

Art Panel members David Thorne and Wendy Ball in conversation with artist Denise Bowser

As members of the Art Panel, and fellow artists, we met with Denise and viewed her watercolour, Blue Beach, displayed at Kingfisher Court.

How do you feel seeing your art on the wall of a Trust building and what does this mean to you?

I feel very proud and I hope it will help patients to cheer up and inspire them and provide moments of peace and happiness.

How did you hear about the art project?

Through Herts Visual Arts, a volunteer-run, non-profit organisation which publicises events and opportunities for artists in Hertfordshire.

What appealed to you about the art project?

The ideas that artwork will be displayed in health units. I remember when my brother in law passed away and particular artwork on the wall of the hospital helped me to calm down. Hospitals are very difficult places to be and art can be very inspiring, relaxing and uplifting. It is good to have something to take your mind away and appreciate something else.

How has making this artwork, and having it accepted by the art panel, contributed to your wellbeing and recovery journey?

It has been fantastic, having the acknowledgement that my artwork had some value for the NHS made me very happy. For me personally art has been therapeutic.

Has your art-making continued/increased since having work accepted by the Art Panel? If so how?

The acceptance by HPFT has increased my confidence about my work, and I have actually been producing more art.

How important to you was it that the Art Panel was made up of a mixture of people with different experiences of mental health: service users, carers, young people, mental health professionals, and representatives of University of Hertfordshire?

When I found out I thought it an excellent idea, I hope my art appeals to a range of people. People from all walks of life go into to hospitals. It is good to know your artwork can appeal to a wide audience.

How helpful did you find the themes: Hope, Resilience, Empowerment, Choice, Memory, Unspoken, Stillness, Journey?

I found the themes extremely inspiring, and as they were general concepts, I had the freedom to interpret them without constraint. My theme was hope.

How do you feel seeing the other people's art displayed here?

I love seeing others work. I love going to galleries. It's great to see that other artists also have the opportunity to display their works, and it is always inspiring to see others artwork. Good to see different mediums, styles and sizes. For people coming to hospitals it is good to find something which appeals.



What do you think are the benefits and disadvantages in having one consistent person throughout the art project?

It is very important to simplify the process. Everyone is so busy that having one designated person with telephone and email contact makes the job easier. Katie was very good.

Would you like to take part in any future creative projects with us?

I would love to, count me in, look at these white walls. Hospitals are very homogenous. Leave me to arrange a corridor, I will make it home.

Is there anything else, not already covered, about the art displays you want to talk about?

Art works well for therapy as it accepts no rules. It is up to you how you use materials. While you are doing it, it demands you focus your attention onto the materials. It is a safe place to go to, a relief. I have been in hospitals for a lot of my life. Art has enormously helped me deal with depression and anxiety. Art transports me to a place of vibrant colours where I can express anger, happiness, uncertainty, sadness, and beauty. You share your feelings in the art and this will be beneficial to your mental health. When you do art you are being creative, and this may lead to being creative in finding solutions for life's problem.