

# DIALOGUE Arts + Health

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## session # 1 'Unravelling Arts and Health Practice'

Marie Brett

*These notes accompany the workshop Marie Brett delivered as part of the Dialogue Arts + Health Series Session #1. September 2011. Their intention is to act as a point of reference and further source of information/dialogue around the discussion strands explored.*

### DISCUSSION STRANDS

#### 1. WHAT IS ARTS AND HEALTH PRACTICE ?

**Arts Council Policy**<sup>1</sup> "Arts and Health is the generic term that embraces a range of arts practices occurring primarily in healthcare settings, which bring together the skills and priorities of both arts and health professions"

**Arts Council Vital Signs**<sup>2</sup> "It is a significant growth area in the arts in Ireland. Over the last two decades the practice has reached into a range of healthcare settings, effectively connecting with a population that has often been excluded, and challenging assumptions about the nature of a legitimate arts venue. It has offered diverse opportunities to healthcare staff, service users and visitors to engage in an exploration of their environment and a reimagining of their experiences. In parallel, it has stimulated and challenged artists to create and facilitate high quality artwork and arts experiences through collaboration and experimentation."

**Marie Brett**<sup>3</sup> For me, Arts and Health is all about bridging creative partnerships between two distinct professions. This in turn forms three way junction between service user, service provider and artist."

**Lord Attenborough**<sup>4</sup> "The arts in all their glorious manifestations are essential prescriptions for those who are in pain, in despair or in recovery. Creativity and imagination stimulate the spirit and in doing so speed the healing process. They are powerful medicine indeed"

#### 2. WHERE DOES IT HAPPEN ?

**Red Book**<sup>5</sup> "The settings in which the work can happen are many and diverse. Arts and Health has become a wide field of practice that includes work in hospitals, primary care, respite care and rehabilitation, public health, social service settings, community based organisations, schools and places where art therapies are practiced."

#### 3. WHAT'S GOOD ARTS & HEALTH PRACTICE ?

**Arts Council** "Good Arts and Health practice is characterised by a clear artistic vision, goals and outcomes. Alongside these it aims to promote health and well being by improving quality of life and cultural access in healthcare settings."

The term reflects equal partnership: Arts AND Health.

**WHAT**<sup>6</sup> "Meaningful and relevant working partnerships between the field of Arts and the field of Health whereby the aesthetic qualities of the arts are explored and promoted alongside their therapeutic values within healthcare and community environments"

**Marie Brett** “For me, good Arts and Health practice is about exploring the ‘grey area’. Akin to a ‘Littoral Zone’, the geographic term for an inter-tidal, ever-shifting interface of land, sea and air, Arts and Health practice lies in a place of flux that can be both personally and professionally challenging; a positive attribute locating the practice with potential for complex and meaningful exchange.”

**Arts & Health Southwest UK** “For artists working in health settings, their experience as an artist is vital. Artists are approaching the work with their own creativity, and tend to look at the world quite differently from the health professionals. Working with the arts gives people the opportunity to relate imaginatively to the world and their own place in it.”

## 5. CHALLENGES?

**Intention, Role + Responsibility** Marie Brett “A challenge for the area of Arts and Health is the juxtaposition of two distinct professions and the balancing of their respective needs to enable true exploration of Arts *and* Health”

Brett/McHarg/Kuczaj<sup>7</sup> “The intent at the beginning of the relationship has the greatest affect on the work”

**Placing Value** Dr Austin O’Carroll<sup>8</sup> “It is in these arenas that the arts can challenge the medical paradigm. Humanising one’s experience in a healthcare setting is a worthwhile aspiration irrespective of whether it reduces the length of inpatient stays or pain intensity. Life is to be lived, not survived. Using the arts to challenge the stultifying, dehumanising, unwritten medical curriculum offers a rich education vein to be mined……. It is only right that questions as to whether the arts promote healing in its more holistic conception are explored. However, it would probably be wise that they equally, if not more strongly, stress the non-evidence based reasons for having art in hospital; the transformation of an intimidatory, cold and clinical environment into one where patients can engage with their surroundings on a human and empathic level.”

**Burn Out** Mary McAuliffe *Sligo County Arts Officer*<sup>9</sup> “Artists are reaching new levels of understanding of the shared nature of their interaction with participants. For a long time many of the artists involved felt they were doing all the ‘giving’ at workshop sessions, but this is changing - many now acknowledge that the process is an ‘exchange’ where conversations and work produced by the participants can and is informing the artists own work and practice. This is being achieved through high quality exchanges and building relationships based on respect and potential.”

## 6. RELATED STRANDS

How’s Arts and Health different to **ARTS THERAPIES**

**The Arts Council Arts and Health Policy and Strategy** “There is a clear distinction between Arts and Health practice, where the key goal is the experience and production of art, and the art therapies, where the primary goal is clinical.”

**The Arts Council Arts & Health Handbook** “Art therapies integrate the experience of a given art form with the theories and practice of psychology, psychotherapy and psychiatry as a unique form of therapeutic intervention, whereas art practices have a focus on artistic process and artistic outcomes for their own sake.”

The Arts Therapies are specific approaches to working with people which combine arts and psychotherapy. Art therapy places its emphasis on the analysis of the symbolic content of the artwork produced by the client aiming for psychological healing through art making, creative expression and the therapeutic relationship.

For information regarding similarities/differences between artist/art therapist see 'Working on the Edge. Exploring the Role of an Art Therapist compared to The Role of an Artist in Arts and Health Contexts – Similarities, Differences and Requirements.'  
By Marie Brett, Ed Kuczaj & John McHarg. 2011. Article published in the May 2011 Journal of The Irish Association of Creative Arts Therapists, plus [www.artsandhealth.ie](http://www.artsandhealth.ie)

How's Arts and Health different to **ARTS & DISABILITY**

Arts and Disability focuses exclusively on the engagement/involvement of people with disability.

How's Arts and Health different to **COMMUNITY ARTS IN HEALTH**

Community arts in health is when the artwork/project serves a health focus. Often delivering a health message and aiming for a change of attitude / behaviour, the work is issue based eg: teenage pregnancy, heart disease, obesity, breast/testicular cancer, drug abuse. The artist works directly with the target audience through consultation to inform/influence the art outcome or through physically making work.

**HEALTHCARE PROMOTION**

An aligned area is health care promotion which involves delivering health messages to the public through awareness campaigns and healthcare marketing. This may not involve working directly with the target audience.

How's Arts and Health different to **ARTS & MEDICAL HUMANITIES**

Arts & Medical Humanities is when the humanities (eg: literature, arts, philosophy) are used to encourage medical practitioners to be more reflective in their work and to increase their understanding of the experience of ill health and suffering. Used in medical education, Arts & Medical Humanities is where the artwork/project teaches skills that are useful in the practice of medicine, or where the arts are actively engaged in the practice of medicine.

How does Arts and Health relate to **HEALTHCARE ENVIRONMENTS**

Artists can be commissioned to create work within/for hospitals and other healthcare settings to improve surroundings for patients and staff. eg: Public Art % for art projects

**Round up .....**

**Support**

**Lucina Russell**, *Arts Officer, Kildare County Council*

"It is very important that artists recognize the need for support structures, both for themselves and for people that they engage with."

**Clarity**

**Mary Grehan**, *Director Waterford Healing Arts Trust*

"..we as arts and health practitioners must be very clear about what we do, why we do it, how we do it and what we need to make it work."

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## Useful links

<http://www.artscouncil.ie/en/publications/policy.aspx> Arts Council Arts and Health Policy/Strategy  
<http://www.waterfordhealingarts.com/userfiles/file/Participatory%20Arts%20in%20Health%20Guidelines%2009%281%29.pdf> Participatory Arts in Health Guidelines  
<http://vimeo.com/26860716> 'A Quickening' Marie Brett & John McHarg video  
<http://www.blurb.com/my/book/detail/1719237> 'A Quickening' Marie Brett & John McHarg exhibition catalogue  
<http://vitalsigns.artscouncil.ie/> Vital Signs conference + exhibition website  
<http://www.publicart.ie/main/critical-contexts/featured-projects> Public Art website, Lost Children profile  
<http://www.create-ireland.ie/professional-development/case-studies.html> Create website Memory Dress case study  
<http://www.artscouncil.ie/en/publications/vital-signs-arts-and-health-conference.aspx> Vital Signs Points of View  
[http://www.artscouncil.ie/Publications/arts\\_health\\_handbook.pdf](http://www.artscouncil.ie/Publications/arts_health_handbook.pdf) Arts Council Arts & Health Handbook  
<http://www.artscouncil.ie/en/areas-of-work/actions/arts-and-health.aspx> Arts Council website  
<http://www.create-ireland.ie/learning-development/arts-and-health.html> Create website  
<http://www.waterfordhealingarts.com> Waterford Healing Arts Trust website  
<http://www.ahsw.org.uk/index.cfm> Arts and Health South West UK website

Available on [www.artsandhealth.ie](http://www.artsandhealth.ie) when website is launched:

- **Article: Working on the Edge.** Exploring the Role of an Art Therapist compared to The Role of an Artist in Arts and Health Contexts. Brett / Kuczaj / McHarg
- **Perspectives Article: Boundary Slippage: An SOS for Artists Integrity?** Marie Brett
- **Amulet Case Study**

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<sup>1</sup> The Arts Council of Ireland. Arts and Health Policy and Strategy

<sup>2</sup> The Arts Council of Ireland. Vital Signs Arts and Health in Context exhibition catalogue introductory note from Director Mary Cloake

<sup>3</sup> Marie Brett. Visual artist with extensive experience of participatory and collaborative practice within arts and health contexts.

<sup>4</sup> Lord Attenborough. Culture, Health and the Arts, World Symposium. 1999. Lime Annual review 1999-2010.

<sup>5</sup> Participatory Arts Practice in Healthcare Contexts. Guidelines for Good Practice. Commissioned from the Centre for Medical Humanities at Durham University by the Waterford Healing Arts Trust and the Health Service Executive South (Cork) Arts + Health programme.

<sup>6</sup> Waterford Healing Arts Trust. Waterford Hospital. Referring to their Arts and Health work.

<sup>7</sup> Working on the Edge. Exploring the Role of an Art Therapist compared to The Role of an Artist in Arts and Health Contexts – Similarities, Differences and Requirements. Marie Brett, Ed Kuczaj & John McHarg. 2011. Article published in the May 2011 Journal of The Irish Association of Creative Arts Therapists.

<sup>8</sup> Vital Signs Points of View. The Value of Arts and Health. Dr Austin O'Carroll.

<sup>9</sup> Vital Signs Points of View. HE+ART Celebrating the Diversity of Arts and Health Practice in Sligo. Mary McAuliffe.