

AtkinsonHR

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# Beyond Boundaries

Paper Abstracts

Date: 22nd March 2025

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**#ATACL25**

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# Parallel sessions

## Panel 1

Chair: Abbie Cairns

11.10am-11.30am

Lesley Gena

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11.30am-11.50am

Ranae Lee

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11.50am-12.10pm

Natalie Parfitt

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12.10pm-12.30pm

Mary Pullen Deacon

## Panel 2

Chair: Michele Gregson

11.10am-11.30am

Haf Weighton

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11.30am-11.50am

Charlotte Chapman

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11.50am-12.10pm

Dr Garry Nicholson

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12.10pm-12.30pm

Lina Ivanova

# Parallel sessions

## Panel 3

Chair: Abbie Cairns

1.50-2.10pm Karen Davies

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2.10-2.30pm Victoria Doyle

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2.30-2.50pm C J Sams

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2.50-3.10pm Cally James

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3.10-3.30pm James Rees

## Panel 4

Chair: Sophie Leach

1.50-2.10pm Lesley Gena

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2.10-2.30pm Jemima Senior

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2.30-2.50pm Anne Reardon-James

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2.50-3.10pm Prof. Samantha Broadhead

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3.10-3.30pm Holly Sandford

# Panel 1

## **On My Way: An Exploration of a Community Art Exhibition for Adults**

**Lesley Gena**

People's Resource Center, Illinois, USA

### **Abstract**

I am the Director of Art Programs at People's Resource Center (PRC), a non-profit organization providing free services to people in the western suburbs of Chicago, Illinois. Participants in our community art program often share that they don't always feel comfortable calling themselves artists. During this presentation, I will share a brief overview of our work, discuss our impact, and highlight participant stories, along with showcasing images and experiences from our upcoming art exhibition at Mayslake Peabody Estate. Mayslake is a tudor Revival-style mansion in Oak Brook, Illinois known today as Mayslake Hall. The style reaches back to England's Tudor period as a revival of the timber-frame buildings popular at the time. Today, Mayslake Hall, which is listed on the National Register of Historic Places, is a thriving community space, where people connect to nature and one another through art, history, and cultural programs offered throughout the year. I aim to provide a digital tour of our exhibition in this extraordinary setting. Displaying their artwork in a beautiful public setting often provides our participants with the confidence they need to see themselves as artists!

# Panel 1

**A series of drawing exercises practiced building the confidence of adults with ASD on how to form compositions.**

**Ranae Lee**

## **Abstract**

On-going drawing exercises to build confidence when forming pictorial composition and to break the teacher-reliance. The group is six adult learners with autism spectrum disorder who enjoy art. However, when it comes to a theme/topic or subject, they are lost and often not pick up the marker or paintbrush. While on occasion, a few may be able to name subjects link to a theme/topic, they were unable to draw it out on their own, even in simple cartoon forms. It comes across as not having a visual library in their mind of the parts that make up a subject.

Over time, it was noted that the group prefers pictorial instead of abstract. Likely because there is a clear subject, and relatable boundaries compared to abstract pieces. We progress from following the teacher's example, to make colour choices before we move on to choose one photograph and breakdown the shapes or parts seen in the photograph.

Currently, we are practicing two strategies (1) Choose a composition between two photographs (2) Rearrange subjects within a composition. It was a rough start at the group relied on each other to "have the same piece", but slowly, they are getting used to the idea that it is OK to have a different composition from each other.



# Panel 1

## **Bridges to Yorkshire Exhibition**

**Natalie Parfitt**

### **Abstract**

Natalie Parfitt from the Adult, Family and Community Learning Team at Doncaster Council outlines the process of organising the ongoing art exhibition at Doncaster Gallery, Library and Museum, covering key steps such as outreach, installation and collaboration.

The aim of the exhibition is to foster confidence and inclusivity within the community, by showcasing the work of local people, particularly women who have English as a second language.

The exhibition celebrates diverse cultural perspectives, providing a welcoming space for learners to share their stories through art, photography and creative writing.

By encouraging participation and engagement, the event aims to strengthen community bonds, promote cultural appreciation, and empower women to feel valued and heard in society.

Doncaster AFCL City of Doncaster Council South Yorkshire SYMCA Mayoral Combined Authority

# Panel 1

## **Looking Back and Moving Forward**

**Mary Pullen Deacon**

37 Queen Street, Colchester

### **Abstract**

I propose a creative workshop for conference participants, using innovative teaching methods, inviting each individual to reflect on prior knowledge and experience to inform the making of a simple artist's book. The aim of the workshop is to build confidence in making skills and to reestablish confidence in and connections to one's own prior knowledge and experience. Minimal and easily obtainable materials will be required.



# Panel 2

## **Through stitch we created a community**

**Haf Weighton**

### **Abstract**

I am a Welsh speaking textile artist based in Wales. I worked as an art teacher in London. Since 2015 I have led many art in health projects.

At Oasis, refugee's and asylum seekers we created a large stitched table cloth with food from different cultures on it. It was important not to use language as a barrier for communication. The piece was then used at a Feast at the National Museum of Wales.

People I have worked with at Oasis use the projects as a vehicle towards refugee status . One journalist from Syria went on to do an art foundation course and is now working for the National Library of Wales. Another musician from Morrocco was included in the Pinc list of influential Welsh LGBTQ people.

Haf's practice has improved the lives of so many. Working on over 7 large projects with the health board, Haf has introduced textile work as a medium by which people can come together to tell their stories through art, no matter what their background, and develop a cultural sharing for some of the most disadvantaged and vulnerable people in Wales.

Melanie Wotton, Swansea Bay Health Board

# Panel 2

## **Folke Art: Older people accessing arts through community connections**

**Charlotte Chapman**

Community Art Kent CIC

### **Abstract**

Over a year, 47 people age 55+ took part in the Folke Art project. Folke Art is a free weekly community art class for adults aged 55+, in Folkestone (South East England). The creative classes prioritises the social: time to talk, exchange, make friends and build support networks, as well as the artistic: taking part in new creative activities, from bookbinding through to printmaking.

Four partnership projects were delivered including a Christmas Card project with a local publisher and a zine project with a local bookshop. Eight artists from the local community delivered sessions and 15 participants have gone on to run their own self led group where they lead sessions.

The digital posters will explore the journey of this year-long arts and well-being project for adults 55+.

It will introduce the methodology used by Charlotte Chapman (FHEA, PGCE) to reduce loneliness among the group through building a strong community connection and a four phase method to enable the group to get to know each other through making & connecting.

The digital poster will link to the evaluation report from Prof Angela Pickard at the Sidney De Hahn Research Centre for Arts and Health, its findings and recommendations.

# Panel 2

## **Beyond Measure: Mastery, Identity, and Creativity in Adult Arts Education**

**Dr Garry Nicholson**

Newcastle City Learning

### **Abstract**

This article examines how mastery, identity, and creativity are nurtured in adult arts education, proposing a shift from outcome-based frameworks to a deeper focus on transformative learning processes. Drawing from the work of the Pitmen Painters and educational theorists such as Elliot Eisner, Jal Mehta, and John Dewey, the small-scale study investigates the practices of seven tutors working in adult learning. Findings reveal that mastery involves continuous refinement through creative exploration, identity formation is deeply connected to personal and cultural narratives, and creativity thrives when learners are empowered to take risks and innovate. The article critiques the dominance of standardisation in education, arguing that it overlooks the immeasurable aspects of learning that are critical to fostering agency and self-expression. By placing mastery, identity, and creativity at the centre of adult arts education, this research highlights the potential of the arts to transform both learners and their communities.

# Panel 2

## **Business Is Driven By Quarterly Results**

**Lina Ivanova**

Graveney School

### **Abstract**

I am pleased to propose a presentation about a recent artist commission at Reeves Corner, Croydon - a plot of land, empty since the furniture shop that used to be there since the 1860s burnt down in the 2011 riots.

Having moved to the area, from Bulgaria, in 2007, I feel the neighbourhood has contributed to my growth as a person. Treating the site as a studio, gallery and a workshop space, I facilitated 4 community workshops exploring our connection to places, the way they shape us and the marks we leave on them. Working with photography and sculpture, the project aimed to bring people together and prompt reflections, to share memories, feelings, knowledge of the area and our personal connection to it, whilst making art. The work produced was exhibited on the site after.

Taking activities that happen in often-interior spaces outside in the open, I am questioning, how does a change of setting impact the learning? Whilst vulnerable, it felt a powerful act to access, occupy and activate the site. The activities - using 'low-grade', inexpensive materials and a practical and participatory approach, made the workshop inclusive.

I am interested in the opportunity to share further reflections visuals and ideas I have for future projects of this sort.

# Panel 3

## **From C to A: Pedagogy vs Paragogy in Adult Community Learning**

**Victoria Doyle**

### **Abstract**

This paper will explore my experience as an Artist-Teacher in Adult Community Learning spaces. Focusing my role as Academic Tutor on BA Fine Art at Sunderland University, in particular the work undertaken on the Fine Art Histories and Ideas (HAD118) module, I will outline my approach to learning and teaching alike.

Informed by a desire to emancipate the learner, encourage independent critical thinking, and facilitate accessible learning experiences, I will detail how and why of implementing an inquiry-based cooperative learning methodology and expand upon the need to forefront paragogy over pedagogy.

# Panel 3

**SPACE to space. Work solo, not alone.**

**Karen Davies**  
SPACE Studios

## **Abstract**

In response to the increasing needs of the artists in our studio buildings, wellbeing has become a key element of adult learning.

In 2024, “SPACE to space” weekly sessions launched as a quiet, focussed online workspace for artists and creatives to meet together while they work on an individual task. This might include an artwork in progress, an application, admin, reading or research. Using the Pomodoro time management technique, the facilitated session is divided into 25-minute stretches of focused work broken by five-minute breaks. Sessions are conducted in silence with microphones off, with cameras on, allowing participants to concentrate on their own particular tasks. The aim is to create a focussed study community, target remote working and isolation. This is a gentle and productive meeting point, particularly beneficial to those with ADHD. To work solo, not alone.

SPACE is a leading artist studio provider and visual arts resource in London, founded by artists Bridget Riley and Peter Sedgley in 1968. SPACE runs 21 studio buildings across eight London boroughs and Colchester which are home to 880 artists, ranging from the newly graduated to some of the most significant artists in the UK. SPACE ‘s mission is to make space for art - by understanding the challenges of visual artists, offering programmes of support, community engagement, exhibitions and participation projects.

Karen Davies is a visual artist and Head of Artist Development at SPACE Studios where she runs professional support programmes for studio artists.

# Panel 3

**Creativity, language, and belonging: How Arts and ESOL can foster community cohesion through creativity and collaboration.**

**C J Sams**

## **Abstract**

This spring I will be working on a creative project with young people on the ESOL course at Suffolk New college. This project will change the dynamic of the teacher and student to utilise creative arts in building language skills, confidence and a sense of community. The cohort have been invited to develop an artwork reflective of their experiences of learning English after arriving as young people in Suffolk, whilst recognising their complex journeys into the UK. To compliment their study of English language I will be facilitating a series of paper and textile collage sessions to develop individual creative outcomes the students experiences of living and learning in Suffolk. The final collaborative outcome will be exhibited in The Hold Archives in Ipswich as part of a group exhibition of community and educational groups throughout the region. The project will build participants confidence in language, creativity and communication, whilst fostering community understanding and a sense of belonging.



# Panel 3

## **Gentle teaching**

**Cally James**

### **Abstract**

Gentle teaching is an empathetic method to enhance and build confidence in people. Expressing empathy can take many forms the use of hands, eyes, our words and being present all contribute to building on safe environments. Hands can be the most useful tool to build relationships and safe feelings, working with clay is one of the greatest ways to include the use of hands in gentle teaching method. I will explore why my studio is considered by over 30 students as a safe environment.

# Panel 3

## **Teaching in the Classroom & Working in the Studio: How the 2 Spaces Inform Each Other**

### **James Rees**

Brigham Young University  
Springville Museum of Art (Collections chair)

### **Abstract**

This presentation examines the profound and reciprocal relationship between an artist's studio practice and their approach to teaching in the classroom, framing both spaces as interconnected ecosystems. Drawing from personal experiences as both an artist and educator, I argue that art-making and art-teaching are inherently intertwined, each continually informing and enriching the other.

Through this lens, I propose that teaching is not merely a transmission of knowledge but an ongoing artistic encounter—an act of creation in itself. Like the fluid and collaborative processes of studio work, effective teaching requires intentionality, reflection, adaptability, and play. Both spaces share a fragile balance that thrives on interconnectedness, spontaneity, and collaboration.

In this session, we will explore these themes, highlighting how studio practices can serve as a metaphor for pedagogical methods. Attendees will gain insights into embracing interdisciplinarity and balancing their creative identities as artist-teachers. By embracing this integrated approach, we as educators can foster environments where both we and our students experience meaningful, transformative engagement with art and creative practices.

# Panel 4

## Workshop: Colorful Tree Trunks

**Lesley Gena**

People's Resource Center, Illinois, USA

### Abstract

Continuing to build on the theme of building confidence, I would like to lead a relaxing workshop for people at any skill level. We'll begin by using masking or painter's tape to block out tree trunks on paper. Participants can choose to create birch trees or any type of tree they prefer. Next, we'll add color using paints, pastels, crayons, or any other available art supplies. Once the artwork is dry, we'll peel off the tape to reveal the tree trunks beneath, and add any detail desired, creating a beautiful and satisfying finished piece. Please find an example of the project here: [https://drive.google.com/file/d/1GbHfT4sogOTzk0Ya-lU\\_rJmkFFkYRIJh/view?usp=drive\\_link](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1GbHfT4sogOTzk0Ya-lU_rJmkFFkYRIJh/view?usp=drive_link)

Though this project may be familiar to some, it offers a chance to reflect on the symbolism of trees and connect with nature through creativity. This workshop aims to foster a sense of accomplishment and joy, leaving participants with a lovely end result and a positive experience.

Materials needed: Masking or painter's tape, thicker paper that can handle the tape (such as Bristol or watercolor paper), and any coloring materials (paint, chalk, pastels, crayons, markers, or colored pencils). The size of the paper is up to each participant. If the participant does not have access to paper that can handle the tape, white crayon can be used to mask out the trunks.

# Panel 4

## **When is an artist-teacher no longer an artist-teacher?**

**Dr Abbie Cairns**

### **Abstract**

This presentation will explore the topic of interdisciplinary practice and the artist-teacher identity and will consider if it can exist outside of the professional locations associated with it, namely the art classroom and studio.

This paper engages in heuristic inquiry, allowing me to engage with the research topic, focusing on self-reflection and discovery. Within the paper I investigate my emotional and intellectual journey in the dual professional identity of artist-teacher. The methodology is used to explore key themes and patterns that emerge to describe the experience of being an artist-teacher in different contexts.

The results will present key findings related to my engagement with my lived experience of being an artist-teacher existing in different professional locations, including digital marketing and initial teacher training courses. I will share insights and epiphanies that led to personal revelations, which can have broader implications for artist-teacher practice, including on the importance of professionalism and values communicated through my manifesto.

The paper will conclude with the sentiment that the artist-teacher identity can move beyond boundaries and exist outside of the professional locations usually associated with the dual identity. The conclusion will highlight how the process of inquiry has changed my outlook on identity in an act of transformation and personal growth.

# Panel 4

## **Empowering Creativity: Fostering Belonging and Social Change in Arts and Crafts Communities**

**Anne Reardon-James**

### **Abstract**

I will speak about the different ways that I encouraged my arts and crafts learners to take ownership of their creativity and learning. I sought to go beyond the traditional approach of the 'teacher as expert', to engage local communities, drive social change in some way and help foster a sense of belonging in class. I will look to address the question of what worked and what didn't work to achieve this aim.

I will reflect on my lived experiences starting out as a community arts and crafts tutor. Working at first for the WEA (Workers Educational Association) in South Wales, UK, I taught classes in partnership with the charity sector, trade unions and various organisations. The approach to teaching was one of empowerment of learners, encouraging democracy and active citizenship, in line with Welsh Government policy.

I will use a Padlet digital poster to present key takeaways and techniques that helped to foster a sense of belonging. This is a resource that can easily be shared with attendees and encourages a multi-media approach and interaction.

I will sum up my observations, with recommendations for community driven practices and next steps.

# Panel 4

## **Learning returns: Revealing the entanglements of cultural ecologies and adult learning journeys within the City of Leeds**

**Prof. Samantha Broadhead**

### **Abstract**

An arts-based research project, Learning Returns, was designed to capture the learning journeys of mature students. The participants had all returned to learning in the arts after being away from education and training. They undertook many routes back into education. Arts-based methods incorporating film-making were the means employed to record their stories (Broadhead and Hooper, 2024). Recruitment of the participants was continuous throughout the project and adopted a ‘snowballing’ approach. This involves the nomination by the participants of other potentially eligible people who could also make valuable contributions.

Snowballing is not unproblematic as it is reliant on the social capital of the participants and this could inadvertently exclude possible candidates from the research investigation. However, Sadler and Lee (2010) consider that it may be a means of contacting ‘hard to reach’ groups, locating the populations that researchers do not have access to. Recruiting participants through formal means depends on who is or is not recognised by institutions as a legitimate learner, and this can also lead to exclusions.

When using snowballing recruitment within the Learning Returns project, the connections between people, and formal and/or informal educational contexts became apparent. Because this project was situated within the arts it was seen that sites of cultural production such as galleries and arts centres were important places where connections were made. These connections were both established over time or more fleeting, but when mapping them it seems that mature students were part of wider cultural ecologies that were developing in local communities. The idea of the “cultural ecosystem” was first coined in 2004 (Holden, 2015, p. 15). It is a theoretical tool for exploring, “the complex interdependencies that shape the demand for and production of arts and cultural offerings” (Markusen, Gadwa,

# Panel 4

Barbour, & Beyers, 2011, p. 8).

This paper reflects on how the snowballing strategy did allow for new insights to be gained about how mature students become part of cultural ecologies, keeping in mind, that only people who are part of these networks are identified as possible participants. It also shows how the web of cultural ecology may encapsulate the city, but at the same time connects and overlaps with artistic communities operating in local towns.

Broadhead, S., & Hooper, S. (2024). How can arts-based methods support narrative inquiry into adult learning in the arts?. *European Journal for Research on the Education and Learning of Adults*, 15(1), 63-80.

Holden, J. (2015). The ecology of culture. Arts and Humanities Research Council. [https://sgs.salzburgglobal.org/fileadmin/user\\_upload/Documents/2010-2019/2015/Session\\_554/AHRC\\_Ecology\\_of\\_Culture.pdf](https://sgs.salzburgglobal.org/fileadmin/user_upload/Documents/2010-2019/2015/Session_554/AHRC_Ecology_of_Culture.pdf)

Markusen, A., Gadwa, A., Barbour, E., & Beyers, W. (2011). California's arts and cultural ecology: Online. Retrieved November 17, 2015, from <http://annmarkusen.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/caarts-culture.pdf>

Sadler, G. R., Lee, H. C., Lim, R. S. H., & Fullerton, J. (2010). Recruitment of hard-to-reach population subgroups via adaptations of the snowball sampling strategy. *Nursing & health sciences*, 12(3), 369-374.



# Panel 4

## **Creatively evaluating in arts and health**

**Holly Sandford**

Artatwork CIC

### **Abstract**

This presentation explores creative evaluation in creative community wellbeing projects, using a case study from the Community Culture Club, a heritage project for older adults living with dementia, carers, and those experiencing loneliness or social isolation.

The project employed creative activities aligned with session themes as a method of evaluation, supplementing traditional surveys for a richer understanding of participant experiences.

Creative evaluations, embedded within the project, built deeper connections and captured the transformative impact of cultural engagement.

The approach yielded increased participant confidence, a sense of ownership, and valuable insights for project improvement.

Further research will explore embedding creative evaluation across projects and developing accessible resources for wider application.