

Art Conserves at the Haworth

Summary of a presentation about a project involving eleven adults, five artists, one conservator and eighteen permanent collection watercolours at Haworth Art Gallery, Accrington

The Haworth was approached in late 2004 by Meadowbank Day Centre, Padiham, for an exhibition of art work made by their service users. Out of this came **Art Conserves**, an intensive weekly art course at the Haworth for eleven adults with learning disabilities from four east-Lancashire Day Centres.

Participants selected their favourite 20 out of 50 permanent collection watercolours which were waiting for conservation and used these as a starting point for learning about art. Between May and October 2005, we employed five artists every Thursday for five or six weeks each, one to teach drawing, one painting, one collage, one printmaking and one papier-mache. Our watercolours were used by the artists at all times as reference and inspiration.

The watercolours then went off for conservation and the group's Thursday visits to the Haworth continued. Various activities were organised, including a visit to Blackburn Art Gallery to select some modern prints to borrow and work from back at the Haworth. We also involved the group in preparations for the final exhibition, discussing labels, promotional materials, the preview and suitable sale prices.

Conventional feedback and evaluation was almost impossible, so I organised a special day when with the help games and three of the artists, I gleaned some ideas about what was more and less successful.

The final exhibition from February 11th to March 26th 2006, was selected with the help of individual group members where possible. Work was framed and displayed around the now conserved watercolours which had informed and inspired it. At the preview the sense of pride in what they had achieved was very strong amongst the group and at the end of the exhibition, everyone received a cheque for sales they had achieved.

The project cost was £11,000 of which £8,000 was grant-aided by MLA and LCC.

Jennifer A Rennie 16/4/07