

Vital Signs: The life in arts and health

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Taken from Vital Signs Catalogue 2009

Arts and health practice is an exciting and challenging area of work for both artists, service providers and service users. Connecting these distinct groups through a shared creative process offers the potential to explore innovative areas for collaborative practice and the often untapped creative potential in those who may not have regular contact with the arts. In curating Vital Signs, I looked at work that displayed this innovative approach and dealt with the individual in these healthcare settings.

The relationship between artist and service user, service provider and artist, creates a complex web of interests and needs. These spaces between us, between the self and other, the 'entre nous' offers a rich starting point to consider the role of arts in health contexts ethically, creatively and practically. Vital Signs presents what is current in arts and health practice and offers a vision of the sector that is beneficial to the healthcare setting, the users, the providers and the artists. It looks at ways to engage with the unique characteristics of the healthcare setting.

The work is also presented in a variety of settings offering alternative ways of viewing. From hospital, gallery to pharmacy, the exhibition presents work in the everyday context of its creation and reception: a living part of healthcare settings.

The artists represented in Vital Signs have taken on the complexities of this practice and have expanded on and advanced the role of art in a healthcare context. I would like to thank the artists for their involvement in Vital Signs and the staff at the various healthcare settings for facilitating this exhibition.