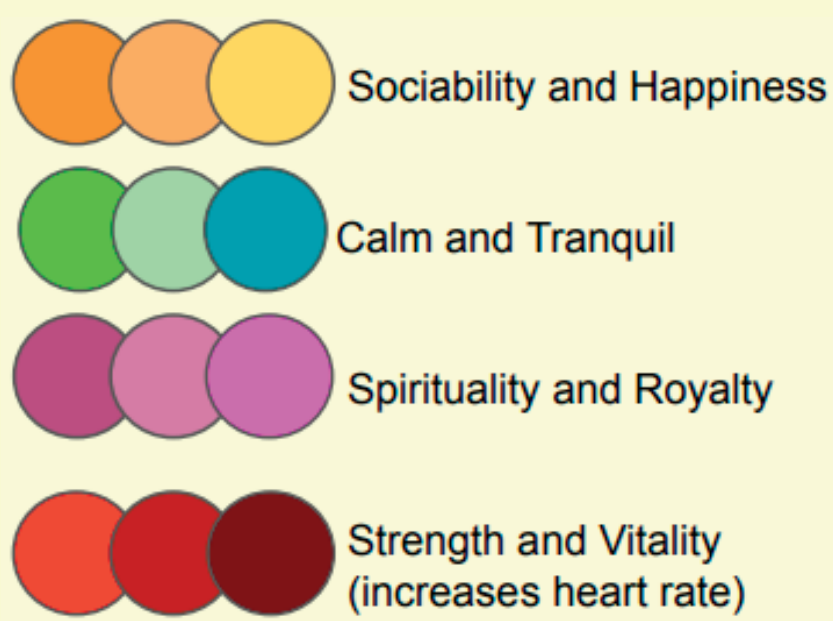


Exploring how colour and environment can effect people living with Dementia?



(Jimenez, K. 2021) (Rogers, T.T. *et al* 2007)
(Anderson, L.S. 2022)

I have used my research throughout this project to create a 'fiddle apron' which I have made before to be used in my Care Home. The fiddle aprons are waist tied aprons with pockets for the carers to use and then sensory elements such as soft materials, textures, and moveable materials to redirect and calm residents. Redirection is important to lower anxiety; hold focus during stressful times such as assisting with food and medications and finally can be used to refocus challenging behaviours. The apron has the same colours and imagery as the 4 collages I have made for the exhibition. Examples shown to the left.

I have used recycled plastic aprons from within my care home that can no longer be used and would otherwise be thrown away. I used dye sublimation in my 4 chosen colours (blue, red, yellow, green) to create collages using imagery to represent the emotions experienced when the colour is used in the environment around people living with Dementia.

I have made the collages from layers of pressed discarded plastic, utilising a process I learnt during the Masters course as I looked towards working more sustainably. I have strategically layered the plastic creating ridges and depth that can be followed with your finger which, again, is sensory stimulation and engagement to redirect someone who is upset.



(Paintings by William Utermohlen, arranged by year (Gerrard, N. 2015))

I have 2 methods of research; The first is analysing academic resources and the second is reflecting on personal experience working with people living with dementia. I looked at both methods together to produce pieces that demonstrate what I have learnt whilst being mindful to the fact that I have no first-hand experience so will never truly know what it feels like. However, I found representing other peoples personal accounts helped my work stay respectful. It was difficult to accurately represent how it affects the perception of your surroundings without analysing other personal account. So an important reference would be the work of William Utermohlen.

Utermohlen was an artist who was diagnosed with Alzheimers in 1995 at age 61. He painted for the next 5 years until his mobility declined. His work is vital in illustrating the change of visual and cognitive skills. It highlights the senses that stay stronger and how Alzheimers changes the perception of shape colour and personality. (Gerrard, N. 2015)

"the artist concentrates on strong and simple sensorial impressions: the sound of voices, the taste of coffee, wine, and cigarettes, the feeling of warmth and cold." Quoted by Dr Patrice Polini (Boicoss, C. (2016))

This project matters because it is estimated that there are currently 900,000 people living with Dementia in the UK and is projected to reach around 1.6 Million towards 2040. It was also found that 70% of people in Care Homes have Dementia or memory problems. (Wittenburg, R. *et al* 2019)
This raises the importance of not just helping the people living with Dementia, but also addressing the attitudes and awareness by others affected such as family, carers etc.

Key Points to acknowledge is that there are many forms of Dementia; Lewy Body, Alzheimers and Vascular being the most common. It also develops into other concerns with the degeneration of the 5 senses and mobility decline.

It is too difficult to ever encompass all the aspects and I believe in a person-centred approach which is considering the individual and not the disease. All the research is generalised to anyone with Dementia and any conclusions coming from the biggest responses and I have generalised from common reactions to colour, situations etc.

What I have taken from this is to raise awareness of the general limitations and start considering adaptations for the individual case. For example, providing a tool to show general responses to certain colours to know where to start and how to introduce colour into well-being, but also leave room for adaptations from individual response.

The Nature of my investigation is to express how Dementia can be affected through the environment of the care home. I have used research from Journals and academic materials as well as personal experience to explore how colour and environment can affect someone living with Dementia and raise awareness to the daily experience through sculptures and collages representing my research.

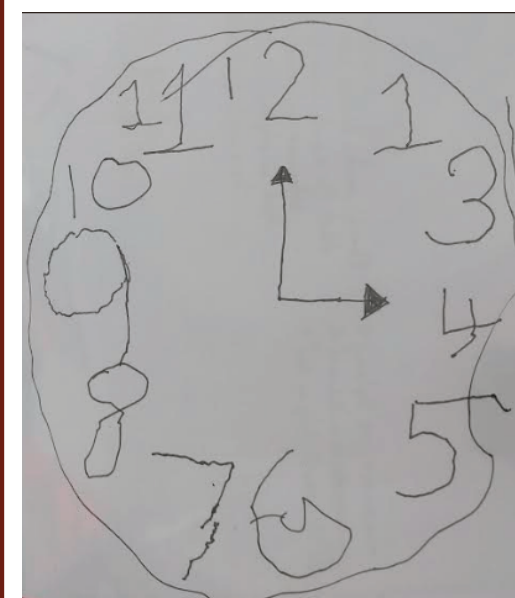
Questions I have used to Guide my Project are:

- How do I use my craft to raise awareness and explore research and experience around Dementia Care?
- How can I use other peoples craft to better understand my learning process and how my craft has developed during the Masters Course?
- How do I make something that can explore what's potentially wrong with Dementia Care and attitudes towards it and why this is important?

I have created hand sculptures and visual representations of colour and provoked emotion to raise awareness to how people living with Dementia experience their environment. I highlight the difference between the visual experience of people with and without Dementia by making goggles with blue filters and visual defects to perceive as someone with Dementia. I have displayed these goggles so the audience can and view through 2 sets of eyes and experience common symptoms of Dementia such as Macular Degeneration, the loss of Peripheral Vision and colour distortion.

Common imagery running through my project is the clock face which was taken from the Clockwork Drawing Test that is commonly used to track the progression of Dementia and mental decline.

"With dementia, many aspects of cognition are affected, including -The ability to perceive the relationship of objects in space - The ability to represent sequence and movement in abstract form - Attention and concentration." (Heerema, E. 2022)



The drawing can instantly show how the persons perception and cognitive function is struggling and can track the degeneration over time. I have used it as a visual way to show how Dementia isn't just affecting the mind, but also the hands which anyone can find scary being that we use our hands daily without much thought. It connects with the audience in a relatable way to open conversations considering life without the use of hands and how to emphasise and accommodate for those affected. Here, I also continue to branch into sustainable substitutions by using Jesmonite to cast the hands from a silicone mould rather than polyester resin and fibreglass.

(Photo of Drawing done by myself, Example of clockwork drawing test while on a bus ride to replicate tremors.)

My craft has developed from Prop Making where I worked to a specific brief with practical props, into exploring how I can raise awareness of issues and start to explore solutions using my craft to communicate. I have worked as a carer for almost 3 years and it has become a big influence in my life and now my future career. I want to use my craft to improve my role as a Dementia Carer as I branch into Art Therapy within my Care Home. My craft has changed from being primarily a Prop Maker because it is more experimental and will continue to develop as I research and start to work with the residents in my care home. The process is the focus rather than making for a functional end goal. Therefore, I have found it important to display my working sketchbook. The research and experiments are just as important as the objects produced and processing what matters to focus my craft.

The focus of my work has already developed a lot so far and it will continue to expand as post-exhibition, the pieces will be able to be donated to the care home. They can be used directly with residents in sensory areas of the home and then the apron being used by me and other carers in assisting the residents.

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