

## **Art & Soul:**

Celebrating Mental and Emotional  
Wellbeing through the arts

Supported by the Hampton Fuel Allotment Charity and  
Richmond Parish Lands Charity

## **Evaluation Report Art & Soul: New Horizons, May 2007**



## **INTRODUCTION**

Art & Soul, established in 1998, is a project culminating in a biennial exhibition open to all people with mental health issues and disabilities living in southwest London, in particular those living in the London Borough of Richmond upon Thames. It is an on-going programme, organised by a team of local arts professionals, mental health workers and service users.

## **AIMS**

Our aim is to celebrate mental and emotional wellbeing through the arts by offering people with mental health issues the opportunity to creatively express themselves through the visual arts and poetry. The works produced are professionally exhibited for public display.

Additional aims:

- To create a social and support network for individuals
- Through Art & Soul workshops, and associated gallery activities, offer vocational work experience and skill-sharing opportunities
- To raise the profile of mental health provision and public awareness

## **VENUE**

This year, the exhibition was held in The Riverside Gallery, Old Town Hall, Richmond upon Thames. This was because the Stables Gallery, the usual venue, was closed for refurbishment. Both the gallery and the Art & Soul committee wanted to host the Art & Soul exhibition as normal, and welcomed this opportunity to present it in a new venue. Situated in the centre of Richmond, the Riverside Gallery, adjacent to the Tourist Information Centre, attracts over 16,000 visitors per year. As usual, a large number of works was submitted - the total was 258, and the walls of the two linking rooms were filled with art works. Three-dimensional works were displayed on plinths or in a glass case.

## **PLANNING**

Planning for the exhibition started in January. Applications to charities were made for funding, and we were very grateful for the support received from Hampton Fuel Allotment Charity, who kindly donated £2,000, Richmond Parish Lands Charity, who also donated £2000 and the London Borough of Richmond Arts Service who contributed the venue and staff time.

An initial letter was dispatched to Art & Soul organisations and individual members on our database, announcing dates and venue for the 2007 exhibition. We received responses from fifteen day centres and fourteen individual artists, most of whom had exhibited in previous Art & Soul exhibitions. Participating centres were Age Concern, The Access Project, Art Aloud, The British Home,

Central and Cecil Housing Care Support, Centre 32, Eaton Rise, Footsteps, Grove Care Partnership, Heathside Resource & Education Centre, Integrated Neurological Services, Lakeside Mental Health Unit, Maddison 'n' Mind Richmond Adult Community College, Richmond Mind and Sutton Drop In Centre,

Although we were restricted by wall space in the Riverside Gallery, practically all artwork submitted was exhibited. As usual, there was no formal selection panel and one artwork by each member contributing was exhibited.

## **PROJECT BUDGET FOR 2007**

Administration	£500
Transport costs	£50
Exhibition materials	£162.72
Framing costs	£380
Publicity	£358.50
Hospitality	£258
Installation (£140 x 4 days)	£560
Exhibition staff /curating	£700
Evaluation	£280
<b>Total</b>	<b>£3,249.22</b>

## **PROMOTION**

A painting by Tom Bushell, *Happiness*, was selected by the committee from a number of possible publicity images, to be used for the exhibition poster and private view cards. Since Art & Soul began in 1998, the committee has selected an image by an individual artist that is visually powerful and conveys the theme of the exhibition. Although this has proved successful in the past, feedback from the committee suggests that a more democratic approach would be to use a selection of artists' work. Posters were distributed throughout the borough to libraries, health centres, hospitals, the tourist information office and the Civic Centre, and also to local and central London art galleries. The exhibition was promoted through editorials in the local press including 'The Richmond and Twickenham Times', and was listed in various event guides.

## **WEBSITE**

As a result of previous feedback from the committee, it was felt that Art & Soul needed a greater web presence. Art & Soul pages were added to the existing arts and exhibition pages of the council website and included: background information on Art & Soul, previous evaluation reports and information on current activities and New Horizons exhibition.

## **WORKSHOPS**

Three workshops were planned and delivered before and during the New Horizons exhibition. Led by Julia Ruppert, former member of Art & Soul and Collective Arts, these workshops comprised:

- Creating 3D sculptures (18 March 2007)
- Creative workshop to produce and complete work for the Art & Soul exhibition (23 March 2007)
- Thematic workshop exploring aspects of the environment (25 May 2007)

These three-hour sessions, which took place in the Coach House Education Centre at Orleans House Gallery, were free of charge to Art & Soul members, with lunch and refreshments provided. The first was devised as an informal drop-in activity while the other two sessions were bookable. These sessions offered members an opportunity to work with a professional artist, learn new media, explore themes and socialise with other members.

During the committee meeting on 13 July 2007, members gave positive comments on the three workshops and gave suggestions for future workshops. Help with framing and mounting was particularly requested.

## **EXHIBITION**

The response from Art & Soul members was huge – 258 works of art were submitted for display. As well as two-dimensional works in oil, acrylic, pencil, crayon and poster colour, several three dimensional pieces were exhibited – a scene made of origami, a large dressed adult doll figure, a fine horse and figure in papier maché, and a ceramic dog. The subject matter was varied and interesting, and this determined the thematic layout, with sections on portraits, landscapes, animals, spiritual images, abstract pieces and works influenced by oriental art. A visitors' book, and copies of the price list were available.

Although we made it clear that we were happy to accept unframed works, a great number of centres submitted their artwork as matching framed pieces, which was extremely helpful, and gave a pleasing uniform appearance when mounted in the exhibition. A professional framer was hired to deal with those pieces requiring mounting and framing, and Orleans House Gallery made available a number of stock frames for this purpose. It was suggested by the committee that perhaps framing and mounting workshops could be arranged for members to learn how to professionally present their work.

The committee suggested that as the Riverside Gallery space was not always invigilated, labels should in future include prices if works are for sale.

Some members did help with invigilation, and also the installation of the exhibition. We were grateful for the assistance given by all members, in particular Anabel Claro, who helped with Art & Soul, and also continued to assist on a voluntary basis at Orleans House Gallery and the Riverside Gallery throughout the summer. During this period her career as an artist developed considerably when her work was included in the Royal Academy Summer Exhibition and the Riverside Gallery Love Is exhibition.

During the three-week exhibition run, 1382 visitors attended the exhibition. This was the third highest number for the Riverside Gallery in 2007 (after Stephen Wiltshire and Artplay). Previous Art & Soul exhibitions at the Stables Gallery had attracted in the region of 1000 visitors.

### **PRIVATE VIEW**

The Private View took place on Tuesday 8<sup>th</sup> May from 6 to 8 pm. The event was organised by volunteers from the Art & Soul committee, and it was a very pleasant and enjoyable event. The party was extremely well attended by artists and staff from day centres, many of whom brought family and friends. Rachel Tranter, Richmond Borough Head of Arts, opened the event with a speech, in which she thanked everyone concerned for their hard work and dedication. She also confirmed the commitment of Art & Soul and Orleans House Gallery to the promotion of mental and emotional well being through the expression of art.

We are grateful to Angela McHugh for organising some excellent live music. This was very much appreciated, and contributed greatly to the enjoyment of the evening.

Because exhibitions in the Riverside Gallery are protected by CCTV and are regularly inspected by staff at the Old Town Hall, it was not necessary to have daily invigilators, but we were very grateful for the help received from Art & Soul members in the reception of the work, mounting the exhibition, and dispatching artworks after the exhibition.

### **FEEDBACK**

As usual, the response from members and visitors to the exhibition was encouraging, and many appreciative and positive comments were written in the visitors' book. In addition, a committee meeting was scheduled for shortly after the exhibition ended in order to discuss and evaluate the exhibition and workshops. This information has also been fed into the evaluation report. New Horizons differed from earlier Art & Soul exhibitions by being staged at the Riverside Gallery in the Old Town Hall, Richmond. This allowed the works to be shown in a different context and attracted new audiences to the exhibition.

### **Exhibition visitor comments:**

“The exhibition does us proud – brilliant!”

“Some really stunning work that deserves the respect that it clearly has earned.”

“Some splendid work this year, and brilliantly arranged to do justice to each piece, and to group the works into categories.”

“Wonderful bright exhibition. Beautifully framed. A delight to view.”

“Thank you for displaying my art work. It looks quite different in this context!”

“Always an entertaining evening. Lots to see. Lovely people. Good interest.”

“It is interesting to see in the exhibition some works from all the centres involved. I know some of the artists, and I have been a user at Centre 32. I thought they were all mucking around at the time, and I am surprised to see all end products and also feel all the paintings in Centre 32, which are seen by passers by, are very good.”

“I found this exhibition very uplifting – huge range, huge imagination, huge daring.”

“A very successful show. *Figure* by Anabel Claro I particularly liked. All very good. More power to the artists’ elbows.”

“Great exhibition. I wish you’d come to Queen Mary’s Hospital, and do some group workshops for the three wards for mental illnesses.”

“Some wonderful work here. As someone who goes to Canal House in Brentford and has art there, I can feel at home.”

“A wonderful exhibition. As someone who has suffered from depression for six years now, I can identify particularly with some of the works. I may try to find a similar scheme where I live. Thank you for this!

### **EVALUATION**

#### **Positive outcomes**

The Art & Soul exhibition provides the opportunity for artists to show their work professionally in a public gallery, and helps to develop self-confidence and self-esteem. We were delighted to receive so many submissions – the total was around 265, even though we had to limit members to one piece of work per

person. This year, in addition to the group show at the Riverside Gallery, individual centres have had the opportunity to mount their own displays, by the linking of Art & Soul with the Richmond Open Studios Arthouse festival. Participating artists or groups of artists opened their studios or workshops to the public for three weeks in June.

Once again, we appreciated the help from members with the installation and dismantling of the exhibition, and hope this provided an opportunity to gain some useful gallery experience.

As always, it was felt that a valuable aspect of the Art & Soul project is that it gives the opportunity for members to interact socially as well as creatively, and to meet other members and the general public, and work with arts service staff.

As part of the Art & Soul programme this year, three workshops were offered, each on a different theme. These were well attended, and some of the work produced was displayed in the exhibition.

## **AREAS FOR FUTURE DEVELOPMENT**

More regular activities and exhibitions. This has been already been addressed by programming the next Art & Soul exhibition for 2008, instead of 2009, in order to sustain the positivity of the current Art & Soul exhibition. The new exhibition, Ten, which coincides with World Mental Health day, will celebrate the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Art & Soul, and will run for 8 weeks instead of 3.

The committee has decided to meet more frequently in order to raise & discuss issues and plan the next exhibition and associated events well in advance.

Pilot the Junior Art & Soul programme of art workshops for young people with mental and emotional health issues in the borough.

Develop closer links with local mental health providers and organizations, including CAMHS and Richmond Mind.

Encourage participation from new individual members.

Devise a marketing strategy for Art & Soul to ensure a wider public presence, including the internet.

Explore the potential of the Orleans House Gallery artist-in-residence programme working with Art & Soul.

Encourage centre and hospital participation in the annual ARThouse open studios festival and support them in creating permanent displays of artwork.

Support 'back to employment' and independent living through developed volunteering initiatives.

## **CONCLUSION**

Once again we were delighted with the response to the Art & Soul exhibition 2007 by both participants and visitors. Comments have been positive and encouraging. Orleans House Gallery, in making available gallery space on a regular basis for Art & Soul exhibitions, provides a valued opportunity for artists with mental health issues to exhibit their work in a mainstream setting. We aim to significantly raise the positive profile of mental health by giving visitors an opportunity to gain a greater understanding of the value of art in the promotion of good mental health.