Looking at Ageing: Life Course Lessons from a Participatory Visual Project

Appearance, Ageing and the Life Course Conference, 26th April 2013, Manchester Interdisciplinary Collaboration for Research on Ageing, University of Manchester

Lorna Warren
University of Sheffield
l.warren@sheffield.ac.uk
www.representing-ageing.com
Historical Significance

Mother Shipton

Emmeline Pankhurst
C21st Context

- Digital Manipulation
- Anti-ageing industry
- Graywashing
Your walls deserve a paint which will age well
Discrimination

Contracts terminated
Intergenerational Perspectives

Mother injects 8-year old daughter...

... with botox
Used creative arts to challenge views of older women
Oct 2009-Nov 2011, based in Sheffield
Self-defined older women participants (n=41, age 43-96 yrs)
Produced own ‘alternative’ images of ageing
# Workshops

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Community-Led</th>
<th>Art Therapy</th>
<th>Phototherapy</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Facilitator</strong></td>
<td>Eventus (cultural development agency)</td>
<td>Susan Hogan</td>
<td>Rosy Martin</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Participants</strong></td>
<td>Green Estate: volunteers</td>
<td>Guildford Grange: extra care housing</td>
<td>Open recruitment</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Number</strong></td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age Range</strong></td>
<td>60-74</td>
<td>77-96</td>
<td>43-70</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Approach</strong></td>
<td>Photographer: Laura Pannack</td>
<td>Photographer: Monica Fernandez</td>
<td>Discussion and artwork</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Photo diary → re-enactment → transformation</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Time Period</strong></td>
<td>6-10 days</td>
<td>6-10 days</td>
<td>2hrs x 8 weeks (16 hrs)</td>
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<td>5 days over 4 weeks, 1 session 3 months later</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Images Produced</strong></td>
<td>Formal portraiture of early C20th</td>
<td>'Before and after' images</td>
<td>Sculptural, textural, photographic and painted artwork</td>
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<td>Photographic images created individually and in pairs</td>
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EXHIBITIONS, DOCUMENTATION AND EVALUATION

- Exhibitions: Workstation, The Moor and Jessop West

- Documentation and Evaluation:
  - interviews
  - observation and description
  - film
  - questionnaires
Dominant Images

Selling Impossible Beauty

Anti-ageing Creams

Positive Ageing

Figure of Fun

Vulnerable Victims of Crime

Dementia & Dependency
Guardian’s All Ages Fashion
Positive Representations
Duality
Wrinkles as ‘hieroglyphs’ or life story
Participant’s skin and her mother’s skin
'There are aspects of ageing that I feel positive about but there are aspects that I feel anxious about... and you see that in our faces. Some days I look at myself and I think ‘Who’s that? That’s not me, that’s some old woman.’ And other days I think “Oh yes, that’s me.”
LOOKING AT HAIR

Chin hair and the crone

The ‘unseen’ balding pubis
“Inside the old self are the other layers of people that you’ve been...”

“Looking at the Inside

“It’s about how you feel on the inside but they judge you on the outside”
‘One cervix has a small drop of blood – I no longer bleed periodically – it was farewell to all that. The other image a kind of hello and welcome to none of that and a new set of hormonal/non-hormonal effects.’
PHOTOTHERAPY APPROACH

“I feel like a prisoner of the numbers.”

“Ageing now means owning the time I have lived.”
Dressing Flamboyantly, Engaging in Play
“They’re wickedly red and pointed-toe and you’ve got to be in the mood to wear them.”
Modelling early 20th century portraiture
Satirising magazine/ television makeovers
Contribution to a New Understanding of Ageing?

Context and Transition
- ageing as a ‘highly nuanced’ process
- emphasis on diversity and potential

Involvement
- knowledge through lived experience
- radical or transformative potential
- self-sustaining activities

Life-course Perspectives
- Intergenerational links
- PHSE education on age and ageism

Charter against Ageism and Sexism in the Media
“Positive reinforcement”

Solidarity
“We wanted an outdoor action picture... Lillian and Jenifer, they were reading a map, June’s meant to be digging and we couldn’t think of anything else so we stuck Pat in a wheelbarrow.”

“This has been the highlight of my bloody life”
Community Exhibitions
Look at Me!
Exhibition, Videos & Website
www.representing-ageing.com

LOOK AT ME!
Images of Women & Ageing

An exhibition of images of women, by women

EXHIBITION DATES
The Workstation
15 Paternoster Row, Sheffield
Wednesday 9th - Wednesday 23rd March 2011
9am – 5pm (excluding weekends)
The Moor & Sunwin House Shop Windows
The Moor and Furnival Gate, Sheffield
Saturday 26th March – Thursday 21st April 2011
Jessop West Exhibition Space
Lea vague Road, Sheffield
Monday 11th – Friday 15th April 2011
10am – 6pm
All exhibitions are free to enter and wheelchair accessible.

www.representing-ageing.com

[Images of people interacting and artworks]
Exhibition Evaluation (n242)

87% - good or very good
83% - thought provoking
88% - would like more images of older women in public

“I’ve thoroughly loved this exhibition. Some of the pieces brought tears to my eyes. I only wish my mum could see these images and have them speak to her as they have to me”

“...excellent piece of work on a subject that needs a lot more publicity.”
School Workshop: Act Your Age!
happy, joyful, cool, pretty, lovely, beautiful, gorgeous, sweet, fab, wonderful, nervous, excited, thoughtful, grateful

enjoying her life & living, happy, joyful, cool, wonderful, funny, thoughtful, chilling out, got a headache

funny, sunny, amusing, having fun, happy, super cool, daft, crazy, coocoo, sleepy, hurt, in pain, angry

relaxed, happy, funny, having fun/a laugh, scary, young, cool, funky, crazy,

jolly, happy, enjoying herself, having a laugh/fun, confident, cool, pinky, bright/jazzy, funky, glamorous, funny, crazy, weird, confused
A Charter?

THE FIRST THING SOME PEOPLE NOTICE IS HER AGE.

AGE

Conam

LET'S MAKE AGE DISCRIMINATION A THING OF THE PAST.
PROJECT TEAM

Lorna Warren, PI (University of Sheffield)
E-mail: l.warren@sheffield.ac.uk
Website: www.representing-ageing.com

Merryn Gott, CA (University of Auckland)
Susan Hogan, CA/Art Therapist (University of Derby)
Naomi Richards, Researcher
Clare Allam, Film Producer
Clare McManus, Eventus
Rosy Martin, Photo Therapist
Laura Panneck & Monica Fernandez, Photographers
Alison Morton, Curator
Judith Taylor, Secretary

George Wood, Sheffield University Research Experience
Student (funded by Uni of Sheffield)