

Art & Soul:

Celebrating Mental and Emotional
Well-being through the arts

Supported by

The Hampton Fuel Allotment Charity and Double O Charity

Evaluation Report **Art & Soul: *Inner Discovery***

27 May – 4 July 2010



Image: 'Angel' by Debbie Simeon

INTRODUCTION

Art & Soul was established in 1998, and is a member-led group who produces a biennial exhibition open to all people who have or are currently experienced mental health problems, or those with disabilities living in southwest London, particularly those living in the London Borough of Richmond upon Thames. It is an on-going programme, organised by a collaborative team of local arts professionals, mental health workers and service users. Contributing groups included The Star Centre, The Holly Lodge Centre, Joseph Palmer Center, Art Aloud, Sutton Drop in and RB Mind Social Centre, together with 54 individual members. The formal Art & Soul committee comprises 2 co-chairs, an administrator, curator, individual members and mental health professionals who meet regularly to discuss issues and plan future events and exhibitions. Art & Soul works in close partnership with Orleans House Gallery, which has organised and provided the venue (Stables Gallery, Riverside Gallery) for all activities and exhibitions to date.

AIMS

Our aims are:

- To offer people the opportunity to explore creatively and express themselves through art
- To raise confidence and self-esteem.
- To create a social and support network for a wide range of individuals.
- To offer members skill-sharing opportunities and vocational work experience through workshops and associated gallery activities, such as exhibition installation and invigilation.
- Raise awareness and challenge perceptions of mental health issues to the general public.

VENUE

After the success of Art & Soul: Ten, the exhibition was held again at The Stables Gallery. After its refurbishment as part of the Phase III Heritage Lottery Fund development of Orleans House Gallery, the Stables Gallery has become a focus for high quality and challenging exhibitions throughout the year, now with an adjoining café and artist's studio.

PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

Planning for the exhibition began in autumn 2009. Applications to charities were made for funding, and Art & Soul were very grateful for the support received from Hampton Fuel Allotment Charity, who donated £3,000, and Double O Charity, who donated £2,000 to support the Junior aspect of the programme. The London Borough of Richmond Arts Service contributed the venue and staff time.

An initial letter was dispatched to Art & Soul member organisations and individuals on our database, announcing dates and venue for the 2010 exhibition on 19 Feb 2010.

Posters were distributed encouraging new members to participate, and submit work for the exhibition. These were sent to health centres, hospitals, Tourist Information Centres, Civic Centre, museums and galleries and Art & Soul member centres as well as posted on the Art & Soul web pages on the council website. This created a significant increase in the number of newcomers to Art & Soul: 54 compared to 17 in 2008.

This year, Art & Soul aimed to build upon the success of the Junior Art & Soul strand piloted in 2008. Children, young people and families were invited to submit work under the theme of 'What Makes Me Happy?' Posters were sent to youth groups, community centres, colleges, borough schools and were accessible via the Art & Soul web pages. This resulted in 15 new young participants. Art & Soul were happy to be contacted by the Oracle Gallery, based in the Isle of Wight, who heard about the project through the website.

Although the majority of contributors had exhibited in previous Art & Soul exhibitions, we additionally received new submissions from The Oracle Gallery, Together as One and Richmond Ethnic Women's Association, who participated for the first time.

Committee meetings were held during the run up to the exhibition on February 11, 26 and March 26 to discuss forward planning, publicity, decide on exhibition title and to collect group feedback. Two of these meetings were held as open forums within the Art & Soul workshops run by Julia Ruppert, allowing all participants to put forward comments.

Four new members were appointed to the committee: Anil Chopra, Margaret Jennings, Martha Beresford and Jay Dempsey. For Margaret and Jay, this was their first year participating in the Art & Soul programme. Betsy Lewis-Holmes was appointed as Co-ordinator to replace Janet MacLachlan. Betsy works for Orleans House Gallery and has previously assisted with a mental health stigma research project

(part of the nationwide 'Time to Change' programme) so has a particular interest in promoting good mental health.

The exhibition and workshops were planned to provide a regular, sustained programme allowing members to have a longer period of support and contact with the gallery site. Additional workshops, funded by the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (MLA) and the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE) began in October 2009 and continued till the end of the exhibition. The exhibition ran from 27 May – 4 July 2010, making it a much longer run than previous exhibitions, which ran for between 3-4 weeks.

As usual, there was no formal selection process for the exhibition, and one artwork by each member contributing was exhibited.

PROJECT BUDGET FOR 2010

Income

Start balance	£ 258.88
Hampton Fuel Allotment Charity	£3,000.00
Double O Charity	£2,000.00
Orleans House Gallery contribution in kind	£4,400

TOTAL: £9658.88

Expenditure

Adult Art & Soul workshops	£1,290.00
Junior Art & Soul workshops	£1,084.00
Equipment/refreshments	£428.47
Exhibition equipment:	£200.00
Frames:	£417.29
Artwork mounting	£280.54
Publicity design:	£199.00
Recruitment poster:	£127.00
Workshop flyers:	£54.00
Exhibition posters:	£127.00
Private View cards:	£182.00
Private View refreshments / hospitality: £428.30 (including private view photography and activity)	
Workshop support:	£210.00
Workshops venue hire:	£1,500.00
Coordination:	£1,000.00
Curation:	£1,500.00
Documentation:	£100.00
Evaluation:	£300.00
TOTAL:	£9,427.60

Remaining balance in Art & Soul account: £231.28

PROMOTION

A painting by Debbie Simeon was selected to feature on the posters and for the private view cards. The exhibition title 'Inner Discovery' was put forward by a group member and agreed on by a vote, during a workshop. As usual, posters were distributed throughout the borough to libraries, health centres, hospitals, Tourist Information Centre, Civic Centre, museums and galleries and Art & Soul member centres. Posters were also sent 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. A feature on Art & Soul was run in specialist health website Nursing Times.

WORKSHOPS

Following from 2008's feedback, an extensive workshop programme was devised by the committee and run by Julia Ruppert, with support from artist Eleanor Pile. The first workshop was held on October 10 2009 to coincide with World Mental Health Day. Along with funding from the MLA, NIACE and the Learning Revolution Transformation Fund; Art & Soul was able to offer a longer term programme, including five expressive arts workshops during November – December 2009. This was further followed by a nine week course during January – March 2010. All workshops, apart from World Mental Health Day, were held on regular Fridays. All workshops included a free lunch for participants.

The workshops provided a relaxing and creative space where regular members could meet up in an informal social setting and work creatively with the support of the whole group. As well as providing a space for regular members of Art & Soul, we were pleased to welcome new workshop participants, some of whom had never experienced art therapy. Over the course of the workshops, a 'core' group of people formed and these participants led the way in the committee meetings and took a more direct role in steering the exhibition and weekly projects.

As before, Julia Ruppert ran the workshops. She holds a post graduate diploma in Art Therapy and is a practicing artist. Julia has been running expressive arts workshops for Art & Soul for many years and as such has a good relationship with the regular members of the group.

The aims and objectives of the expressive art workshops were:

- Build a community of creative activity
- Create support structures and positive communication between participants
- Provide a space to confront problems both inside and outside of the studio – using challenges in art as metaphor for problem solving beyond the art environment

This year we had a very diverse group of participants – people with neurological problems, mental health and special needs. The group had a strong positive dynamic that was inclusive and very supportive to one another. It was a very self directed group who became active participants in the development of the final exhibition as well as the workshops.

Using 'accidental art' participants were invited to lose control over their methods of creating artwork and thus open themselves to new ways of thinking. Using still life, blind contour drawings were created, gestural quick drawings and printing with string used to remove the need for control in creativity.

Starting with the idea of 'What Makes Me Happy' the group created artwork that explored happiness through text and image – resulting in a collaborative artwork. This gave the workshops a clear agenda, which was empowering, challenging and positive.

EXHIBITION

The response from Art & Soul organisations and individual members was large – over 210 works were exhibited, almost double that of 2008. The varied subject matter determined the thematic layout, which was separated into sections such as seascape/landscape, abstract, portrait, flora and fauna and still life. There were 30 three dimensional works in a variety of media including ceramic, glass, stone and papier-mache. Some poetry was displayed, as well as work in the following media: photography, gouache, prints, oil, acrylic and textiles. Helen Robinson from RB Mind worked with the curator and gallery team to install the exhibition:

"The Art & Soul exhibition was set out in themes and colours and all together made a very colourful impact on me. All the little things were done so things like the hooks to hang the pictures were all painted white. These are things that became apparent when I helped with the hanging of the exhibition. There was a large team of helpers some who were service users as well and they took an active part in hanging."

Helen Robinson, RB Mind

Orleans House are happy to continue the partnership with RB Mind, through showcasing their work in the In Focus section of the main gallery, during Oct – Dec 2010.

The following centres contributed artwork to Art & Soul:

Art Aloud
Central and Cecil Housing Trust
Footsteps
Heathside Resource & Education Centre
INS Integrate Neurological Services
Joseph Palmer Center
Lakeside Pottery
RB Mind (old Centre 32)
REWA (Richmond Ethnic Woman's Association)
Richmond Adult Community College
Richmond upon Thames College
Stepping on Out
Sutton Drop in
The Access Project
The Aquarius Ward at Springfield Hospital
The Holly Lodge Centre
The Oracle Gallery
The social centre, RB Mind
The Star Centre
The Vineyard, The Vineyard Project
Together as One
Whitton Day Centre

A visitors' book and gallery feedback forms were available, and many appreciative comments were received (see Feedback). In total there were 12 sales.

It was helpful that once again many of the works were mounted and framed before submission. In addition, a professional framer dealt with those artworks requiring mounting and framing and Orleans House Gallery purchased new frames to create a consistent professional look to the exhibits and also made available a number of stock frames for this purpose.

As in 2008, the exhibition was on display for six weeks, compared to the usual three-four weeks for most shows in the Stables, to attract more visitors and encourage group visits by participating organisations. The total number of visitors was 2108, compared to 1440 in 2008 representing a 46% visitor number increase.

PRIVATE VIEW

The Private View took place on Thursday 27 May from 5 - 8 pm in the Stables Gallery and Courtyard. It was a well attended (268 visitors recorded) and enjoyable evening. Guests included artists with their families and friends, and some staff from the day centres. A range of food and drink was served and one of the artists played some music. A professional photographer was on hand to take photographs of the artists and their work, which were distributed to the artists after the event and some are included at the end of this report.

During the evening, Rachel Tranter, co-chair of Art & Soul and Head of Arts, made a speech, in which she thanked everyone for their hard work and dedication. She also confirmed the commitment and support of Orleans House Gallery, through Art & Soul, to the promotion of mental and emotional well-being through artistic expression. She commented on the importance of supporting new projects in the arts and mental health, such as the newly formed group Together as One, created in response to the closure of some day centres.



INVIGILATION

We are very grateful to Paul Ewart-Gadd for invigilating the exhibition and providing emergency cover as needed. Paul's enthusiasm and support for Art & Soul created a positive visitor experience, which was valued greatly by the public and is commented on in the visitor's book.

We are also very grateful to Catherine Jeffries, a new member of Art & Soul who helped invigilate the exhibition on regular weekends. She also worked with the Carnival arts team, creating floats that were used in the parade of Twickenham Carnival. Catherine is now applying to become a regular gallery volunteer.

FEEDBACK

Visitors were encouraged to comment on the exhibition in the visitor's book and through feedback forms. The feedback forms were tailored towards the aims of Art & Soul. In the feedback, 100% of those surveyed indicated that the exhibition had raised their awareness of mental and emotional health issues, and were overall satisfied or very satisfied with the Art & Soul exhibition. Of those surveyed, 10% had a physical or mental disability.

As usual, there were many positive and appreciative comments in the Visitors' Book. A total of 98 visitors wrote comments.

Sample Exhibition visitor comments:

"I enjoyed the variety of paintings, sculpture, poetry etc very much. Evident spontaneity in much of the work – gave me many a smile. A delightful show." (09/06/2010)

"There's some very beautiful work here, lovely and inspiring space." (10/06/2010)

"Thank you for a very inspiring show." (13/06/2010)

"I really enjoyed looking at the pictures and paintings, will definitely return with my wallet!" (13/06/2010)

"Very interesting ... unusual, and good to see people expressing themselves." (13/06/2010)

"Very moving. Something incredibly beautiful about people expressing themselves, 'coming out' of themselves. Some amazing art. So many pieces – I have to come back another day!" (19/06/2010)

"Great alternative to The Summer Exhibition!" (01/07/2010)

"Wonderful exhibition, composition and display well thought out. Brilliant opportunity for artists!" (01/07/2010)

"Fantastic exhibition – really inspiring." (03/07/2010)

"Excellent, very inspiring. Lovely to speak to Paul Gadd!" (04/07/2010)

Exhibition and Workshop feedback:

Julia Ruppert, expressive arts workshop leader:

"I feel the exhibition gets better every year – beautiful, colourful and positive. The exhibition empowered participants to feel a sense of success and achievement as creative people."

Jay Dempsey, workshop participant:

"I have found this group to be very valuable and therapeutic to me. The core members of this group have now developed to be very supportive of each other, and each member has been able to benefit greatly by this atmosphere. Overall this is a unique place and a very accepting group of people who benefit from a feeling of relaxation and wellbeing from participating."

Margaret Jennings, workshop participant:

"The workshops allowed us to explore and release unknown positive energies and develop a sense of pride in our creative potential. The whole experience was very relaxing, joyful and nurturing – therapeutic. ...The surprise at the glorious, rich variety of work, very imaginatively and beautifully set out with such care and thought for the exhibition filled me with deep pride and a wonderful sense of sharing both with the public and one another. I returned many times to learn from and enjoy others work. I would like to thank all those involved with this project, for all their time and hard work. I will always remember this experience with very happy memories, where I learnt much of myself and others."

Martin Gilbert, workshop participant:

"I have only come late to Art & Soul but I have found it tremendously therapeutic. Although I get anxious about coming here, when I am here it soothes and is very restful. It is very convivial and brilliant chatting to others and seeing the various talents on display"

Catherine Jeffries, workshop participant and gallery volunteer:

"Not only did I exhibit my work for the Art and Soul Exhibition, but I volunteered as an assistant, welcoming people in to see the exhibition. I thought the private view was well organised and a number of very interesting and artistic people attended. The exhibition itself showed varied talent and a mixture of emotional and mental conditions expressed through art. When I worked as an assistant I talked to visitors who were very enthusiastic and passionate about the exhibition. The workshops proved to be very supportive, encouraging and enjoyable."

Eleanor Pile, workshop assistant:

“As assistant to Julia, my role was to provide additional support to individuals throughout the session. On a more basic level this involved setting up and welcoming members of the group as they arrived, explaining the starting points for each particular session to those who missed Julia's introduction, suggesting and sourcing new materials for their work, and meeting any extra comfort/access needs. Some of the most rewarding aspects of the sessions for me included encouraging and enthusing people to try new ideas and take risks in the creative context of the session, as well as chatting about what they felt was more or less satisfying to them as they worked and reflecting together on the outcomes. Each member of the group brought a very unique set of ideas and interests to the session, which made for some rewarding cross-fertilisation as very different art work developed elbow to elbow around the room.”

Alice and group, Stepping On Out:

“We all agreed that it was good that our art was not put together under the Stepping on Out umbrella but displayed individually. It is wonderful to have an exhibition like this to showcase the talents of those with a disability, so that everyone can see that despite this, people can be amazingly creative.”

Nick Farey, Art aloud:

“Most of our group (Art aloud) were very impressed with the show! I liked the way we were treated with respect and as artists as opposed to "mentally ill" people. Also the venue is magnificent & the location by the river idyllic. As for the art itself I was very pleased with high quality & diversity of the work. Overall we were impressed.”

Jenny, Sutton Mental Health Foundation:

“This exhibition presents a wonderful opportunity for self expression, and motivation for our clients. It also serves to boost self esteem.”

Nuala Dempsey, workshop participant/artist:

“Very happy to be part of Art & Soul. The exhibitions get better each year. Well done everyone”

Chris Raymond, artist relative:

“I was able to visit the exhibition three times as I took some family members along at different times. On each visit I spotted something different which I had not noticed before. It was great to see that so many people had the opportunity to have their work on display especially that it was for 'everyone' - not just for those with great artistic talent! I thought that the Stables Gallery was a great place to hold this exhibition - not a 'formal' gallery and with space to escape if it got too busy/crowded. The Tea Room is also a very nice place to relax!

Though my son's canvas didn't sell it was good to know that people had actually seen a sample of his work which is usually just stacked up in his room. A friend was delighted to have sold his artwork. I see the whole concept of Art & Soul as a very worthwhile project indeed, giving support and some sense of hope to people who are struggling with mental health problems. The staff/Volunteers with whom I had contact were all very encouraging and helpful."

Renata Gross, Heathside Arts Workshop:

"On behalf of Heathside Art Workshop may I thank you for a truly enjoyable private view of the Art & Soul exhibition. We all agreed it was the best one so far. It was interesting to see the diverse exhibits hung in the best possible way in the newly refurbished Stables and a joy to Raymond Derzko that his model of Jack the Ripper was among the first to be sold. The exhibition certainly drew a crowd with many enquiries for the artists! In future shows it might be a good idea to get each artist to wear a badge with 'EXHIBITOR' on it to enable the public to identify them and approach them with questions about their work. This would invariably lead to more communication between artist and encourage the shyer exhibitor to explain their work. Thank you to you and all your team who worked so hard to produce this splendid exhibition and I wish it more ongoing success."

Councillor Pamela Fleming, Richmond Council's cabinet member for community development (2009)

"Art & Soul have worked with the council's Art Service for a number of years and each time their work goes from strength to strength. The huge amount of contributors this year has created a really unusual exhibition."

Paul Ewart-Gadd, exhibitor, workshop participant and long term member of Art & Soul:

"I have been involved in Art & Soul for eleven years and it is extremely important to me. This year I have taken part in workshops, looked after the exhibition (as I have done in the past) and also exhibited my work. The workshops are a social event as much as a class, a support group of like-minded empathetic individuals. The atmosphere is very different to traditional art therapy as it is an art gallery. The staff are more empathetic and open. There are no rules or regulations. The hanging of the exhibition was fantastic – put the Royal Academy to shame!

I was happy and pleased to be asked to look after the exhibition. Exhibiting in a major gallery such as this, gives people a huge boost to their self esteem. When looking after the exhibition I try to make it an uplifting experience for visitors. To walk into the gallery and realise that

people are capable of such diverse work is a positive experience for all people, which I try to encourage. I look forward to the next time."

ACHIEVEMENTS

- More regular activities and workshops, spread over a longer period. The original date for the 2010's exhibition was October 2010 – this was brought forward to May 2010 on the suggestion of an Art & Soul member.
- Marketing, including web content, was greatly improved and new members were recruited
- Art & Soul members took part in workshops creating carnival floats with artist-in-residence Jo Beldham, their work was part of the Twickenham Carnival parade.
- Supported Art & Soul members in independent living through volunteering initiatives at Orleans House Gallery.
- Committee meetings held within workshops allowing more members to raise & discuss issues, and plan the next exhibition and associated events well in advance. Four more committee members were appointed.
- The Junior Art & Soul / Expressive Arts programme of workshops continued and developed into a families programme.
- Improvements to systems – use of Excel for creating artwork labels and calculating pricing.
- Improved display – uniform framing.
- Increased participation from younger members.
- Longer exhibition run.
- Increase in members taking part in exhibition installation and de-installation.
- Continued links with RB Mind by holding displays about RB Mind in the main Orleans House Gallery during Sept-Oct 2010.

AREAS FOR FUTURE DEVELOPMENT

- Increasing online presence, allowing members to register online.

- Creating an online forum, allowing members to leave feedback and discuss issues, thoughts anonymously
- Continue links with RB Mind
- Support continuation of workshop group through follow up meetings, e.g. gallery visits
- Support new grassroots groups such as Together as One

CONCLUSION

Once again we were delighted with the response to the Art & Soul: Inner Discovery from 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.



Julia Ruppert and Jay Dempsey, workshop participant admire the collaborative piece 'What Makes Me Happy?' at the private view – with activity in background.



Nilda Norman, part of Joseph Palmer Centre with her work 'Leo - The Force'



Martha Beresford, a member of the Art & Soul workshops with her work 'Paternity'



Roy Whillock, member of Art & Soul workshop with his work 'Taxi cab – New York'