An exhibition by Emily Robyn Archer
Artist-in-Residence with the Waterford Healing Arts Trust

21st October – 17th November 2010
In the WHAT Centre for Arts & Health & Waterford Regional Hospital
A residency based around community engagement is an exciting and challenging opportunity for an emerging artist like me. I studied Fine Art at the National College of Art & Design and Anatomical Drawing under Lolli Alberto in the Accademia di Belle Arti, Bologna. My artwork describes personal memories and remembered imagery. I am interested in how the manipulation of a drawn image emulates the way we rethink and reconstruct memories and events from our past. As my practice is centred on the personal, expanding into something collaborative and socially engaged has been a great reprieve for me as an artist. This exhibition is a combination of my own studio work and the collaborative material generated from the Post Room Project.

When I arrived in the hospital, the post room immediately intrigued me; it supports lines of communication between all departments inside and outside the hospital. Although it looks much like an ordinary post office, its consignments are sometimes extraordinary. Anything from get-well-soon cards to X-rays to blood samples are sent, received, sorted and delivered from this small room. Among these are the hospital’s internal mail envelopes, specially designed with numerous address spaces for the transfer of information from staff member to staff member all over WRH. I set out to harness this method of communication and use it to introduce an element of playfulness and creativity into the working day of the hospital. The project took me to every corner of the hospital. It showed me first-hand the demanding roles of the people that work here, their dedication to their profession, and their willingness to be involved in something a little bit different. I celebrated the return of each package to my post box and was always curious to see what it contained.

Emily Robyn Archer - Artist in Residence 2010

Introduction

Working as a studio-based visual artist can be an isolating experience. When the Waterford Healing Arts Trust invited its artist in residence to engage the Waterford Regional Hospital community in an art project in the course of his/her six month residency, it offers the artist a set of relationships and a working context which makes the experience of a hospital-based residency more grounded and integrated. However, it can be challenging for the artist to approach the institution. In the past, some artists have chosen to collaborate with a particular ward or unit. Others have traversed the whole hospital. It is always exciting when an artist adapts the existing structures and materials for creative means and this year, Emily Robyn Archer found an ingenious way of infiltrating the hospital through the post room. The post room is a hub in the hospital through which all hard copy communication travels. In a blind leap of faith, Emily chose this as the point from which to send her creative invitations. It was not unlike sending a message in a bottle. Once the message was dispatched, the artist didn’t know if it would be received or responded to. Conversations were triggered around it that Emily was not privy to. She could only hope that the creative impulse in people would drive the project forward.

The responses to this project were made into animations that have been installed in a series of small wall-mounted post boxes. The viewer must push the flap and look inside. Unlike most exhibition formats, this is an intimate viewing experience, a one-to-one between the artwork and the viewer, that is imbued with the anticipation of opening a gift at Christmas. Meanwhile, as collaborative artworks were moving through the corridors of Waterford Regional Hospital, Emily was back in her studio making her own animations built up from her drawings based on memories and imagery of personal significance to her.

Emily will give an artist’s talk on Friday, 22nd October at 1.15pm in the WHAT Centre for Arts & Health. R.S.V.P. 051-842664 or WHAT@hse.ie

The Post Room Project is a participatory art project using the hospital postal system as a medium for collaboration & creative interaction within the community.

Between recipients, the package was returned to the post room, where each new contribution was recorded, resulting in a series of short animations that document this unique collaboration.

The WRH Management Team
The WRH Technical Services Team, especially Ken Power & Tom Walsh
Margaret Molloy, the WRH Lab
Steve and Ohli at An Post
Everyone who participated in The Post Room Project

Emily will be joined on Thursday, 21st October 2010 at 5.30pm
in the WHAT Centre for Arts & Health, Waterford Regional Hospital.

The exhibition will be launched by
Denis Roche
Curator of the Open Window Project

and will continue until Wednesday, 17th November 2010.

Emily will give an artist’s talk on Friday, 22nd October at 1.15pm in the WHAT Centre for Arts & Health.

Acknowledgements

The Waterford Healing Arts Trust and the artist would like to thank the following for their help and support:

The WRH Management Team
The WRH Technical Services Team, especially Ken Power & Tom Walsh
The Post room staff at WRH: Mary, Tony, Catherine and Dave
Margaret Molloy, the WRH Lab
Steve and Ohi of An Post
Everyone who participated in The Post Room Project

Waterford Healing Arts Trust,
Waterford Regional Hospital,
Dunmore Road,
Waterford
Toll: +353 81 842664
E-mail: WHAT@hse.ie

WHAT Centre for Arts & Health

The exhibition will be launched by

Denis Roche
Curator of the Open Window Project

An exhibition by Emily Robyn Archer
Artist-in-Residence with the Waterford Healing Arts Trust
(on Thursday, 21st October 2010 at 5.30pm in the WHAT Centre for Arts & Health, Waterford Regional Hospital.

Artists Statement

THE POST ROOM PROJECT

is a participatory art project using the hospital postal system as a medium for collaboration & creative interaction within the community.

The hospital postal system was infiltrated with a series of special internal mail packages, each containing a different drawing, story or other artwork. A letter introduced the project and invited each recipient to contribute something and then post the package on to someone else in the hospital - a type of “chain letter”.

Between recipients, the package was returned to the post room, where each new contribution was recorded, resulting in a series of short animations that document this unique collaboration.

Emily Robyn Archer - Artist in Residence 2010