

Nottingham University Hospitals

Artworks and Engagement Activities for Hospital Patients and Staff

Location: Nottingham



IMAGE: Gill Douglas, *Misty Islands*, 2003. Part of the Paintings in Hospitals collection on display at NUH.

About the Project

In June 2022, we brightened the corridors of [Nottingham University Hospitals NHS Trust](#) (NUH) with two new exhibitions at Nottingham City Hospital and Queens Medical Centre. Artworks were carefully chosen by patients and staff to support therapeutic reflection and stimulate discussion and memory for older people and people with dementia, as well as to support staff in their busy daily work.

“I’d have art everywhere – every building should have art!”

Patient, NUH

The Activities

The selection process for these exhibitions was especially impactful. Both clinical and non-clinical care staff at NUH, including Arts Champions and occupational therapists, selected 10 artworks to be displayed across the two sites. They considered the artworks’ ability to promote reminiscence, stimulate memory, support group discussions, and encourage creative exploration for patients. For staff, the artworks were chosen for their motivating, energising, and relaxing effects. Encompassing themes of home, pets, childhood and calming landscapes, their selection includes works from the Paintings in Hospitals collection by artists such as Nicholas Hely-Hutchinson and Gill Douglas.

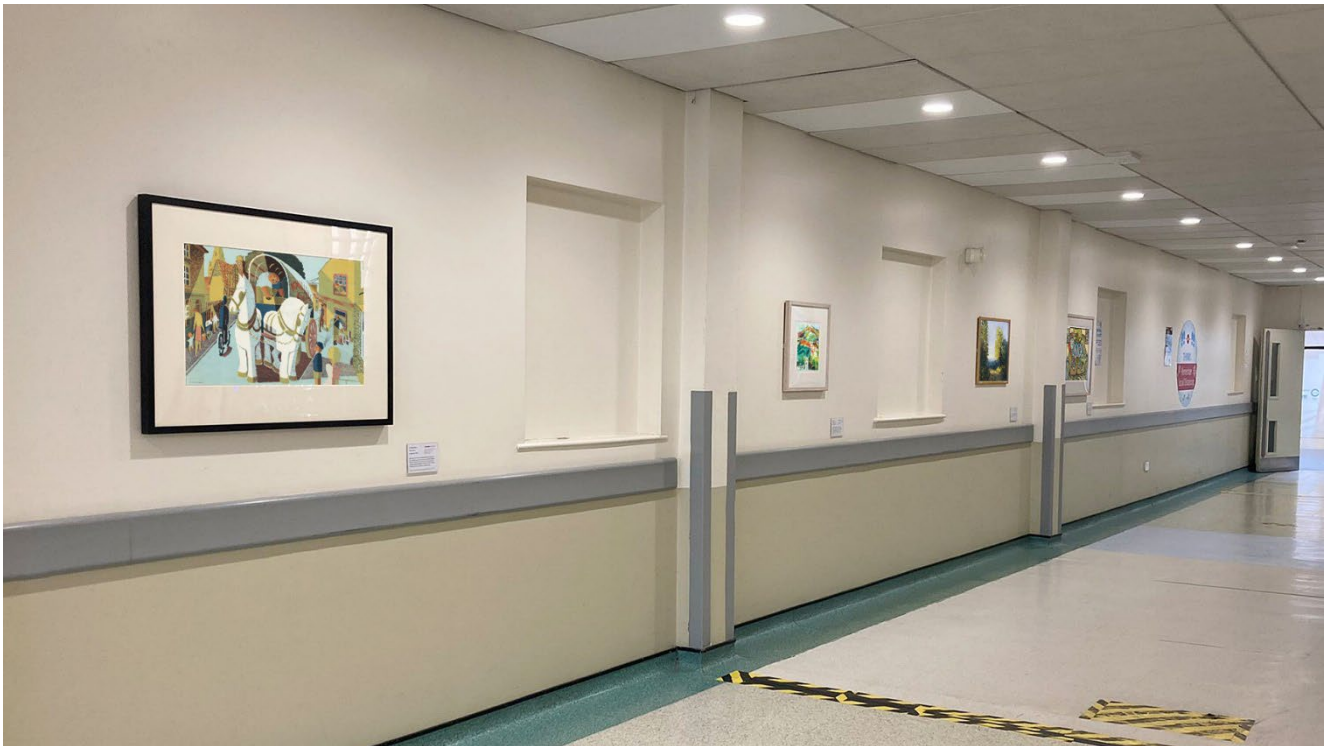


IMAGE: Artworks from the Paintings in Hospitals collection on display at City Hospital, NUH.

Since installing the artworks, we have worked with NUH to develop activity plans related to the works on display at both hospitals. The activities range from painting a favourite holiday destination while listening to music, to creating favourite flowers from colourful tissue paper. The activity plans are designed to ensure that the artworks are in constant use to support patient health and wellbeing. The final artwork selection can also be accessed digitally so that all patients, even those with low mobility or confined to bed, can reap the benefits of viewing the artworks and creative activities.

The Impact

“We are particularly pleased that patients and staff chose the artworks through in-person and online selection activities. Many expressed that it had made their day having something to look at and take their mind off being in hospital.”

Megan Dawes, Arts Coordinator at Nottingham University Hospitals

Research has shown that art has a powerful part to play in the lives of older people and people with dementia. A [2014 report](#) found that creative arts therapies are effective for the treatment of behavioural, emotional, and social challenges of Alzheimer’s disease and dementia. While a [2015 study](#) published by the American Academy of Neurology found that painting, drawing, and sculpting in old age lowers the risk of developing the early signs of dementia by 73%.

These studies joined existing research that suggested similar links between creative activity and resilience to dementia. In 2002, [a large study](#) of 1,375 people in Sweden found that both creative activity (including painting and drawing) and cultural attendance (museum/gallery visits, theatre, etc.) helped to preserve mental functioning. Beyond neurological conditions, research sponsored by the National Endowment for the Arts found that older adults who were involved in culturally enriching programs showed [a decline in depression, were less likely to fall, and had few doctor visits](#).

“I think they brighten and uplift the corridor and take away the clinical feel from what is often an unpleasant walk full of worry for visitors and patients.”

Staff member, Nottingham University Hospitals

Staff at NUH were amazed by a patient who was displaying signs of distress but appeared much calmer after viewing the artworks, going on to share how the art transports them to a tranquil place, recovering fond memories from happier times.



IMAGE: Tom Gentleman, *Grey Horses*, 1948. Part of the Paintings in Hospitals collection on display at NUH.

The two new exhibitions from Paintings in Hospitals are kindly funded by Nottingham Hospitals Charity, which supports projects across Nottingham’s hospitals.

Megan Dawes, Arts Coordinator at Nottingham University Hospitals, said:

“Art can be so powerful, not only for brightening up two once very plain corridors but also for sparking memories and conversation - I feel this is something that has been achieved through these artworks. Thank you Paintings in Hospitals, and our funders Nottingham Hospitals Charity, for bringing this to life!”



IMAGE: Richard Bawden, *Fizz*. Part of the Paintings in Hospitals collection on display at NUH.

Dominic Harbour, Relationship & Development Manager at Paintings in Hospitals, said:

“With every new Paintings in Hospitals artwork loan, it is vital that process as inclusive as possible, from start to finish. At NUH, it was essential to ask both the clinical and non-clinical staff what kind of artworks they thought would be most helpful to both their colleagues and patients.

Our ongoing evaluation programme records responses to the artwork and provides an important way of making sure the artwork is doing its job. It has been wonderful to work with the staff and patients at Nottingham University Hospitals and great to see such a fantastic selection of artworks really being appreciated in the fullest sense.”

Find out how you can benefit from working with Paintings in Hospitals at
www.paintingsinhospitals.org.uk