



'Transformations: Digital Prints from the V&A'

Name of Organisation

Paintings in Hospitals

Title of project/programme

Transformations: Digital Prints from the V&A

Dates of project/programme

2012

Summary

In Spring/Summer 2012 Paintings in Hospitals collaborated with the Victoria and Albert Museum to bring the therapeutic benefits of museum quality artworks to patients, staff and visitors of the Great Western Hospital, Swindon. Transformations: digital prints from the V&A collection brought together a range of artists who work with computers as an expressive and experimental medium. All of the prints featured in the exhibition had never been exhibited outside of the V&A, and in some cases they were displayed for the first time.

Paintings in Hospitals is a charity that uses art and creativity to improve the wellbeing of people with illness, addiction, autism and disability along with the people caring for them. The charity has a collection of 4,000 original artworks, which are available to the health sector for loan, and implements interactive art projects and exhibitions with museums.

Shortlisted for the Arts & Health South West Award 2013 for a health organisation

Overview

Identifying Need

Our experience of working with health and social care providers across the UK over past 54 years has taught us that artworks help to create welcoming and stimulating environments, conducive to improving wellbeing and promoting a positive image of healthcare. Our art loan collection and interactive arts projects are consistently in demand from the health and social care sector, with over 80% of our collection on public display at any one time. Furthermore, there is now an overwhelming body of evidence demonstrating that participating in the arts and having access to artworks can dramatically improve clinical outcomes and mental and physical health.

The Great Western Hospital reopened in 2002 with a new building and a mission to integrate the visual arts throughout the site. Paintings in Hospitals has been working with the hospital for the past eight years to help them fulfill this aim through loans of individual artworks and temporary Feedback about our work from staff and service users at the hospital over the course of our relationship has been overwhelmingly positive.

Aims and Objectives

The overall aim of this project was to offer patients, staff and visitors of the Great Western Hospital access to a unique national collection and the enrichment opportunities this provides.

- Paintings in Hospitals wanted to help a healthcare partner create an uplifting and stimulating environment as part of the charity's digital art programme.
- The V&A aimed to bring its Computer Art collection to new audiences and generate interest in the artists and techniques represented.
- The Great Western Hospital aimed to enhance a passing corridor and increase the quality of its temporary exhibition programme.

What We Did

Paintings in Hospitals worked with the Word & Image Department at the Victoria & Albert Museum and the Great Western Hospital to exhibit 11 artworks from the Museum's Computer Art Collection. We used our expert experience and knowledge of displaying museum standard artworks in health settings to deliver a successful project that met the needs and aims of all three stakeholders. The Programme and Collections Manager at Paintings in Hospitals

managed the project, from the inception and planning stages, right through to the evaluation.

Artforms

The exhibition brought together a range of artists who use computers as an expressive and experimental medium. All the artists featured use the computer as an artistic tool and as a conceptual framework to explore ideas about digital technologies, computational processes and time. The digital prints reveal multiple artistic styles, from the abstract geometric patterns to representational and painterly designs.

Intended Health Outcomes

- Help the Great Western Hospital create an uplifting and stimulating healthcare environment, conducive to improving wellbeing and promoting a positive image of healthcare.
- Provide patients, their families and healthcare professionals with moments of respite, reflection and distraction that would help them better cope with their time at the hospital.

Outputs

- A five-month exhibition of 11 prints.
- A private view for members and supporters of the three partner organisations.
- A curator's talk for 40 members of hospital staff.
- Coverage in local press and radio.

Partnerships

Over the past 10 years Paintings in Hospitals has worked in partnership with the Word & Image Department of the Victoria & Albert Museum to curate exhibitions in healthcare settings. The V&A provides access to its collection of prints and curatorial expertise, while Paintings in Hospitals offers its comprehensive knowledge and experience of the healthcare environment.

Paintings in Hospitals has also worked with the Great Western Hospital for the past 8 years assisting them in fulfilling their arts in health aims. This was the first time that the Great Western Hospital and the V&A had worked together.

When and Where

The exhibition took place from Thursday 19 April until Thursday 13

September 2012 at the Great Western Hospital, Swindon, in their Temporary Exhibition Space near the main entrance on the ground floor.

Activities

Two events were organised alongside the exhibition for the first time in the history of the collaboration between Paintings in Hospitals and the V&A; a private view and a Curator's talk. The private view took place on 18 April and was attended by representatives of all three parties (the V&A, the Great Western Hospital and Paintings in Hospitals) as well as guests from the Great Western Hospital. 20 people attended the event, including the Mayor of Swindon and local artists.

A talk by V&A Curator Melanie Lenz was organised by the hospital on 7 September at lunchtime, when most employees have a break between morning and afternoon clinics. The talk was extremely useful as it provided an opportunity to generate a better understanding of the prints exhibited. Some attendees reported that the talk had helped them view the exhibition in a different light and better connect with the artworks.

Innovation

The V&A were able to bring their Computer Art collection to new audiences and generate interest in the artists and techniques represented, as never before. In testament to our successful relationship with the V&A, all of the artworks featured in the exhibition had not previously been displayed outside of the Museum, and in some instances they were presented in public for the very first time. The project added value to the hospital's existing temporary exhibitions programme by providing unique access to museum standard artworks and curatorial expertise. This was the first time the hospital had collaborated with an internationally recognised museum, and importantly, the project has set a precedent for possible future partnerships.

Participation **Event Attendees**

In addition to the day-to-day exhibition visitors, 40 hospital staff members attended the curator's talk. Attendance to the event exceeded expectations and was well received. The talk provided a

platform for staff to ask questions and discuss the artworks, which in turn encouraged a better understanding of the exhibition and the motivation behind the project.

Professional Development

Paintings in Hospitals worked closely with the hospital arts coordinator and the V&A curator to organise the project, neither of whom had experience of similar projects. Through our work all parties gained new skills and knowledge in relation to displaying museum standard works in a health environment.

Outcomes

We believe that approximately 2,700 people passed by the exhibition over the five-month period. A comments box with specially designed cards was installed alongside the prints exhibited to invite patients, staff and visitors to give their feedback. The variety of messages left indicate that the exhibition was extremely well received and benefitted people in many ways.

Triggered thoughts and emotions

- 'Some artworks cheer me up, some make me think; they move my mind! I try to guess what the titles might be.' Member of staff at the Great Western Hospital
- 'Some of these works can stay with you to ponder on after you have seen them. They bring a different interest.' Patient at the Great Western Hospital
- 'This exhibition provides a nice change of scene and some of the works are thought-provoking.'

Member of staff at the Great Western Hospital

- 'I have just seen a passing man that stopped and look intently at the artworks. They are a great point of interest, they trigger emotions.' Patient at the Great Western Hospital

Uplifted spirits

- 'Every day I use this corridor as a rat run to my department. Every day I stop and look at the artworks. There is one piece in particular I really like – The Book of Transformations by Paul Brown. It is so uplifting. I will miss the artworks when they go.'
- Member of staff at the Great Western Hospital
- 'The artworks are spiritually uplifting and add a feeling of self-worth.' Patient at the Great Western Hospital

- 'Bare walls are very depressing. These beautiful artworks brighten up the corridor and help cheer me up on difficult days.' Member of staff at the Great Western Hospital

Offered moments of respite

- 'It is wonderful to stop and see. It stops you being absorbed into your world of health and worry.' Patient at the Great Western Hospital
- 'However temporarily, the art distracts you from your health issue. I was wandering through this corridor on day 6 and 7 of my stay at the hospital and the exhibition helped distract me from the pain.' Patient at the Great Western Hospital
- 'When I am on call over the weekend and feel lost or stressed, these artworks help me get over the shifts.' Member of staff at the Great Western Hospital

Learning

The healthcare environment has higher temperature and light levels than museums. Finding a setting that meet conservation requirements is challenging and in this instance, has delayed the inception of the project. Paintings in Hospitals has therefore improved its information recording processes to identify healthcare partners that can meet museum-standard conservation requirements. The comments box broke half way through the exhibition, which limited the amount of feedback received. Implementing a self-evaluation method in a passing corridor is challenging and not the most fruitful. It would be best to invest some staff time for the next exhibition to implement a more robust evaluation system. For the next exhibition, it would be beneficial to take professional photographs of the display and events to better document the project.

Critical Success Factors

Transformations: digital prints from the V&A collection was a great success, from the quality of the display through to the events' attendance and media coverage.

- Staff at the Great Western Hospital were very supportive of the project and provided the necessary resources to ensure safe installation and de-installation of the exhibition.
- The partnership between Paintings in Hospitals and the V&A curators worked very well and resulted in an excellent selection and display of prints.

- Due to the overwhelming success of the project the V&A has agreed to tour the exhibition to the Royal Brompton Hospital, London in autumn 2013.

On this occasion Paintings in Hospitals will also be working in partnership with the V&A learning department to deliver a series of workshops for hospital patients.

Press Coverage

Paintings in Hospitals and the Great Western Hospital partnered on a PR campaign, which resulted in 10 minutes coverage on BBC radio Swindon and BBC radio Wiltshire on 30 April as well as articles in the local press.

http://www.swindonadvertiser.co.uk/news/local/9659939.Museum_pictures_on_display_at_GWH/

http://www.gazetteandherald.co.uk/news/9667441.Hospital_art_to_soothe_patients/

The communication department at the Great Western Hospital also promoted the exhibition on the hospital's website and internal newsletter. The V&A Curator listed the exhibition in the Word & Image Department's Annual Review, which has a museum-wide readership.

Paintings in Hospitals listed the exhibition on its website as well as arts in health online platforms, more specifically the London Arts in Health Forum and Arts & Health South West. The charity's social media platforms (Facebook and Twitter) were also updated regularly, raising awareness about the exhibition to over 800 followers.

Funding and Resources

Project Budget

Staff costs (Paintings in Hospitals): £3,795

V&A borrowing costs: £4,020

Transport: £150

Installation/de-installation: £350

Insurance: £500

Education/Interpretation: £500

PR/Marketing: £500

TOTAL £9,815

Funding for this project came for Paintings in Hospitals' core costs.

Contact details for further information

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