

Background to A Quickening

By Marie Brett

Marie Brett is a visual artist and John McHarg is an art therapist / visual artist, together they worked collaboratively over an eighteen month period as part of an arts and health participatory project called 'On the Edge of My Sky' based at St Raphael's Centre for Intellectual Disability in Youghal, County Cork.

One strand of the project was for Marie to work with a core group of 13 participants in a dedicated off-site studio space to create new artwork(s). An outcome of this was an exhibition of work at Sirius Arts Centre, Cobh touring to Waterford Healing Arts Trust, Waterford Hospital.

A second strand of the project was for Marie and John to reflect on their respective practices of therapist and artist within a healthcare context and to consider the similarities, differences and overlaps of their practice, if any. An outcome of this phase of work was a compiled body of critical research and developed findings presented through lectures and round table discussions titled '2 Voices', presented at Crawford College of Art and Waterford Hospital. From this work, the article 'Working on the Edge' was developed and published in the 2011 edition of 'The Journal of The Irish Association of Creative Arts Therapists'.

John and Marie's partnership enabled critical research of their respective practices: art therapist and artist and through dialogue and reflection, they interrogated these practices; their juxtaposition, intersections, similarities and differences when working in participatory contexts.

After a year, they realised the need to step back into the critical landscape of making art and developed a new body of experimental artwork informed by this experience of a dialogue in opposition, their findings and associated theory. They were invited to present this experimental artwork at Wandsford Quay Gallery, Cork and the exhibition was titled 'A Quickening'. The work comprised a large scale floor drawing using soil/compost and cement with a series of inter-connected audio works, plus a separate video work.

John and Marie were grateful for the support they received from The Arts Council of Ireland / Cork City Council Arts Office / Cork Institute of Technology Crawford College of Art / Sound artist Danny McCarthy / Film maker Maximilion Le Cain.