

INSIDE OUTSIDE

July - October 2006



Project Description

Art Therapy sessions for mental health outpatients at Launceston General Hospital, culminating in an exhibition during Mental Health Week.

Host Organisation

Launceston General Hospital

Funding sources

Launceston City Council

Outcomes

Exhibition. Participants going on to be active in the arts community

Highlights

Seeing the changes in people's lives.

Project workers

Wendy Nash (Art Therapist)
Jenny Pike, Amanda Rowlands,
Peter Wager, Jan Dorman & Carol
Campbell

Keywords

Visual Art, Launceston,
Mental Health

Project Contact

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Inside Outside began with the observation by participants that the types of medications they were on often dulled their senses. This gave rise to the idea to hold – an exhibition where people would come not just to view, but to experience, the work. Part of the aim was to break down stigmas associated with mental illness in the wider community.

It was thought that the medications people were on might limit the amount of energy participants had for the project. However, with all the stimulation and the amount of self-direction they had, people were coming in on the weekends and putting in extra time on their works.

Some of the participants had creative or artistic backgrounds and undertook their own projects, while others decided to create sensory colour experiences where the viewer was invited to experience colours using all their senses.

Art works and installations were produced using silk screens, clay modeling, dead fish printing, whale bones, stones and more. Sounds, recorded from a woodworking session, were played in the background. There was a video on schizophrenia, made by one participant in his final year at university.

The corridor became a series of rooms, with a veil of kelp at the entrance.

“You could hear people coming down the corridor, they weren't just standing and looking”.

Stories from the participants, relating to the work, were written down and incorporated into the exhibition. People experiencing the works were very drawn in by this, as it enabled them to make a real connection to the person behind the artwork. Many health professionals returned more than once, while community and social workers asked Wendy about how to replicate the process.

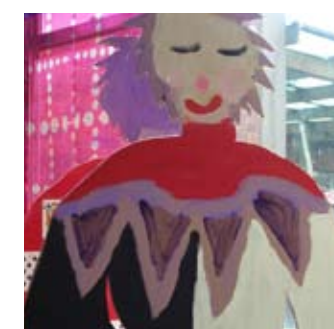
Wendy made the observation that in the area of mental health, people often get stuck, what with institutions, drugs, stigma and so on.

“If it goes on for a length of time, it can be quite difficult to shift ...to enable people to get their life breath back, so to speak”.

Inside Outside is an outstanding example of not only giving people their breath back, but also providing the wider community with valuable insight into the lives of participants - the multi sensory experience proved to be a great leveler.



“We are a group of artists who meet weekly. We are creative, whole and unique. We travel together on colourful, conceptual and surreal journeys. We invite you to join us, to step outside “yourself” and discover the person within”. - Stella Ferreras



“One participant ‘didn't know she was valid ...’ she went from being not very active in the community and now she's alive, she's evolving in herself”. - Wendy Nash

Images

Top: Alida Mullins figure (Detail)
Middle: Mandala with figures (Detail)
Bottom: Alida Mullins figure #2 (Detail)