Engaging with Works of Art

SUGGESTIONS FROM THE AOE PROGRAM AT MACQUARIE UNIVERSITY

Art expresses many facets of the world in which we live, and for people living with dementia it allows a visual engagement that encourages creative expression and storytelling. We have found that contemporary art speaks to this audience in supporting active engagement through the practice of looking and telling.

Approaching any artwork using simple structural questions is key to active engagement. Keep in mind to wait patiently for their responses which can range from verbal, facial expressions or a spontaneous physical response such as dancing or singing.

We have found the structural elements within art such as colour, movement, line, composition and technique are of great interest to this audience which prompts personal narratives.

ENGAGING WITH ART
An important part of engaging people living with dementia is to use our imagination in creating a narrative. We can create different scenarios when looking at art from imaging to being within the space of the picture to what it would be like in the creation of the painting. The artist produces artwork for us to respond in our own ways, there is no set response.

ARTIST AND IDENTITY
Discuss the artist identity, their name and background.

Using your imagination and storytelling: what do you think may have prompted them to become an artist?

TECHNIQUE?
Has the artist used a brush, is it small or large or has the artist used something else to apply the paint?

STUDIO?
Looking at the way the artist has used paint in the work, let’s discuss the look of their studio, can you imagine it to be messy, filled with lots of things or tidy, neat and clean?

SUBJECT MATTER
• Is the artwork depicting a landscape, still life, portrait or is it abstract?
• What does the artwork remind you of?
• What can you see in the artwork?
• Describe the colours and do they signal anything in particular?

CONTACT INFORMATION
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