

Vascular Dementia 2020: Creativity, community & connections: empowering people living with dementia through artistic practice- Ellie Robinson-Carter- Sensory Trust

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The arts provide an incredibly valuable resource through which people living with dementia can be empowered to live well: with more evidence being released about the benefits of art practice for people living with dementia - both on neurological and social levels - there is more reason than ever to delve further into its potential. Ellie Robinson-Carter has created and delivered numerous international projects which are uniquely designed to best suit people living with dementia. The projects encourage and enable individuals through person-led collaboration and co-authorship. They are of a highly professional standard, some being published and with professional exhibitions, meaning individuals are taking part in projects which empower them as artists, writers and creators. Her projects have been funded by various bodies, including the Big Lottery, Arts Council and FEAST. As is the case for all of us, people living with dementia wants to feel connected, useful and necessary to their communities and society more widely. Along with a diagnosis of dementia, established roles in their social networks are challenged and can become difficult to maintain. Art creates a safe yet exciting and rewarding space for individuals to express themselves creatively, in ways that works for them, providing participants with cognitive stimulation, experimentation, as well as reconnection to previous skills and the acquisition of new ones. The ability to feel & express themselves in response to worldly surroundings is a defining feature of an individual living with dementia is, and can have significant effects on the ways in which they think, act and express creativity. I extend our hypothesis and understandings of how some experiences their day-to-day lives, with particular attention paid to their affective practice in creativity. I investigate how the affective creativity of the couple transforms, emerges, & circulates as a spouse's dementia develops, whilst feeling bodies continuously remake relations and familiarize themselves with the immediate surroundings through the making of artworks. Opening Minds through Art is an arts program for person with dementia which aims to enhance the quality of life for individuals living with dementia, as well as their care givers, through a creative opportunity held within their own community. Other than many venues and arts opportunities in the St. Louis area, there are some agencies that are actively seeking to expand their services to person with dementia. The purpose of this project was for community art agencies & galleries to participate in dementia-specific training to develop programming for individuals with dementia so that individual with memory needs can actively engage in the creative arts in St. Louis. The theoretical and philosophical framing for this project stems from Person

Centered Care which not only cares for the individual with dementia but includes an actual awareness of the individual needs of each person at each stage of the disease. This article used a pre-post design to analyze perceptions regarding arts based programming with people who have memory loss. Prior to and immediately following an informational training session on creativity and memory loss, participants completed the Dementia Attitudes Scale as well as 4 open-ended questions regarding their experience with the training session and if they would host a session like OMA at their agency. Although no community agencies fully committed to implementing OMA at this time, inroads into the process were made and this training project served as an introduction to the opportunities present through OMA. Additionally, perceptions & attitudes of participants in the training did change, and in particular, the perception about people with dementia having creative capacity was increased. Although the purpose of this project was to educate and equip those in the arts community with knowledge and strategies to help foster participation with individuals who have dementia, there was limited participation from the invited art agencies. Future programming & research should aim to target art agencies, with a stronger connection to involving those individuals who are key decision makers in the agency in order to make such programmatic changes happen.

Discussion: Creative activities could be stimulating for dementia patients. This study gives a review of practical forms of treating dementia patients with art therapeutic indications. It is also a ground for long-term research objective: at last, I take exception to such a view, contrary to the common belief in the society and some professionals in the healthcare of dementia individuals, on the ground that the patients do not have the capacity to improve their own creativity. The theory of cognition reveals us about the principle of being creative as a basis for human life. In the long run, the creative potential of old patients will be unblocked in person and group therapy sessions. Creative activity has been shown to lower depression and isolation, offering the power of choice & decisions. Towards the end of life cycle, art and creativity offer a path of opening up the windows to people's emotional interiors. Creativity and art therapy provides possibilities that are mostly indicated to sharpen the capacity of the senses and the patients' propensity to act themselves. Therapy methods, such as painting, music, are able to influence the well-being of the patients positively, within the modern healthcare system in nursing homes. The elderly and some of the dementia individuals take the initiative to combine creativity and arts and to define his/her feeling for aesthetical matters. Moreover,

group therapy sessions help against isolation and lack of life perspective and hope.