

Access & Community programme report for the Lord Leonard and Lady Estelle Wolfson Foundation

Report covering period May 2017 – April 2018

The Lord Leonard and Lady Estelle Wolfson Foundation has kindly supported the National Portrait Gallery's Access and Community programme since 2013 and we are most grateful to the Trustees for their continued help. This report outlines some of the activities and audiences the funding has enabled over the past year. This includes *Musical Portraits*, the Gallery's creative arts project for young people with autism; the Gallery's onsite access public programme and *Creative Spaces*, our art studio project for learning disabled adults.

1. Musical Portraits partnership project with Wigmore Hall and Turtle Key Arts



2017 Rehearsal at Wigmore Hall, image by Alan Bowyer

Since 2010, the Gallery has worked in partnership with Wigmore Hall and Turtle Keys Arts to deliver *Musical Portraits*, a visual arts and musical engagement project in the summer holidays for young people aged 10-14 years old with Autism Spectrum Conditions (ASC).

The successful partnership between the three organisations ensures the project is delivered professionally, sensitively and creatively with the individual needs of the young people and creativity at the heart of the partnership. The Collection at the Gallery is the focus for the project and artists work with the young people to explore two portraits. Wigmore Hall provides Ignite – their ensemble group, including a composer, musical instruments, and a performance space. They work with the young people to create new compositions inspired by the portraits resulting in a performance at Wigmore Hall for family members, carers and friends. Turtle Key Arts provide the expertise with recruiting the young people and supporting them and their families.

Musical Portraits responds to the needs of young people with ASC, encouraging the development of social interaction and communication skills. By working with artists, musicians and a composer their creative response to art and music is celebrated with the performance of their work.

ASC can cause a wide range of symptoms, which are often grouped into two main categories:

- **Problems with social interaction and communication** – including problems understanding and being aware of other people's emotions and feelings; it can also include delayed language development and an inability to start conversations or take part in them properly.
- **Restricted and repetitive patterns of thought, interests and physical behaviors** – including making repetitive physical movements, such as hand tapping or twisting, and becoming upset if these set routines are disrupted.

Those with ASC are often also affected by other mental health conditions such as attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), anxiety or depression. About half of those with ASC also have varying levels of learning difficulties. (Information provided by the NHS www.nhs.uk).

The National Autistic Society describes autism as a lifelong disability that affects how a person makes sense of the world, processes information and relates to other people. People with ASC often find social situations very difficult. 22% of young people with autism responding to a 2012 survey said they had no friends at all. (Information provided by the National Autistic Society.)

Project Aims and Objectives

- To provide creative arts provision for young people with autism during the school holidays when there is limited, specialist, free provision
- To increase creative and cultural participation for autistic young people and encourage the development of art, music, creativity, ideas, literacy and communication
- To engage with art and music-making in renowned venues and respected organisations, supported by professional musicians, artists and pastoral support staff
- To enhance health, wellbeing and happiness through engaging with the creative arts. Providing enjoyment, fun and active participation with a peer group of others with similar experiences
- To engage new, hard to reach audiences beyond the Gallery with the Gallery's Collection

- To broaden our work with the wider community, encouraging the young people to visit the Gallery independently with their families
- To broaden our partnership work with different organisations outside the heritage sector.

Musical Portraits ran from Monday 24 July – Thursday 27 July 2017. Working with a group of ten young people aged 10-14 years old for four days, musicians and artists took inspiration from the Collection to create and perform new musical compositions with the young people. The portraits in focus this year included Edwin Landseer by John Ballantyne and the Sharp Family portrait by Johan Joseph Zoffany, which provided rich inspiration for the young people.

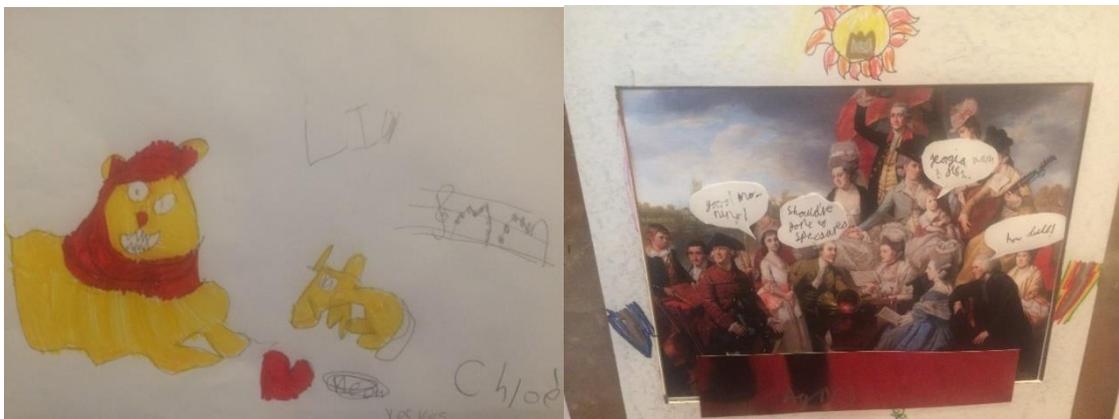


Edwin Landseer
by John Ballantyne



The Sharp Family
by Johan Joseph Zoffany

The young people explored how Edwin Landseer scaled up his drawing of a lion into the sculptures that sit in Trafalgar Square today. They tried this process out themselves using a pantograph device (he used a similar device, which is featured in the portrait). This was then linked to the music activity, which included scaling up/down. With the Sharp Family portrait young people thought about the narrative behind the portrait and what they might be saying/thinking. This then influenced a lyric writing activity with the musicians.



Creative activities inspired by the portrait of the Sharp Family and Edwin Landseer.

Outcomes for the young people included the following:

- Reduced social isolation, improved communication skills and increased confidence/self-esteem.
- Enjoyment in the creative process, taking part in creative activities and a sense of achievement through seeing the results of their work.

Response of participants to the question: ‘Do you find the Musical Portraits project different from other groups that you attended? If so, how?’

‘Yes it was loud and more chatty’

‘Different because there is new students, and new people, made me nervous’

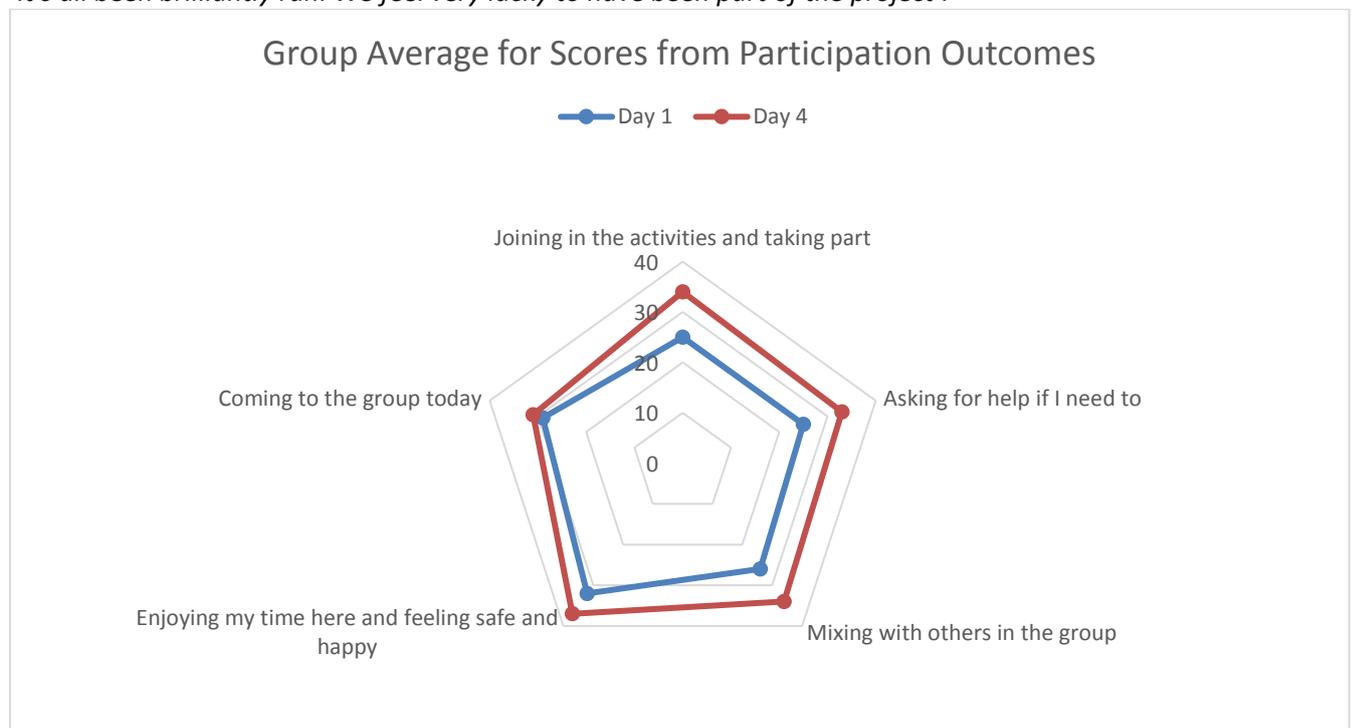
‘I love it!!!!’

Response of parents to the question: ‘What, if any, benefits do you feel your child has got from this project that they cannot get from involvement in ordinary mainstream creative projects?’

‘xxx does not do any mainstream activities - we have learned from experience. She sticks out like a sore thumb and can become very anxious. Musical Portraits has been wonderful for her sense of self-worth. She really enjoys coming. School is a huge problem, she refuses to go regularly and has separation anxiety. She has really enjoyed this, and has been able to feel that she can interact with others and be accepted for who she is. It has been wonderful to see.’

‘xxx is chronically bullied in a mainstream grammar school. He has self-harmed. This project allows him to be who he is and the staff are gentle, compassionate and understanding. It has helped him understand autism whilst making music.’

‘It’s all been brilliantly run. We feel very lucky to have been part of the project’.



This graph demonstrates how young people felt on the first day of the project compared to the fourth day of the project. This shows an increase in confidence and enjoyment.

The project takes place at the start of the summer holidays, enabling a wider range of young people to take part. Evaluation demonstrates that the project enables parents to spend time in London with their other children during the project and then all join together at the performance.

In October 2017, Ignite performed the compositions created by the young people during the July Musical Portraits project at the Gallery as part of Late Shift, the Gallery's Friday night lates programme. This provided a wider opportunity for audiences to hear about the project and enjoy the music created during the project. It also provided a moment for the young people and their families who participated in the summer project to return to the Gallery and meet each other again. The event attracted over 100 members of the public.

The performance included not only compositions created by young people but also some of their own compositions, which linked with the portraits in focus. For example, *Vauxhall Gipsy*, a dance piece dating back to the time of the Sharp family (*The Sharp Family* by Johan Joseph Zoffany), and referring to the Pleasure Gardens, a park at Vauxhall, on the banks of the Thames in London.

The evening was well received and was a valuable showcase for the project and partnership.

IGNITE PERFORMANCE AT THE NATIONAL PORTRAIT GALLERY

FREE FRIDAY 27 OCTOBER, 18.30, ROOM 20



Hannah Strijbos

We would be delighted if you can join us!

National Portrait Gallery

Ignite ensemble will be performing compositions, including arrangements of some of the work composed during recent Musical Portraits projects.

The performance will take place in room 20 of the Gallery and will last approximately 1 hour.

You are invited to join the team in the Education Studio from 17.45 onwards for refreshments and a workshop using Model Magic (modelling material used in July workshop).

Invite to Ignite performance

In the February 2018 half-term school holidays, the participants from the sum 2017 project were invited back to take part in **Musical Band**. Artist Chloe Cooper worked with the group to explore and take inspiration from the Gallery's portrait of Sir William Henry Perkin, a chemist working in the 19th

Century. He is known for his accidental discovery of the colour mauve while he was in fact attempting to discover a treatment for malaria at the age of eighteen. Young people discussed the idea of experimenting, trial and error and happy mistakes. The portrait of Perkin was the starting point to think about mosquitos through music and art. There was a music activity inspired by mosquito sounds. The young people then created lenticulars of mosquitos so their artwork appeared to change when viewed from different angles.

Musical Band culminated in a showcase for family and friends at Wigmore Hall. The opportunity for thirteen young people to come back and participate in another project had a very positive impact on them. Young people were familiar with some of the others in the group and the adults working with them so were able to focus on the creative activities more quickly.



Mosquito lenticulars created by young people

Each year the project builds and is a model of best practice. Each partner brings their skills and expertise to the project and now in its eighth year this partnership continues to flourish. The feedback from young people and their parents demonstrates the value of this project in enhancing experimentation and confidence with the creative arts, introduces young people to feeling comfortable and confident in an art Gallery, promotes wellbeing and happiness, and provides an enjoyable, fun and active project for young people to meet and forge new friendships and work collaboratively with each other creatively and with artists and musicians.

2. Visualising Portraits

Visualising Portraits is our monthly picture description talks programme for blind and partially sighted visitors. Artists, historians and photographers who are trained in delivering audio descriptions of pictures lead the talks. Visualising Portraits attract a core group of regular attendees who value the sessions and in addition to the art appreciation they learn, they have also forged new friendships and a feeling of community.



Visualising Portraits session in the Gallery

When programming the talks, we consider quiet spaces in the Gallery and select a range of different portraits to explore ranging from historic to contemporary. The talks focus on the art and the biographies of the sitter. Some of the talks that have proved popular this past year included:

- The group discussing new artworks created by Julian Opie in response to Van Dyck's final self-portrait
- The BP Portrait Award - participants enjoyed the exhibition and found out more about the variety of styles and approaches to the contemporary painted portrait in this annual painting competition
- The group visited the *Creative Connections: Nottingham* display and explored the notion of community, finding out more about inspirational sitters connected to Nottingham
- The Taylor Wessing Photography Prize was discussed with photographer Marysa Dowling.

Between May 2017 and April 2018, 90 adults attended *Visualising Portraits* sessions, an average of 9 adults each month.

3. British Sign Language (BSL) events

Adults

British Sign-Language Gallery tours take place each month during *Late Shift* on a Thursday evening. There is a strong following to the tours with an average of between 25-30 audience members to each event. The tours are led in BSL with some events interpreted into English.

Events over the past year have included:

- John Wilson led a tour of the *Speak its Name!* display which features portraits accompanied by quotations from sitters discussing their own experience of 'coming out.'
- Serena Cant explored the significance of clothing in portraits in a tour that took in examples from different periods.

- In October a BSL interpreter was booked for the in conversation event with curator John Elderfield and Tim Marlow (Artistic Director, Royal Academy of Arts), celebrating the opening of *Cezanne Portraits*.

Between May 2017 and April 2018, 169 adults attended *our BSL events*, an average of 25 adults each month.



BSL Gallery tour, Julian Opie after Van Dyck during Late Shift

Families

BSL events for families take place every 3 months during school holidays. There continues to be a strong interest in attending these events with an average of 6-8 families attending each event and accessing the interpretation services. During October half-term, workshops were themed around the *Cezanne Portraits* exhibition with families exploring different painting techniques and processes. Deaf artist Chris Sacre led two family workshops. The session was offered to deaf and hearing families and there was positive feedback.

4. Creative Spaces

Creative Spaces is an eight-week course, which runs twice yearly in the spring and autumn. It is an opportunity for adults with learning disabilities to work with professional artists, try new processes and use the Gallery's collection as a resource for creating artworks. The Gallery works in close partnership with two local organisations, The Westminster Society for People with Learning Disabilities and Action Space to select ten participants for each programme. Participants are selected following the submission of an application for their place on the programme, a process which encourages the commitment of those who really want to learn and benefit from this experience.

Aims and objectives of the programme:

- To provide an on-site creative arts space for learning disabled adults
- To engage learning disabled artists with the Gallery and its Collection through creative art sessions
- For participants to explore their practice, develop their skills
- The Gallery to provide support and introduce new approaches and techniques within the area of portraiture
- To work with key specialist partners to reach a new audience
- To foster confidence in the development of ideas and approaches with the participants
- To encourage participants to access the public programme at the Gallery, for example Drop in Drawing (Late Shift) and The Drawing Room.

Each course involves two artists, who lead four sessions each which offers the participants a chance to engage with a range of media and different styles of art. Workshops over the past year have included:

- Made cyanotype photographs inspired by the *A Century of Photography: 1840-1940* display
- Worked with mixed media to build layers to make a self portrait
- Worked collaboratively on portraits of the body
- Created three-dimensional portraits



Cyanotype photography

Photographs by Martha Linfield



Creating three-dimensional figures

At the end of the course, they curate a display of their work showcasing the work they have created over 8 weeks and learning the skills of curation.

Feedback from the participants in *Creative Spaces* and their support workers has been very positive. Comments have included:

Participants

'I have enjoyed coming to the Gallery and meeting new people

'Trying out things I might not usually try out. Expanding boundaries, going out of my comfort zone'

'I think I've grown in confidence'.

Comments from artist facilitators, carers and staff from the partnership charities

'Carer said it was rare to see her smile. She wasn't feeling very well this morning but still wanted to come which shows how much she enjoys the sessions'

'xxxx was more aware and watching people compared to previous sessions – he was also vocal and made more sounds than I've heard before'

'Carers were going to take her home because she wasn't engaging at all to start. But when we started to make the sculpture she got really engaged and was laughing and smiling.'

Creative Spaces increases creative and cultural participation for learning disabled adults. Participants have gained confidence and developed skills and ideas to continue with after the 8 week programme finishes. Some participants have since felt confident enough to attend the Gallery's public drop in drawing offer.

Creative Spaces was delivered in autumn 2017 and spring 2018 with 15 participants taking part in each programme.

5. Access Guide

The Access Audit undertaken by Vocaleyes and Action on Hearing Loss provided us with invaluable information on our current access provision at the Gallery and a list of recommendations for best practice. The key finding from the focus groups flagged that the Gallery has a good access programme, resources and facilities but that it isn't visible enough when onsite in the Gallery. We have responded to this by writing and creating a comprehensive Access Guide that will be available to pick up from the front desk and Visitor Service Assistants will have copies and undertake training to ensure that we communicate our access offer to audiences. The Guide is currently being printed and will be available in the Gallery end April 2018.

With thanks to the Lord Leonard and Lady Estelle Wolfson Foundation

The support of the Lord Leonard and Lady Estelle Wolfson Foundation has been invaluable in enabling a wide variety of activities as part of the National Portrait Gallery's Access programme to take place. The Gallery is extremely grateful for this support.