ARTS FOR HEALTH

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INTRODUCTION

During 1997 a small group drawn from past and present hospital staff and from the local community was set up to consider the provision of works of art in all forms throughout the hospital buildings and grounds. This was in response to the now wide recognition of the role that the arts, both visual and performing, can play in the healing process and in improving the working environment of hospitals.

The current working group is shown in appendix A. In January 1998 Susan Loppert, the Director of the Chelsea and Westminster Hospital Arts Project, came to Lancaster to give a talk on the introduction of an arts project in the hospital environment. The Chelsea and Westminster is the largest hospital development in Britain and the first NHS teaching hospital to be built in London since the seventies. The hospital was designed by the architects Sheppard Robson and was planned to provide an environment full of light, space and a feeling of optimism and filled with art work of all kinds including a wide variety of the performing arts.

The hospital was built on the old site of St Stephen's Hospital on the Fulham Road in an area containing some of the city's wealthiest residents, many of whom are patrons of the hospital, which of course is a great help in non-NHS fund-raising for arts projects. This should not put us off in Lancaster as once the concept of Arts for Health is accepted then the example set by the Chelsea and Westminster can be followed in hospitals throughout the land.

PROGRESS DURING 1998/99

In March 1999 the business plan for Arts for Health – Lancaster, was approved at the board meeting of Morecambe Bay Hospitals NHS Trust⁽¹⁾.

The idea of improving the hospital environment had already been taken up by the Estates Department under Martin Ellam, prior to the foundation of Arts for Health. No-one can have failed to be impressed by the effort that has been put into the refurbishment of Medical Unit 1 in the old hospital building. The transformation shows what can be done to brighten the surroundings for patients, staff and visitors. The corridors and wards have been transformed by the imaginative use of wallpaper instead of paint and the addition of pictures including the marvellous black and white photographs of Yosemite National Park by Ansel Adams in the old Ward 7 corridor. Patterned floors and beautifully tiled bathrooms have all helped to lift the spirits of patients and staff. Indeed, one senior surgeon expressed the view that he would prefer to work in the old building. This is not to say that the Centenary building is without benefits. Space, colour and light have been well used but there are acres of wall

space crying out for art work. The approaches to the building are becoming pleasing and restful now that the trees and bushes are maturing.

PROJECTS COMPLETED BY ARTS FOR HEALTH

1. Seven black and white photographs by Joseph Harman (1893-1972) of farming and social activities in Cumbria have been hung in the reception area and Exercise Stress Test Room of the Heart and Lung Unit. These photographs have been donated by Valerie Anderson. Staff and patients in particular have been taking an interest in these photographs, discussing the ploughing, stone walling and basket weaving and trying to guess where they were taken. They were purchased from the Abbot Hall Art Gallery in Kendal and the Kendal museum holds the negatives.
2. Ten landscape photographs of Lancaster, Morecambe and the Lake District have been hung in the corridor of the Centenary building operating theatres. The colour photographs, taken since 1984 by John Hicks, were a gift to the theatres.
3. A Royal Lancastrian Pottery poster (Figure 1), depicting examples of Royal Lancastrian pottery, has been hung in the corridor near the entrance to the Centenary building. The poster is a gift from the Peter Scott Gallery, Lancaster University, and the corridor was redecorated by the Estates Department to accommodate the poster. The original pieces of pottery can be seen in the Peter Scott Gallery.

Figure 1 Royal Lancastrian Pottery Poster

4. The orthopaedic outpatients children's play area has been designed by Shane Johnson (Figure 2). This is a children's play area in the form of an ocean liner leaving port with tugboats as seating, storage facilities and a lighthouse in a corner of the orthopaedic outpatients. Funding for this project was a gift from the farmers of Cockerham and is named SS Jessie after Jessica Elliot, aged 9, who has spent some time in the unit.

Figure 2 Orthopaedic outpatients children's play area by Shane Johnson

CURRENT PROJECTS

1. *Ammonite Fountain* (Figure 3). A fountain in the shape of an ammonite by the sculptor Althea Wynne is to be sited in the new outpatients' courtyard. The pool shown will be filled with pebbles, so will not present a water hazard. The fountain has been funded by the Health for Lancaster Appeal Society.
2. *Boy on a Dolphin* (Figure 4) by Maggie Angus Berkowitz. A ceramic tile mural by the Carnforth artist Maggie

Figure 3 Ammonite fountain by Althea Wynne

Figure 4 Boy on a dolphin by Maggie Berkowitz

Berkowitz has been given to the Royal Lancaster Infirmary and will be sited in the new entrance to the Women's Unit.

PROJECTS FOR THE FUTURE

1. *Millennium Imaging Suite at the Royal Lancaster Infirmary, incorporating the CT and MRI scanners.* The trust wishes to make imaginative visual enhancements to the fabric of the suite in order to promote the well-being of patients, many of whom are being investigated for cancer and understandably feel nervous and often claustrophobic. The plan is to install a two-metre square piece of artwork in a south-facing external wall and might utilise architectural glass brick, or stained or etched glass to create a feeling of spaciousness and natural light in the scanner room. Two decorative panels will be installed in existing window apertures in a wall separating the nuclear medicine department from the CT scanner room. The panels, possibly consisting of backlit stained or etched glass, will be visible from the examination rooms. The success of the project will be entirely dependent on the amount of funding available from non-NHS sources and the artistic interpretation of the scheme.
2. *Three-year project to refurbish the Women's Unit.* The trust has asked Arts for Health to consider projects for artwork to enhance the 30-foot outside brick wall above the existing entrance. Readers of the *British Medical Journal* will have seen the illustration of the sculpture (Figure 5) *Out of the Blue* by Paul Marc Davis which was recently unveiled at Guy's Hospital, London. The wall-mounted figurative piece is displayed in an internal courtyard where

Figure 5 *Out of the blue* by Paul Marc Davis

Figure 6 *Family group* by Shaun Williamson

the old hospital tower adjoins a newer wing. The sculpture was selected by staff, patients and visitors from a shortlist of five designs⁽²⁾. A similar approach will be used to select a sculpture for Lancaster.

3. *Textile-related project for Medical Unit 2.* The Lancaster Embroiderers' Guild under the chairmanship of Mrs Sue Widden has kindly offered to undertake some form of textile-related project for the Royal Lancaster Infirmary. An example of their work can be seen in the beautifully executed design presented to the St John's Hospice. This is a series of tapestries mounted on folding screens portraying the River Lune from its source to the sea. The project took six years to complete and is a fine example of the concept of Arts for Health.

PROJECT ON HOLD

Sculpture for the Royal Lancaster Infirmary. A proposed larger-than-life-size stone sculpture (Figure 6) by local sculptor Shaun Williamson depicting a family group based on the Zimbabwean sculpture shown in Figure 7 was under consideration. This has had to be abandoned for the time being. Maquettes, artwork and photographs of the sculpture were displayed for five weeks in the Skylight Restaurant, RLI, in order to obtain the views of staff and visitors. The results of the questionnaire, though predictable, were disappointing: only 29 people expressed their views, which were fifteen against and fourteen in favour. Those against based their views largely on the mistaken belief that NHS money would be used, thus using funds from patient care or staff salaries. Of those in favour, half preferred the Zimbabwean sculpture. This is not really an option as the intention was to have a sculpture made from local stone by a Lancastrian sculptor. The project will be reviewed at a later date and will be open to competition and hopefully produce a sculpture acceptable to the majority.

Figure 7 *Zimbabwean sculpture of family group*

ADMINISTRATION

All the members of the group serve on a voluntary basis and meet bi-monthly. John Hicks is currently chairman and arts co-ordinator. Should the work of the group prove successful, it could be extended throughout the Morecambe Bay hospitals. The appointment of a professional arts co-ordinator will need careful consideration. This is a major role and can determine the success or failure of an arts programme.

FUNDING

- £1,000 per annum for five years from 1999 has been made available by the Health Authority for Arts for Health.
- All other funding will have to be raised separately from private and business donations and from local and national charities. It is one thing to raise money for medical equipment and facilities but Arts for Health is more difficult as people have to be convinced of its benefits. Hopefully once some of the current projects have been completed an appeal will be made to all sections of the community to become Friends of Arts for Health and so provide an ongoing source of funds for future art work.

THE WAY FORWARD

At the Arts for Health National Seminar held in April 2000 at Manchester Metropolitan University the message was clear: capital schemes with early involvement of art schemes at the design stage are the key to success.

A new faculty of Health Medicine and the Environment has been established at Durham University headed by a former general practitioner. The aim of the faculty is to raise awareness of Arts for Health amongst health professionals,

NHS trusts and universities and to encourage and facilitate interaction with the arts.

Alan Howarth, minister for arts, stressed the importance of artists being involved from the design stage and has instructed local authorities that they must have a set of guidelines in place by 2002 to consider artists working in healthcare premises.

We would hope that Lancaster can follow the example set by the Chelsea and Westminster, the Royal Devon and Exeter, the Queen Elizabeth Hospital Gateshead and many other hospitals up and down the country who now recognise and have acted on the beneficial effects of Arts for Health.

With the acknowledged support of the trust and the local arts council and with the financial help of the local community, Lancaster may become the Chelsea and Westminster of the north - who knows?

Appendix A

Arts for Health Group Members include:

Dr J B Hicks (Chairman)	Dr A K Brown
Dr V Anderson	Dr W G Park
Mrs A Carruthers	Mr K Sykes
Miss S Charnley	Ms S Ashworth (Lancaster Museum)
Ms M Gavagan (Peter Scott Gallery, Lancaster University)	
Ms J Laurie (Arts Development Officer, Lancaster City Council)	

REFERENCES

- 1 Hicks JB Arts for Health - Lancaster Business Plan. Agenda item 13 Morecambe Bay Hospitals NHS Trust Board meeting 31/3/1999
- 2 Davis PM Illustration of sculpture - Out of the Blue, at Guy's Hospital London Br Med J 2000; 320;1494