

Reframing the Muse

Summary
An intergenerational photography project working with newly arrived migrant, refugee and asylum seeking teenage girls from the Baytree Centre in Brixton, and socially isolated, older women in the Southwark area.

Background
At Dulwich Picture Gallery our inclusive programmes cater for audiences of all ages, inviting people to unlock the stories behind paintings and find personal connections with art.

Challenge
This project provided a unique opportunity for local socially isolated older women and young women new to the UK to learn new skills together. It helped the younger women develop and practise their language skills in a friendly, creative and engaging environment whilst providing a forum for both to address the representation of women in Dulwich Picture Gallery's permanent collection.

Approach
A project group was established which included staff from Dulwich Picture Gallery, the Baytree Centre, and a professional photographer.

A series of workshops were designed to create photographs responding to female representation in the gallery's permanent collection.

Key vocabulary was identified for each session and formed part of the English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) classes run by Baytree Centre, which the young participants attended in the run up to the workshops.

Older participants were recruited from programmes at Dulwich Picture Gallery for socially isolated older people and young people came via the Baytree Centre's *Into School* programme.

Intended outcomes
Within the project the aim was for women of different generations and backgrounds to work together to discuss, learn and form a better understanding of each other and their creative process. They were to work together to explore the gallery, discuss ideas of the portrayal of women and age and have the chance to make a statement of their own.

They also worked together to improve the confidence of the younger participants in using English.

- Intended outputs**
- Six gallery-based workshops.
 - One workshop at Photofusion Photography Centre's editing suite in Brixton.
 - A final photographic exhibition and celebration event.

Obstacles and issues
Although transport costs for the participants were built into the budget, the co-ordination of the transport took up a significant part of planning as participants needed additional support in the form of letters and phone calls before each session detailing their transport schedules.

As the group became established it became clear that participants couldn't be guaranteed to attend each week. In addition many of the young women initially identified for the project moved into school before the project started, as a result we ended up with a group with lower than expected English language skills. We changed the content of the project and we reframed the project themes to focus on three main questions. Each question had a universal focus and could be easily translated through visual cues and accessible language. We included an output at the end of each session, so that no matter the level of attendance every participant was included in the final exhibition.

Actual outcomes
The women really came together as a supportive group. Despite the language barriers and age difference the support and friendship in the sessions were the highlight of the project.

New skills were learnt, using the cameras over the weeks and working with Photofusion artist to learn new computer skills. For some of the younger participants this was their first digital experience.

Linking Baytree's *Into School* ESOL lessons to the workshops with vocabulary lists meant that the girls arrived for each session with some language they felt confident in using, and therefore in a good position to try things and learn further.

- Actual outputs**
- 2 taster sessions.
 - 3 creative workshops.
 - 1 photo editing session.
 - Creation of a pop-up exhibition of the created photographs and a project photo journal for each participant.

Lessons learned
Being flexible, having patience and maintaining regular communication with all partners was required to adapt to the changes and challenges throughout the project. However, this flexibility needed extra staff time and resources.

We had to completely re-draft our initial project schedule due to the changing circumstances of the young people, and the additional co-ordination required for travel arrangements. The overall result was positive as it became a stronger project which changed and responded to the participants.

Next steps
The pop-up exhibition was exhibited for a month at Dulwich Picture Gallery before moving to the Baytree Centre. It will continue to pop-up at different events across the community throughout the year. The Baytree



Centre participants will continue to work with the gallery and will be supporting the gallery to develop ESOL tours and activities for young migrants, refugees and asylum seekers.

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Further information

www.dulwichpicturegallery.org.uk/whats-on/exhibitions/2018/april/reframing-the-muse/
www.baytreecentre.org/youth-service/into-school/

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