

# Case Study

## Haslemere Educational Museum From the Ordinary to the ExtraOrdinary



Age-Friendly

**We wanted to use our European Peasant Art collection as inspiration for a community project. Peasant Art is often about embellishing the ordinary to make it special for loved ones. We decided on the idea of a patchwork quilt and asking people to make 15cm squares using a variety of materials. The finished mosaic had over 600 squares made by over 500 participants who ranged in age from 10 days to at least 90 years.**

The vast majority of participants were unaware of the collection so we were really able to widen the audience's knowledge and we also reached out to many people who would not usually connect with the Museum. The mosaic was displayed in the reception of the Museum for a month and then also in another exhibition for a further month with around 5000 visitors seeing it.

**How did it aim to reach or have relevance to older audiences? What impact did you want it to have on the size or profile of your visitor base?**

We wanted this to be a true community project and so it was important to us that we reached beyond our core audience for events which is largely children and families. We also wanted to reach out to people who may not visit the museum.



### **What tools did you use to measure this impact? What key indicator did you use to measure this impact?**

We recorded participant numbers and also visitor numbers to the exhibition. We also recorded participants of different activities which enabled us to ascertain the number of participants who fitted into the older age bracket, this was about 20% of the total.

### **What other objectives were you hoping to achieve?**

More audience awareness and appreciation of our European Peasant Art collection, and an exhibition of the work created.

### **Were there opportunities for this activity to be intergenerational?**

The family events we hold are great opportunities for intergenerational co-operation. We often get grandparents bring their grandchildren and we always encourage them to take part either by themselves or in collaboration with their grandchildren.

### **What worked well, what challenges did you face?**

The events we held all seemed to go well with people really enjoying themselves.

The idea of a mosaic/patchwork seemed easily understood by participants and a 15cm square was seen as easily do-able

Number of participants - over 500 and percentage of older people - about 20%

Lots of people visited to see the mosaic in the two exhibitions, included people from at least one of the care homes and also the Alzheimer's group

Initial buy-in by older people was slightly difficult

Publicising the project – it would have been nice to get great recognition of the project and the amount of people who participated.

### **What have been the most important things you have learned?**

Not to write anyone off but allow and encourage EVERYBODY to take part



## What will you do differently next time?

Try to reach out to even more groups and try to maximise awareness of the project.

### Top Tips for engaging older audiences:

- Value them and their life knowledge
- Allow time, things such as getting seated can take longer than with a younger audience
- If they have a carer make sure you talk directly to the older person and don't just talk to the carer, but take full advantage of the carer's knowledge of the person

### Here's what participants had to say:

'My mother-in-law, Audrey (aged 90) had not knitted for some time as she was losing her vision due to macular disease. However, simple squares were something that she could achieve, even though she felt she could no longer knit baby clothing for new family members any more. She had recently had long spells of ill health and repeated hospital admissions, which had left her feeling low and somewhat depressed, reducing her activities and interest in life. Knitting squares was something she could talk about to visitors that was positive, and led to increased visits as friends and neighbours brought oddments of wool they had to her and stayed to chat with her whilst she recalled other family members and the things she had made for them over the years.' **Audrey's squares were never square (due to her loss of vision) but they told a bigger more important story about creativity and wellbeing.**

'Even those who felt they couldn't take part 'because they didn't knit or sew' used the time to recall a wider range of creative activities they had previously done, sometimes with their own parents or grandparents. They remember using knitting dollies, rag rug making and so on, and were quick to praise the skills of others.' Care home worker. **We received a variety of squares from this group including paper and fabric collages made by those who initially didn't feel they could contribute.**

### Author:

Kay Topping

Organisation Education Officer, Haslemere Educational Museum