

LEE LIMING
PROGRAMME IN
AGEING URBANISM

Recreational Spaces
for Older
Population¹

Arts for Elderly

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Social participation is crucial to seniors. We now understand that it helps keep depression and other psychological distresses at bay and contributes to better physical and mental health. In the following case studies, art and art spaces are revealed to play a vital role in tackling isolation amongst older people and enhancing lives, regardless of socio-economic and cultural backgrounds. A new British study has shown that regular participation in cultural activities (keeping the mind agile through exposure to painting, poetry, performances, etc.) helps maintain elderly's 'health literacy' or the literary skills needed to manage one's health (such as reading doctor's prescriptions, labels on medicine bottles, etc.)²

¹ This is an evolving database. We will be adding more examples and cases over time.

² *Cultural Activities Help Seniors Retain Health Literacy*,

<http://www.psmag.com/books-and-culture/cultural-activities-help-seniors-retain-health-literacy-95233>, accessed 2 November 2015.

Good Times: Art for Older People at Dulwich Picture Gallery, UK

The *Good Times* senior outreach programme at Dulwich Picture Gallery was started in 2005 in partnership with more than 60 community-based elderly organisations around London. It had the aim of combating the adverse connotations of ageing, elderly seclusion and bridging the gap between generations by way of art. The programme was designed to bring art to seniors in the community by developing trust, overcoming individual perceptions of limitation, making them feel at home at the Gallery and eager to revisit.

Inclusivity and accommodating different interests, skillsets and personalities

Good Times presented an assortment of activities to cater to the variety of elderly capabilities, tastes and dispositions including:

- **Gallery guided tours;**
- **In-house and outreach arts workshops** including painting, water-colouring, mosaic making, printing, ceramics, silk painting, photography classes; reproductions of gallery art and art materials are brought into the community;

- **Dance and drama workshops** where interpretation of the gallery collection is taught through kinaesthetic means;
- **Intergenerational workshops** that put the young and old in the same learning environment;
- **Gender Specific Classes** to address the persistent issue of lower male participation in such community activities; the programme experimented with different methods to include more older men;
- **Prescription with Art**, a programme that works alongside doctors and clinics to create art workshops targeted at individual seniors who may not be part of any organisation and who may suffer from depression, isolation or are feeble.

The programme also provided training for caretakers and elderly care staff, sharing knowledge and techniques to ensure the sustainability of acquired creative skills, processes and attitudes.

Space and Furniture

Dulwich Picture Gallery's relatively small scale makes it less intimidating to newcomers while its single storey and complete wheelchair accessibility allow those who are less mobile to enter and move around easily. Furniture proved crucial in the elderly's comfort and

attention span during guided tours and workshops – since seniors get fatigued fast, backless benches and stools were unsuitable. Ergonomically designed chairs with back and arms rests, lightweight for moving across gallery spaces and stackable for convenient storage proved a better choice. These chairs allowed seniors to sit, relax and focus on the guide’s explanation of artwork or creating their own artwork for more than an hour, which added significantly to a positive experience.

Source: *Cultural Activities Help Seniors Retain Health Literacy*, <http://www.psmag.com/books-and-culture/cultural-activities-help-seniors-retain-health-literacy-95233>. *Good Times: Art for Older People*, <http://www.dulwichpicturegallery.org.uk/learning/community/good-times-art-for-older-people/>. *Prescribing art for older people*, <http://www.theguardian.com/healthcare-network/2013/jan/08/prescribing-art-older-people>. Oxford Institute of Ageing Report, “This is Living”, *Good Times: Art for Older People at Dulwich Picture Gallery*, <http://www.ahsw.org.uk/userfiles/Evidence/This%20Is%20Living-Good%20Times%20Art%20for%20Older%20People-1.pdf>

The MoMA Alzheimer's Project: Making Art Accessible to People with Dementia, NY, USA

³ This was an extension of MoMA’s Access Programs, which served thousands of individuals with disabilities annually since the 1980s. It was established in light of

In 2006, the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York introduced new programming that catered specifically towards individuals with Alzheimer’s and other types of dementia, and their caretakers.³ Museum education programmes (MeetMe@MoMA) were on request for groups from elderly organisations such as nursing homes and assisted-living facilities and comprised activities such as artwork discussion and art creation with specially trained educators.

Individuals and caretakers shared that they felt ‘stimulated, enriched and alive’ during the artwork discussions, and that the conversation of art continued back at home. A MoMA art educator shared that when discussing paintings, sometimes one could not tell apart individuals with dementia and their caretakers, meaning that they were interacting at the same level – a high, adult level, and that their condition seemed diminished and less defining of their lives in those moments.

Global outreach, development and dissemination of resources

To spread this education programme nationwide and globally, the MoMA Alzheimer’s Project was established (2007-2014). The project widened its outreach

America’s growing number of individuals affected by dementia – a total of 5 million today.

through the development of open-source resources (website, publications, research study etc), which can be used by other museums, elderly organisations and families serving people with dementia and their caretakers. Currently, there are about 80 art institutions in the USA and other countries (e.g. Japan's Art Communication Project for People with Dementia and their Caregivers) that have adopted similar programmes.

An example of MoMA Alzheimer's Project resource is a practice guide, which details step-by-step how to create an art programme in Museums.

Box 1: Guide for Museums by MoMA Alzheimer's Project

- **Designing the programme** - establishes programme goals, content, types, dates and times, number of participants, costs, contact information and evaluation;

- **Staffing the programme** – information on educators, other staff and staff training;
- **Spreading the word** - developing partners, informing the community through mailings and website, brochures and meetings and conferences;
- **Logistics** – reservations and scheduling, transportation and parking, check-in and check-out;⁴
- **Art-looking programmes;**
- **Art-making projects;**
- **Proposed structure for staff-training workshop.**

Another useful resource of the MoMA Alzheimer's project is an evaluation study conducted by New York University on MeetMe@MoMA sessions. Participants of the art discussion sessions have been reported to revisit every month, which revealed how significant and cherished it was to them. The research gathered and pinpointed the attributes, which make the programme

⁴ For example, *Transportation and Parking* - The guide suggests to plan how participants get to and from the museum; to inform them of their options and assist as much as possible with their planning. For those providing their own transport, to consider: how far away participants live and how long the trip would take; what the best route is to the museum; if public transportation is available or there are free or cheap transport for people with disabilities; if there is reasonably priced parking nearby or discounts on parking that be given to the museum.

Check-in and Checkout - Defining the best location for check-in and check-out. Find a place that is relatively small; is barrier-free; has a bag check room nearby; has toilets nearby; is as close to parking and the entrance as possible; is protected from heavy pedestrian traffic coming in and out of the museum; is quiet and free from distracting noise; has enough chairs or benches for participants to sit comfortably while waiting to begin; is within a short walking distance to the destination or is close to lifts.

successful in supporting participants' well-being and rehabilitation.

Box 2: Findings from NYU study on MeetMe@MoMA Art Programme

- **Importance of the Educator** – Warm and interactive approach and style was identified by attendees to be extremely crucial. Meeting participants' comments with a true interest and gratefulness evokes self-worth and confidence;
- **Intellectual Stimulation** – Attendees felt fortunate and happy for the chance to learn, enjoy masterpieces and to be aroused intellectually;
- **Shared Experiences** – Family members felt immense appreciation that the person they care for can have such an enriching experience and that they can share in that;
- **Social Interaction** – For many attendees, being in a situation where interaction was not full of anxiety, difficulty or embarrassment was a welcome relief. They have expressed desire for more interaction time after the gallery tour;
- **Accepting Environment** – A caring and safe environment where participants are given full attention and treated with respect removes the stigma of Alzheimer's (even if only

temporarily) and allows them to enjoy the programme thoroughly.

- **Emotional Carryover** – For participants and their caretakers, elevated moods both immediately after and the days after the visited were reported.

Source: The MoMA Alzheimer's

Project: Making Art Accessible to People with Dementia, <https://www.moma.org/meetme/>. Art Communication Project for People with Dementia and their Caregivers, <http://www.artsalivejp.org/en/program/training/index.html>.

Silver Arts, Singapore

Integrating arts into elderly care is picking up momentum in recent years in Singapore. Nationally, there has been significant push for this agenda. The Silver Arts Festival (started in 2011) is an annual national campaign, which champions 'meaningful possibilities seniors have in the arts' and hosts a variety of art activities such as workshops, exhibitions, performances, films that have been made or handpicked by seniors for other seniors.

National Arts Council has partnered with 30 elderly organisations across the nation including those in dementia care (e.g. Alzheimer's Disease Association, ADA) to include arts into their care programmes.⁵ New

⁵ These initiatives had been supported by the WeCare Arts Fund started in 2012. A new grant of S\$1.5 million was launched in 2014 to further initiate art access and

art projects for underserved communities that cater to their needs and interests.

Horizon Centre (Bukit Batok) was one such beneficiary. The centre held a pilot run of the Arts & Dementia Project by ADA's Person-Centred Care (PCC) Steering Committee. As a means to actively engage individuals with dementia through culture and creative arts, six participants were given a PCC tour of the Peranakan Museum in 2012.

While there is noteworthy effort of art as an intervention for elderly care and dementia rehabilitation in recent times, there is a need for sustainability in such initiatives. The Oxford Institute of Ageing in its report on the Dulwich's Good Times highlighted the question of why museums and galleries (or other art projects) fail to offer 'long-term, consistent, regular, core creative programmes specifically for the elderly'. The report added that the Good Times should not be exclusive to Dulwich and recommended the programme be a fundamental component of the gallery, instead of a seasonal addition that lasts for several weeks a year. In that regard, the MeetMe@MoMA and MoMA Alzheimer's Project (with its creation and dissemination of resources and promotion of programme) have taken steps in the right direction for sustainability and serve as an important role model.

Source: Arts in Eldercare, <http://www.artsineldercare.sg/index.php/about-us.html>. TODAY Online - Using the arts to reach elderly with dementia, <http://www.gov.sg/news/content/using-the-arts-to-reach-elderly-with-dementia#sthash.pbBpWtyv.dpuf>.

WeCare Arts Fund For The Social Service Sector To Uplift Lives Through The Arts, <https://www.nac.gov.sg/media-centre/news-releases/news-detail?id=93c04d5b-f4d0-486b-9cb8-7d1df17a7a9e>.