the accommodation of artists and the facilitation of the creative process

| Billy Burns



The main challenges faced by the programme

The Artists' Mentoring and Networking Programme has been fortunate to receive funding over the past three years. This has enabled the successful completion of the mentoring phase and allowed for the set-up of an ongoing network. Furthermore, over eighty people in care settings have had a long-term opportunity to develop their creativity.



| Ballina

Sustainability

Sustainability is the main challenge facing the ongoing workshop programme. Funding is allocated by all contributing organisations on a year to year basis and there are no guarantees. Naturally, a more long-term commitment to the funding of artists working in care centres, and recognition of the importance of this work is crucial. In the absence of such commitment, access to creative expression could once again be beyond the reach of many of the clients.

The Workshop Programme | Without a commitment from the Health Service Executive to fund the employment of artists in care centres, the training and development of skills and experience may be lost or severely under-utilised, and the opportunities for creative expression experienced by clients in care centres could diminish rapidly.



| Bridie Timlin

The Mentoring Process | An element of ongoing support will be required to keep trained artists up to date with developments in the area and to periodically renew levels of confidence, creativity and enthusiasm.

The Networking Process | The ongoing support of networks presents a challenge at local level. The current networking process is proving exceptionally valuable to the artists involved. A structured mechanism to facilitate this networking is needed in the longer term and this also needs to be linked in to broader national structures if it is to remain relevant.



| Des Lydon



| Annie Mae Cullnanne

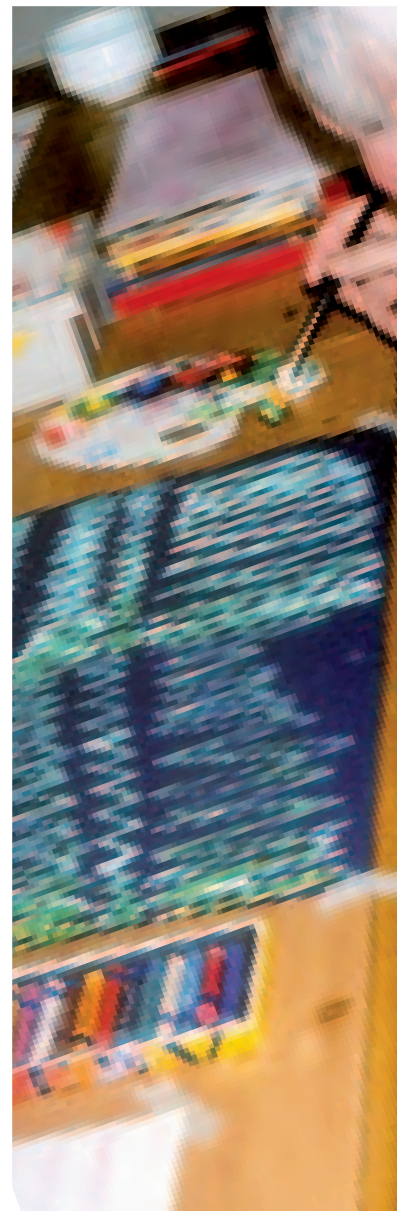
Awareness-raising among management and staff in care settings

Arts programmes do not fit easily into the space or routine of most care settings where management and staff may be constrained by strict timetables; juggling a wide range of physical, social and psychological needs without sufficient back up or support. Most Irish day care and residential centres were designed with medical care in mind; creative activity was not considered, and the rooms were not designed for its facilitation. In these circumstances, arts awareness raising is crucial. If management and staff fail to understand the value of the arts process, they will consider it an inessential luxury and place it low on their list of priorities, vulnerable to being cut in times of shortages.

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| Michael O'Shaughnessy



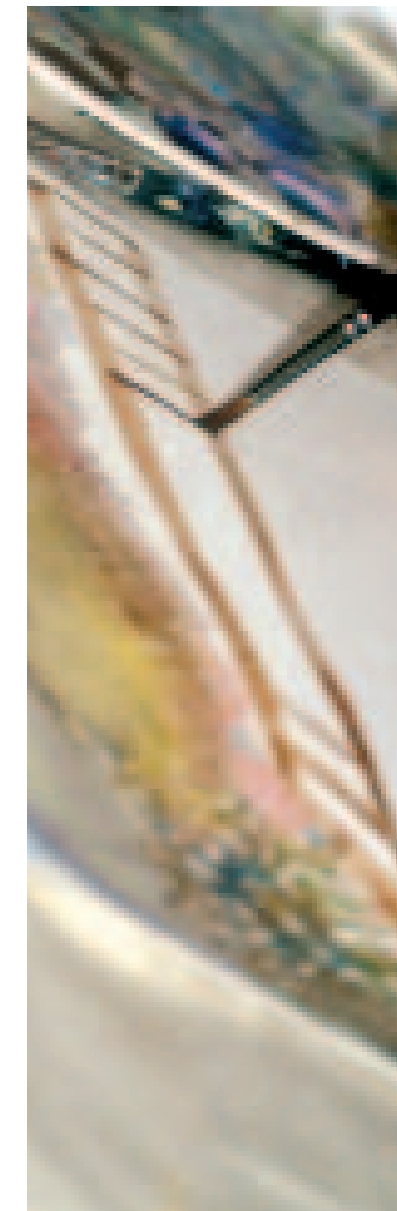
| Swinford



| Pat Kane

The success of the Artists' Mentoring and Networking programme depended on building mutual understanding and nurturing good relations between the participating artists, management and staff. This was accomplished in several ways. Initially, the programme introduced management and staff to the arts process and demonstrated its impact on clients in an informal way, suited to local circumstances where there was no pre-existing commitment to arts development. It also introduced the artists to the work of care staff, again in an informal way. This was augmented by a formal workshop programme, which specifically targeted care-staff.

As a result of the extensive work done throughout the county over the past twelve years, (through Deidre Walsh, the Health Service Executive, Dr Patricia Noone, the Arts Office and other interventions), there is now an artist's studio integrated into the nurse training section of GMIT. This will ensure that nurses and care-staff can be introduced at an early stage to the benefits of this kind of work.



| Ballina

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