

Pedagogic Prescription: art and design teaching practice and object-led wellbeing

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Introduction

It is now recognised that loneliness and social isolation contribute to a number of psychological and physiological problems, from elevated blood pressure and fragmented sleep to depression and anxiety (Cacioppo and Cacioppa, 2014; Wang, et al., 2018). With social isolation and mental health problems on the rise in the UK, there is a clear need for an integrated response that tackles the cause as well as the symptoms (Thompson, et al., 2015; Camic, et al., 2017). A recent increase in socially engaged practice in UK Museums has seen many working to deliver object-led therapeutic activities either as part of formal social prescribing schemes or through relationships with local communities.

This chapter is based on the experiences of the Central Saint Martins Museum & Study Collection, an Accredited museum based within an art school, which is delivering well-being workshops for a range of mental health service users and older adults at risk of social isolation. The chapter will argue that the pedagogic practices used in art and design, coupled with a museological approach to object-based learning (Paris, 2002), provide an ideal basis for addressing issue of well-being.

Art and design pedagogic methodologies challenge participants, encourage self-reflection and create opportunities for emotional engagement and flow states (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996; 1998). They also encourage skills such as emotional intelligence, resourcefulness and adaptability, all of which can play a key role in tackling social isolation and mental health problems and have long lasting impacts on participants. While there is already a considerable body of evidence to support the well-being implications for museum based activities (Chatterjee and Noble, 2013; Morse et al., 2017; Todd et al., 2017), the potential impact of art and design teaching practices within the well-being agenda will be discussed here in full for the first time.

Central Saint Martins Museum & Study Collection and Well-being Provision

Central Saint Martins is one of six colleges that make up University of the Arts London (UAL). The Central Saint Martins Museum & Study Collection (M&SC) is a rich and varied art and design teaching collection which tells the story of the College's 150 year history. The oldest objects in the collection are medieval manuscripts dating from the 14th century, while more recent acquisitions include textiles woven from fish skin or coloured by atmospheric pollution. The collection comprises over 25,000 objects, 5,000 books and periodicals and 100 linear metres of archive material, and is embedded in learning and teaching and curriculum development within Central Saint Martins and the wider University.

The M&SC teaches formally assessed student projects and delivers one-off workshops on object literacy to individual courses and through the University's Academic Support Programme. As an Accredited Museum, the M&SC also has an external profile servicing researchers from outside the University and working with a variety of local schools and community groups. While the M&SC does have a public exhibition programme, it does not have a permanent display space, so its primary mode of engaging with visitors is through object handling sessions. Consequently, the M&SC has a considerable history of research and practice around the potential power of objects as pedagogic tools (Willcocks, 2015; Barton and Willcocks, 2017) and participates in a university-wide Community of Practice, sharing knowledge around object-led pedagogic activity with academic, technical and curatorial staff.

More recently the M&SC has begun to explore the therapeutic value of objects and in 2016 delivered its first ten-week course of well-being activities via the Museums on Prescription programme, a three year UK Arts and Humanities Research Council funded research project (2015 – 2017) led by UCL and Canterbury Christ Church Universities exploring the role of museums in social prescribing for socially isolated older adults. Social prescribing is 'a mechanism for linking patients with non-medical sources of support within the community (CentreForum, 2014, p.6) and social prescribing schemes represent a more holistic approach to healthcare, based on the premise that prevention is better than cure and often costs less than clinical care (Thompson et al., 2015).

Evaluation of social prescribing schemes in the UK shows positive outcomes for participants including increased sociability, a sense of empowerment and improved psychological well-being. Socially prescribed activities can also reduce symptoms of anxiety and depression, contributing to a reduction in GP visits and healthcare referrals (Thomson et al., 2015). Evaluation of the Museums on Prescription programme through grounded theory analysis revealed that participants' confidence and self-esteem grew as a result of attending the ten-week course and that taking part provided an alternative to the illness narrative (Todd et al., 2017).

Since taking part in the Museums on Prescription programme, the M&SC has continued to develop well-being workshops for a number of community partners, including: the Claremont Project, a community arts centre for the over 55s based in Islington; Mind Camden, a mental healthcare charity which organises the Healthy Minds programme for adults struggling with mental health issues; and Portugal Prints, a therapeutic art group for mental healthcare users over 18 with a Care Plan Approach and personalised budget.

This in itself is not unusual in the museum world, where many organisations have some kind of well-being offer (Silverman, 2002; Chatterjee and Noble, 2013; Morse et al., 2017). However, a significant number of our workshops will also combine creative engagement (most often through object handling) and creative practice (an opportunity to make or create something) scaffolded by art and design teaching practice. There are also opportunities to meet (and be taught by) students and recent graduates, creating ample opportunities for well-being outcomes.

Evaluation and Research

While taking part in the Museums on Prescription programme the M&SC was part of a large, funded research project evaluated through a mixed methods research methodology and involving several qualified psychologists assessing mood and well-being through the use of various well-being scales – an approach which provided rich, robust results and added to the existing body of evidence in suggesting the benefits of offering object-led or creative workshops for those suffering from social isolation, issues of ageing or mental health problems (Kilroy et al., 2007; Cameron et al., 2013; Thomson, et al., 2015; Camic et al., 2017).

There is always room for more evidence, but as an organisation with limited resources delivering a relatively small programme of well-being related activities it was felt that the M&SC's most useful contribution would be through a small qualitative study, using a series of semi-structured interviews with workshop participants. While not without drawbacks (questions can prove leading and there is always the danger of bias) semi-structured interviews allow for rich personalised accounts, explore commonalities of experience and are flexible enough to probe unexpected responses (Bell, 2010). In this respect they can deepen the evidence gathered from larger randomised control trials.

A list of questions (Table 1), a participant information sheet and consent forms were submitted to the Central Saint Martins College Research Committee for approval. Participants were recruited in conjunction with our community partners and efforts were made to recruit an equal number of male/female participants. Participants were offered a gift voucher by way of thanks for their time in attending the interviews. Five participants took part in interviews which lasted for about an hour. All participants were offered the opportunity to be interviewed in a venue of their choice, but all chose to return to Central Saint Martins for the interview, seeing the interviews as part of the therapeutic process.

Table 1

1. Where do you usually go to find out what's available?
2. Have you ever been given information about socially prescribed activities by your GP or pharmacist?
3. What works better for you? Single workshops? Short courses? Or would you prefer ongoing provision?
4. Do you prefer to sign up for workshops as part of an organised or semi organised group? Or would you be happy to come alone?
5. What is your main motivation for attending workshops? Learning? The social aspect? The challenge of doing something new?

6. Can you describe your experience of attending our workshops? I'd like to hear about anything that worked well for you and anything that could have been improved.
7. Was our setting in an art school part of the attraction of signing up?
8. As a result of coming to our workshops have you or would you consider coming to other activities in Central Saint Martins (for example our degree shows or the Make event)?
9. Has attending the workshop or workshops at CSM had any long lasting impact? Is there anything you are doing differently? Have you tried anything new as a result?
10. Have you attended other creative workshops either before or after attending the workshops at CSM?
11. If you have attended other creative workshops can you describe the experience including what worked well for you and what could have been improved?
12. What barriers do you face in attending workshops?
13. Is there anything we could do to help overcome those barriers?
14. Is there anything else you would like to share?

The Interviews revealed that bereavement and caring for partners or close relatives with long-term sickness featured high on the list of issues faced by participants, though a number had been experiencing mental health issues (from anxiety and depression to social phobias and even psychotic episodes) all their lives. Those suffering from life-changing mental health issues all spoke of a pressurised healthcare system that was hard to navigate with long waiting times for services such as counselling. Older participants also cited the loss of subsidised adult-learning classes which had proven a life-line in the past.

While efforts were made to recruit a balanced group of interviewees it did prove a struggle to find participants who had no real prior experience of crafting, making or creative practice. We were also somewhat led by the willingness of participants or their ability to attend the interview (some were unable to travel alone.) This chapter uses their personal stories to demonstrate the impact of the M&SC's well-being workshops across the themes of creative engagement, creative practice and art and design pedagogy. As much has already been written about creative engagement and creative practice in terms of their impact on or contribution to the well-being agenda, the main emphasis will be on the impact of art and design pedagogy.

Creative Engagement in Museum Settings and Well-being

Almost all of the M&SC's well-being workshops begin with a 'creative engagement' through the direct handling of museum objects and artworks, including prints, photographs, printed

and woven textiles, collages, paintings, drawings, films and rare books and manuscripts. These handling activities provide a focal point for communal discussion and give workshop leaders an opportunity to assess and understand the group. Workshop participants are generally quite vocal about how much they appreciate the chance to handle rare or precious objects, or those which have been deemed by the M&SC to be worthy of collection, with many citing in their interview how much they enjoyed the object handling element of the workshops. One described visiting the M&SC as a '*real bonus*' and another (viewing a print by Eduardo Paolozzi) exclaimed '*I never expected to be handling an original!*'

Slivia (2005) notes that from ancient times 'theories of aesthetics have emphasised the role of art in evoking, shaping and modifying human feelings'. Objects and artworks can act as powerful metaphors, enabling abstract ideas to be communicated and understood, and there is now a considerable evidence base to suggest that engaging with objects and artworks in a museum or gallery setting can have significant well-being impacts from reducing anxiety and contributing to a sense of identity (Chatterjee and Noble, 2013), through encouraging problem solving and producing greater self-efficiency (Morse et al., 2017) to decreasing pain and social disconnection (de Tommaso et al., 2008; Koebner et al., 2018).

In recent years, academic literature has increasingly addressed the importance of haptic engagements with museum collections. Candlin (2008), Phillips (2008), Manfredi (2013) and Willcocks (2015) have all written about the power of handling objects in a museum context while Chatterjee (2009) has identified the therapeutic value of touch in the same arena. Object engagements through handling 'allow the user to drive and manage their own learning experience and to engage more deeply with the objects' (Willcocks, 2015, p.47), and the fact that touch is experienced via the areas of the brain that deal with emotion, motivation and memory (Gallace and Spence, 2008) suggests object handling sessions may have a significant role to play in well-being interventions.

Chatterjee and Noble (2013) have also noted that museum-led wellbeing activities offer opportunities for social interaction in non-clinical settings. This proved to be important for M&SC workshop participants, many of whom suffered from loneliness, social isolation or social dislocation. While a number of participants followed creative pursuits at home they all enjoyed the opportunity to work communally or in a group. One commented that '*It's nice to have a group dynamic and build up some kind of rapport with other people*' and another commented on the importance of being with like-minded people:

'So yes, a feeling of finding your tribe as it were, so you don't walk around feeling like - less than, don't fit in, having to keep explaining what you are or what your people were like where you come from. So after having a lot of that for ages and not fitting in with the locals it was nice to walk into a room and fell like I fitted in.'

Creativity and Creative Practice as Therapy

Following on from the direct handling of objects, all of the M&SC workshops moved on to some sort of making or crafting activity run in conjunction with student ambassadors and/or teaching staff. In some instances these activities were fairly straightforward to run, requiring little equipment and readily available materials. However, in some cases the M&SC was able to work in partnership with other programmes to provide access to more complex equipment, such as a heat transfer press.

A considerable amount has already been written about the capacity of creative activities to promote well-being (Schmid, et al., 2005; Cameron, et al., 2013; Cliff and Camic, 2016) so this chapter will give no more than a brief synopsis of some of the thinking and evidence around creative practice and wellbeing. Schmid (2005, 5) argues that 'creative thinking and behaviour exist to a greater or lesser degree in everyone'. She describes creativity as a special kind of thinking process and lists a number of creative cognitive functions – including openness, tolerance of ambiguity, divergent thinking, problem finding and solving and willingness to take risks – that contribute to mental well-being and resilience. It is creativity that enables us to imagine situations beyond the present, branching out from what is known to visualise multiple potential outcomes to complex problems or challenging situations.

Creek (2005), an occupational therapist specialising in creativity and creative practice, identifies a number of approaches in art therapy that mobilise these cognitive processes in support of the well-being agenda, including play and playfulness as therapy, art production as a means of exploring unconscious feelings and creative activity as a way of expressing emotions without language. If being creative is an expression of the self, creative activities can provide a safe space for exploring both positive and negative emotions or working through conflict.

In addition, creative arts activities seem to confer self-esteem and hope (Reynolds, 2005) and increase the experience of control and choice (Reynolds and Prior, 2003), which can help to combat a number of mental health issues. Finally, Belfiore (2017) sees the art of making as leading to some sort of catharsis or emotional release similar to the psychoanalytic process of abreaction, whereby the analyst encourages patients to talk or work through past traumatic experiences, leading to increased feelings of well-being. As Sennet (2009) posits, thinking and feeling are embodied within the process of making, and people learn about themselves through the things that they make.

Workshop participants were generally self-aware about the health benefits of having some sort of creative practice, and several showed an advanced understanding of what taking part in create activities might mean for them. One participant who had a family history of Alzheimer's talked about the role of art-making in '*creating new pathways*' which '*stops the clusters that are associated with Alzheimer's developing.*' Another participant who suffered from social anxiety and social phobias stated:

'For me I'd say art has been very therapeutic in the past. I've always considered myself very introvert, very quiet and shy and I feel like being in an imaginary world helps me to express myself.'

A central aspect of the M&SC well-being workshops was to tie the creative activity back to the object engagement, so a handling session with prints was followed by a printmaking activity, an exploration of woven textiles by a weaving activity and so on. This enabled participants to draw links between different aspects of the workshops. To quote one participant describing how the creative activity drew on a handling session exploring colour theory through the M&SC collections: *'everything fitted in together. It was perfect.'*

Art and Design Pedagogy and Well-being

If the role of creative engagements and creative practice in addressing well-being is fairly well documented, the potential for art and design teaching practices to contribute to the well-being agenda has only been touched on. Based on project work, problem solving, object-based learning, kinaesthetic learning and experiential learning, art and design teaching has developed over more than a century of studio practice and practical instruction to scaffold a student-centred voyage of discovery (Shreeve, et al., 2010.)

Willcocks (2017) has argued in a short case study about social prescribing that the pedagogic approaches used in art and design create an ideal basis for well-being activities as they involve challenge, encourage self-reflection and resilience and create opportunities for emotional engagement. This chapter will elaborate on those ideas and assess the effectiveness of art and design pedagogic practices in well-being interventions by referring to existing literature, emerging professional practice and interviews with workshop participants.

Staff responsible for designing and delivering well-being activities at the M&SC have undertaken a teacher training qualification for Higher Education and as a result, art and design pedagogy shapes the way collections engagements are framed. In attempting to identify 'signature pedagogies' in art and design, Shreeve, et al. (2010, 125) point to the predominantly dialogic nature of teaching in these subjects where creative outcomes are uncertain and learning is seen as a partnership or exchange of ideas, rather than a transmission of expert knowledge.

In the M&SC, this has led to a move away from the traditional museum model of the 'expert curator' to a model focussed on peer-to-peer learning and co-production of knowledge with workshop participants (Shreeve, et al., 2009). Well-being sessions are structured to create a level playing field, where workshop leaders negotiate ambiguity alongside those taking part (Shreeve, et al., 2010, 125). Barton and Willcocks (2017) have noted the ability of objects to act as mediators in the classroom (Engeström, 1999) while Chatterjee and Noble (2013) suggest that objects can promote cross-cultural understanding. Within this context, museum objects are offered as a point of meaning-making, surfacing tacit knowledge and allowing participants the space to explore their own affective and extra-rational responses (Barton and Willcocks, 2017). One participant described the workshops as a *'sort of safe space'* where they could express or share ideas.

Object-based learning is not unique to art schools, but as a handling collection based in an art school (where embodied or sensory learning is a common element pedagogic activity) the M&SC has a particularly well developed professional practice in this area. Paris (2002) and Hooper Greenhill (2002) have both written about the way those viewing an object make or construct their own personal narrative from it. However, where Paris and Hooper Greenhill were writing about museum and gallery settings, Barton and Willcocks (2017) have explored what that means for museums in Higher Education, developing the concept of object-based self-enquiry, a pedagogical process that uses object engagements to help students better understand their own habituated responses and cultural viewpoints. It is this skill for using objects as a point of self-reflection that underpins object engagements in M&SC well-being workshops, where multiple curatorial staff circulate, drawing out participants' personal responses to objects and listening to their personal stories. To quote one participant:

'One of the things I thought was good about it, and is maybe a luxury and not a necessary thing, there was a lot of staff buzzing around. There was you, there were three women from your side, and it was really nice to get that level of care.'

It is interesting to note here that the term the participant has chosen to describe the interaction is 'care', indicating that the creative process is one which might require a degree of nurture. Certainly, responding to or making art is a personally affective journey. Where the extra-rational dimensions of learning can be negatively characterised by scientific or social scientific subjects, art and design is essentially an area for self-expression which involves the emotions and senses as well as cerebral activity (Shreeve, et al., 2010). Spendlove (2007) argues that there is powerful interrelationship between emotion and creativity and sees emotion and self-esteem as being closely intertwined. He notes that in recent years, there has been an increase in discourse relating to the place of emotion within education policy and practice, with terms like 'emotional literacy' and 'emotional intelligence' becoming commonplace, and art and design students in particular are expected to take emotional responsibility for the outcome of their creative endeavours.

The capacity for self-reflection and emotional intelligence and the fostering of self-esteem can be usefully employed in support of both art and design and well-being agendas. Managing the emotions (hope, fear, uncertainty, sadness and delight) that result from object engagements or the 'emotional process' (Sagan, 2011) of partaking in the creative activities has emerged as a key element of the M&SC well-being workshops. Staff delivering the workshops have learned to look out for instances of resistance or distress as well as the moments of excitement or gratification, what Morra (2017, 178), writing about art engagement and psychoanalysis, would describe as 'a point of urgency that breaks into and upsets the functioning of the self'.

While these points of urgency offer the potential for positive transformation they require careful and sensitive handling. Those leading the workshop must facilitate movement from the art engagement to the personal and back to the art engagement in a manner that leaves time and space for participants to work through their emotions – a technique which draws on the experience of working with art and design students, many of whom find their education an emotional journey. To quote one of our participants: *'I thought back on all*

the essays and dissertations – they're just words on paper. Whereas actually making something – it's got part of you in it. Working with vulnerable adults who are exposing something of themselves in this way requires an atmosphere of trust, confidence and security.

Another key aspect of art and design education is that students are encouraged to take risks, push boundaries, experiment and explore (Shreeve, et al., 2010). Against this backdrop students are expected to make independent decisions about their work, for which they will be held accountable and which they may also have to defend. While this can be an exposing experience, it can also help students to accept frustration and disappointment as an integral part of the creative process and lead to feelings of pride, self-esteem and a growing sense of independence – what we might describe in the well-being world as 'resilience'. An acceptance (even embracing) of the unexpected and an improved sense of self-confidence obviously have significant implications for the well-being agenda where so much ill health is generated by anxiety and fear of failure. To quote one participant:

'...having a process that is new to you is both exciting and interesting in itself, but also you're sometimes more ambitious with what you try than you might be if you knew all the things that you couldn't do.'

A final point worth noting here is one around alienation and disconnection, which seem to be at the root of so many mental health problems. Almost all of M&SC workshop participants who took part in the semi structured interviews indicated some feelings of remoteness or withdrawal as a result of being bereaved (*'I found myself surrounded by people who didn't know me very well'*), suffering from motivation issues (*'I find it very hard because I have this mental health problem... there's a lot of depression involved and getting here was a struggle'*), experiencing social anxiety (*'I don't really socialise with people, I do isolate myself a lot of the time'*) or being stigmatised by their community for having mental health problems (*'where I'm from...not many people talk about it'*).

While it may not always be entirely successful in achieving inclusivity, the art and design pedagogic system is structured to be accessible to all and traverse normative assumptions, creating spaces where learners' own 'narratives or subjective experiences' can be expressed and valued (Bhagat and O'Neill, 2011, p.140). In line with UAL strategy the M&SC is developing a professional practice that explores issues of race, gender and otherness, working in conjunction with the University's Widening Participation team and associated groups such as *Shades of Noir*. This played out in well-being sessions through the addressing of difficult items in the museum collection (such as those with a colonial influence) and the involvement of someone of BME background in delivering almost all of the workshops. It was also important that those delivering the workshops listened while participants talked, letting accepted western narratives take a back seat and giving space for new meaning-making.

Art and Design Pedagogy and Flow

The previous section has described pedagogical interventions that encourage self-awareness and long term, behavioural change in a way that contributes to well-being. However, having observed what happens in well-being workshops over a period of three years, it has become apparent that a more immediate benefit can be derived when participants lose themselves in the object handling or creative activities. Schmidt (2010, 605) argues that 'nearly every educator holds the primary, though often illusive, goal of facilitating students' deep engagement in learning activities. This deep engagement has been described by Csikszentmihalyi (1996, 1998) as flow, an experientially positive state where the learner loses track of time and self while taking part in an absorbing activity. Learners become self-motivated because flow states are rewarding, with those taking part in flow generating activities enjoying immediate feedback from and about their work.

While flow can be experienced in almost any activity, from athletics to the factory production line, students of creative activities such as art or music experience greater levels of flow than in almost any other context (Schmidt, 2010). Indeed, Csikszentmihalyi developed his theory of flow while observing art students at work, and over the years art and design pedagogy has developed structures which aim to promote flow states in the workshop or classroom.

The first of these is the 'crit' or critique, a common way of managing group participation, encouraging peer-to-peer learning and (most importantly for the promotion of flow states) providing formative feedback on a student's work (Shreeve, Waring and Drew, 2009). For a crit to be successful, particularly in a well-being context, participants must be encouraged to feel confident in sharing their personal stories and creative journeys. Willcocks (2017) has noted the potential of the crit to draw participants into conversation with the wider group within a well-being context. A number of workshop participants spoke of the benefits of taking part in an informal crit both in terms of it being a place to '*express and share ideas*' and receive honest, constructive feedback, or because of the motivating experience of seeing what other participants were producing.

'One of the aspects of working in a group was to see what everyone else had done and I was so impressed and I thought gosh, I must give this a go.'

However, as Shreeve, et al. (2009) note, the crit can be problematic, causing anxiety among those taking part. Thus the sort of crit experience offered in well-being workshops must be a gentle introduction to the concept, with participants offered the option of sitting out or deciding not to share their own work. One particularly reserved participant usefully suggested that when workshop attendees aren't participating just writing 'how do you feel?' in a personalised note could be a way of getting them involved. Setting all such issues aside, when used wisely the crit (or crit-lite) serves to promote self-reflection in learners and provides immediate feedback to participants, bolstering the feedback they are getting from their own emerging work and providing another key dimension for flow states.

The second requirement for flow states is around finding a balance between challenge and skill, which Schmidt notes have emerged as the two primary conditions for the flow

experience. Set a task that is too easy and the result is boredom and apathy; set a more difficult task (but one which is still within the learner's emerging skill set) and the result is a pleasurable experience in which the learner experiences feelings of vitality and control. Setting briefs that find a balance between challenge and skill and allow for flexibility either to accommodate less confident makers or to increase the challenge as the skill set of participants develops, is a key part of art and design pedagogy. In well-being workshops, changes in mood and health must also be taken into consideration.

While M&SC staff have teaching qualifications and teach on a range of courses from Fine Art to Fashion, much has been learned from working with colleagues whose primary purpose is the teaching of practical making subjects, such as textile design, and who are more familiar with setting briefs for practical projects. Almost all participants in our well-being workshops noted the importance of working to a brief with clear goals, points for reflection and deadlines. One responded particularly positively to the issue of time limits: *'it's actually an attraction of workshops, the pressure of doing something in two hours.'*

Much care has also been given to the kind of activities the M&SC offers in well-being workshops. There is a tendency to shy away from activities like drawing or painting because they require a certain aptitude, and can lead to feelings of anxiety or exposure if a participant feels their work isn't up to scratch. Instead, there is a focus on activities like printmaking, collage, weaving or heat transfer as they are more forgiving for those without an existing art or design practice.

The ability of flow states to block our environmental distractions and promote complete absorption in a task has obvious implications for well-being activities. Reynolds and Prior (2006, 255) conducted a small study of female cancer patients taking part in creative activities and concluded that 'flow experiences during art making helped to banish intrusive thoughts about cancer and draw attention from everyday preoccupations and anxieties, thereby alleviating some of the stress of the disease. They also note that the feelings of accomplishment and autonomy inherent in flow experiences might help to challenge feelings of helplessness and counteract the 'assault on identity' experienced by cancer patients (2006, 256).

Several of our interviewees reported experiencing something that could be described as a flow state. They described losing themselves in the task, losing track of time and experiencing feelings of calmness. One described creative workshops as *'a zone where you're sort away from the pain of reality.'* Some activities, such as weaving, seemed to be particularly effective for promoting calm while others (like using the heat transfer press to print textiles) posed a positive challenge. In the words of one participant:

'...to begin with I was kind of holding back because I thought, I don't know what I'm doing and this is all new (although I'd tried bits and pieces before but nothing like that). But gradually, it just happened, I just got drawn in and I didn't really notice. The time passed very quickly, and then it was done and I thought, wow, that was great.'

Schmidt (2010, 605) notes that out of the flow state 'emerges the desire to replicate the experience a phenomenon described as 'emergent motivation' (Schmidt 2010, 606). This is borne out by the Reynolds and Prior (2003) study where many participants described becoming more observant and appreciative of their surroundings as a result of experiencing flow. Many of those who participated in the M&SC's Museums on Prescription programme reported having sought out other creative activities, or exhibited a renewed or even new interest in visiting museums, as a result of having taken part in our workshops. Those who were interviewed about their participation in more recent well-being activities felt reminded of past skills, abilities or ambitions and were keen to repeat either the creative experience or the experience of working on a communal project. As one participant noted:

'It reminded me I enjoy working in a team, because I can see the point of that kind of socialising. I'm not very good at standing round networking, that kind of dinner partner chatting... I do prefer it when there is a project. I find being round people easier if there's a focus and it's not just all about our personalities.'

Finally, Csikszentmihalyi (1990) argues that personal identity emerges more strongly after going into temporary abeyance during flow activity, strengthening self-worth. This resonates with Shreeve, Sims and Trowler's (2010) assertion that a key element of art and design education is encouraging students to develop an identity as a practitioner. Students are expected to experiment, take risks and push boundaries rather than provide right answers. Morra (2017) talks about the art of unlearning, the process through which thought is unravelled, teaching us something about ourselves in the process. This act of learning, unlearning, constructing and reconstructing the self is evident even in the small-scale well-being interventions discussed in this chapter. To quote one participant taking part in a two-day heat transfer press workshop:

'So I found that actually quite interesting... to find that at first it did quite freak me out but I was quite pleased that it freaked me out for about 30 seconds and then I was all right. It shows me something about myself.'

Engaging with Art and Design Students

Right from the beginning of the Museums on Prescription programme we were keen to offer opportunities for participants to meet and engage with students. During the initial ten-week programme of activity students led gallery tours, gave demonstrations of their work and were employed as Student Ambassadors to help deliver workshops. The response from participants was strongly in favour of these interventions, and many cited how much they had enjoyed meeting students and talking to them about their creative practice. As the Museums on Prescription programme was engaging older people at risk of social isolation, this also provided an opportunity for intergenerational interaction.

In the light of this positive response to meeting and working with students the M&SA has continued to offer opportunities for engagement (for example using student ambassadors to walk the floor during activities, talking to participants about their work) finding that

younger as well as older participants enjoy and benefit from the experience. One participant noted:

'And you had a student present in the group. That was a positive thing. I mean, University of the Arts is our local art school so you should interact with it. You could have had more than one student in that group and it would have gone down well, because... she was so patient and well informed.'

The M&SC has also been developing a programme of activities for Healthy Minds and for an independent trauma survivors group where the workshops are led by recent graduates, some of whom already have highly developed practices around well-being and/or community engagement. Working with recent graduates has a number of benefits both for the participants (who benefit from working with someone who has just completed their art and design education) and the students (in terms of career development and work experience.) It also offers an opportunity for the Museum (which has a very small core team) to work with a more diverse range of practitioners.

Ethics

As a project working with vulnerable adults, there were a number of ethical issues to consider. The first was around staff training. It was important to ensure staff were able to protect workshop participants and themselves, as well as having the confidence to address any issues arising during the workshops, such as the surfacing of painful memories. It proved surprisingly hard to access training on working with vulnerable adults but an online course run by Islington Borough Council was identified and proved very useful in understanding some of the issues. M&SC staff also attended a training day with the Museums on Prescription team and other museum professionals with experience of social prescribing to discuss potential problems and how to address them, which helped us to shape and structure our own workshops more effectively.

The second ethical issue was around managing the relationships with participants themselves, particularly in terms of data protection. In some cases the relationship was managed through the community partner who recruited participants and sent a link worker to help manage any issues. Where participants were signing up through a healthcare provider, we were sent individual case notes for those signing up to workshops, which proved invaluable in helping us to prepare for the workshops and ensure that participants experiences were as anxiety free as possible. Such personal data was kept securely and deleted or destroyed after the workshop had taken place.

Conclusion and Further Research

Interviewing participants revealed that there was a real hunger for creative, object-led well-being activities and that many of the behaviours encouraged by art and design teaching practice, such as managed risk taking, proactive self-reflection or problem solving in response to a brief, were contributing to participants well-being by improving their resilience and self-esteem. The creation of the multiple factors required to maintain flow

states were also having a positive impact in terms of blocking out intrusive thoughts and making new connections. While this small study was hampered by scale and lack of resources, it has at least been able to argue that the subject matter is worthy of further research.

In light of the UK government's announcement that a new approach to social prescribing, using link workers who can signpost patients to well-being activities, will be in place by 2021 (NHS England), it is even more important to understand how those working in museums, creative practice and art and design institutions can help. Recognising that medicine is limited in terms of what it can do for chronic and progressive illness, that it cannot tackle the root causes of loneliness and social isolation, and that medicine itself faces an uncertain future in times of austerity (Cliff and Camic, 2017) it may now be expedient to explore how other public institutions might step up to the plate and contribute to the delivery of complementary healthcare provision.

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