Sanctuary 2026

Residency Evaluation

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Project Lead

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Four strangers

Three days

Two things in common: cancer and creativity

One goal: to make artworks that challenge preconceived notions of life with incurable cancer



"Landscape of the Mind"
© MB

Not Dead Yet? is a multidisciplinary arts project centred on the experiences of people living with incurable cancer and those caring, or who have cared, for a loved one with incurable cancer. It seeks to create opportunities for artistic expression, collaboration, and conversation, placing lived experience at the heart of the creative process.

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Context and purpose

The three-day residency took place at Lighthouse Poole through Sanctuary 2026, a program which provides space and support for artists across disciplines to develop projects and nurture their creative practice.

Its emphasis on curiosity, experimentation, creative exchange, and underrepresented artists provided a relevant setting for Not Dead Yet?.

This report will evaluate the residency against the intentions in the original application and the aims of Sanctuary, while providing evidence for future funding applications.

It brings together the project's development, preparation, and opening activities; participant feedback, as well as provide a map for further activity, resources, and outcomes as a measuring tool of the success or otherwise of the project.

Original intentions and development

The application proposed bringing together up to ten people from BH and Dorset postcode areas who had experienced cancer themselves or cared for a loved one with cancer.

The intention was to build community, support expression through participants' chosen creative media, and explore cross-discipline working.

Possible forms included textiles and/or fibre arts, writing, music, sculpture, painting, film, photography, and mixed media.

Sanctuary 2026 offered an opportunity to develop the concept and begin making work for a future exhibition, helping local people explore and understand different experiences of cancer.

It also proposed encouraging the use of reclaimed materials, including materials sourced through organisations such as Dorset Scrapstore.

Refining the project's focus

The original application took a broader approach to experiences of cancer.

As the concept developed, the author —and project lead— chose to focus on people living with incurable cancer and those caring, or who had cared, for a loved one with incurable cancer.

This decision grew from her own experience of living with an incurable cancer diagnosis and the challenges it presents, both in her creative practice and in everyday life.

The freedom to shape the residency allowed for a more focussed exploration of a very specific lived experience of cancer, creating space for participants to express their individual realities through different artistic disciplines.



Collaborative and multidisciplinary creativity
© AS

Participating artists

A recruitment and selection process, disseminated through social media, local cultural networks, cancer charities, and in-person presentations to target groups, ran from late June until late August.

The recruitment criteria invited applications from artists and creatives who were/had:

- aged 18 or over
- working in any creative/artistic discipline
- living with incurable cancer or caring for, or have cared for, someone living with incurable cancer
- a clear connection to the Dorset geographical area, which included the following postcodes BH, DT, SP7, and SP8 (Shaftesbury and Gillingham).

Prospective applicants were made aware that subject to successful funding/ fundraising, there would be capacity for a small payment in recognition of their professional practice, creative contribution and lived experience.

Four artists, including the author, took part in the residency. All four attended each of the three days. Together representing the following creative practices and professional experiences:

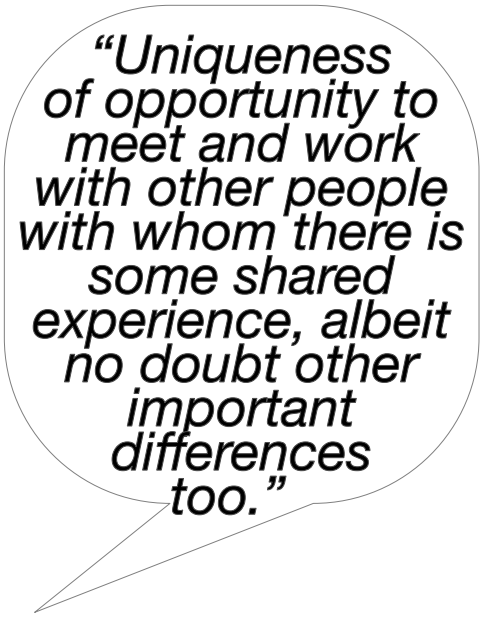
- An impressionist painter;
- An emeritus professor in cinematics;
- A poet and multimedia artist; and
- A social scientist and documentarist with an interest in visual arts.

Preparing for the residency

The week before the residency, participants took part in an online session ahead of meeting in person. Everyone had an opportunity to introduce themselves, ask questions, and meet Kathy Lett, a BACP registered psychotherapist supporting the project.

This session served the purpose of explaining what participants could expect from the there-day residency and to set and manage expectations.

Follow up communications included providing participants with details of the project's wellbeing and safeguarding protocol, participation consent form, and a pre-residency reflection.

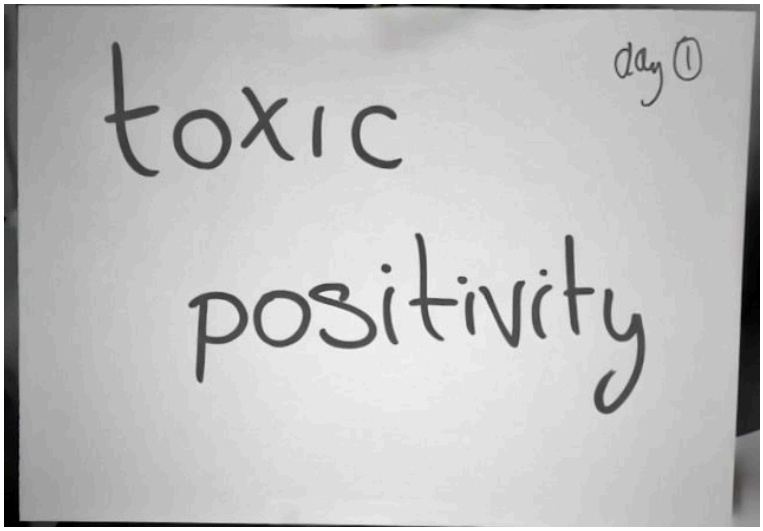


Participants were given choices on consent regarding photography, filming, audio recording, identification, and the use of project documentation.

The Wellbeing and Safeguarding protocol set out that participation did not require disclosure of personal or medical information, personal choice, confidentiality, emotional support, and responses to distress or safeguarding concerns.

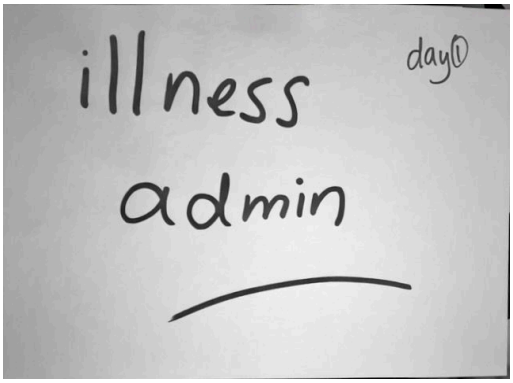
It recognised different energy levels, communication styles, and ways of participating.

Participants were invited to share their hopes, concerns, and participation needs, as well as their opinion as to what would make the residency a worthwhile experience for each of them.



Toxic positivity, often experienced by participants
© MB

Questions about creative confidence, connection to other artists, and comfort exploring lived experience through creative practice provided a framework against which post-residency feedback could be considered



Naming experiences
© MB

Documentation and further evaluation

We were joined throughout the three days by Alexandra Szigeti, a Dorset-based photographer who committed her time and skills to document the residency and the artist's interactions.

Additional photography was undertaken by the project lead, to include activity, participants' interactions, work in progress, and to serve as aide memoire and evaluation tool.

Completed consent and reflection forms, financial records, and further creative documentation form part of the project's archive as background reference for future concept and project development.

The Residency



Individual marks merge into a shared drawing
© MB

Bringing four people together with such varied skills and experiences, could not simply rely on the commonality of cancer and creativity. It needed meticulous planning to ensure the time and space available could be maximise, without jeopardising the main goal of the project, to make artworks that challenge the preconceived notions of life with incurable cancer.

The project lead set out a schedule of collaborative making across the three days, involving drawing, clay and assemblage. The participants were given a detailed schedule though they were mostly "blind" as to what each activity entailed.

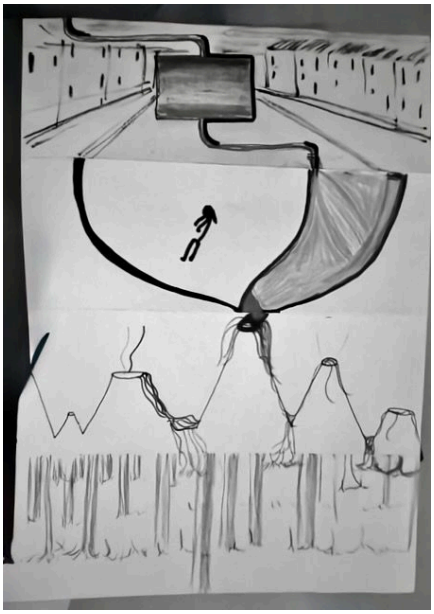
The activities were intended to create a playful way for participants to experience making, responding, relinquishing control and building on one another's ideas before moving into the day's wider creative work.

They formed a loose framework and their meaning was left open so that participants could bring their own interpretations, supporting the group in identifying and shaping the themes which emerged as the residency progressed.

Day One - Collaborative Making: Drawing

The Landscape of the Mind

The residency opened with “Landscape of the Mind” a drawing activity with a focus on connection, interpretation, and collaboration. Each participant received an accordion-folded sheet of paper with four to six panels. A choice of accessible drawing materials was provided, including soft graphite pencils, charcoal, soft pastel sticks, easy-grip markers, and colouring pencils.



“Circulation”; a common theme identified
© MB



Drawings reveal everyone’s contribution
© MB

Participants were asked to respond to the prompt:

“*We are going to start by making something together without knowing where anybody else is taking it. Think of this as a landscape, real, imagined, or completely abstract. You only need to respond to the marks that reach you.*”

The activity introduced the idea of creating together without a predetermined outcome, with participants responding to one another’s marks through their own visual choices.

The purpose was to gently introduce the artists to working collaborative in an activity that required no preparation, only basic drawing skills, and evoked childhood pursuits.

Seeing the whole for the first time

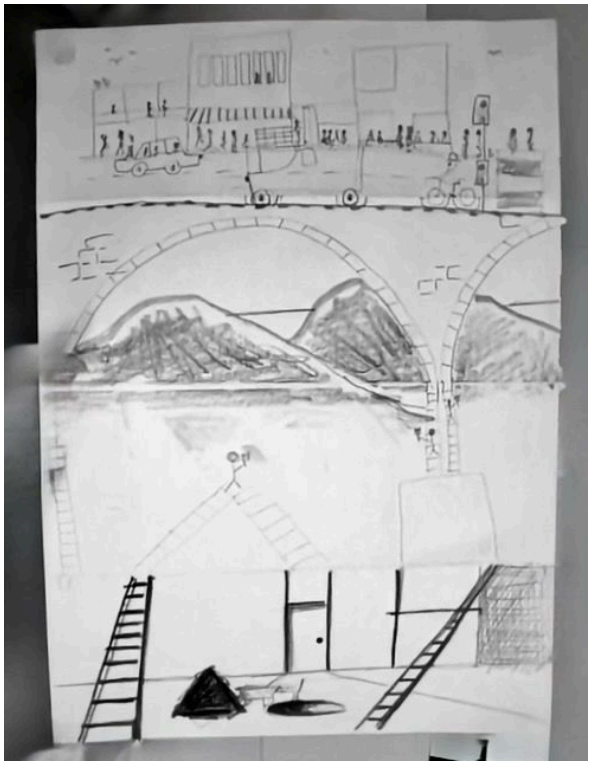
Process and shared reflection

Each participant had approximately two to three minutes to draw before concealing their contribution and passing the sheet to the next person to continue the drawing.

Once each sheet was full, having passed through every participant's hands, the resulting drawings were revealed and displayed for everyone to see. Together, we analysed each drawing and listened to one another's feedback, noting unplanned similarities and contrasts in styles and patterns.

The activity explored "not being in control" and how creating "blind" influenced each person's ability to create.

Our reflections connected this experience with living with our individual cancer diagnoses, prognoses, and treatment, identifying common themes of uncertainty, limited control, and having to respond to what unfolds.

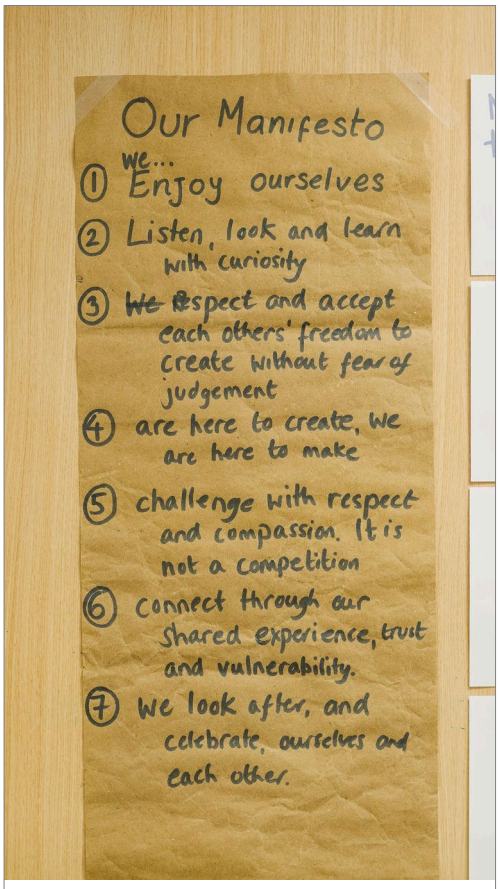


Diverging direction of travel
© MB

Creating a shared manifesto

Having “broken the ice” with an initial creative activity, participants were encouraged to formulate the residency manifesto collaboratively, beginning with the question:

“What do I need from the people in this room to be able to participate fully and creatively?”



Our Manifesto
© AS



Responding to prompts
© AS



Documenting ideas
© AS



Organising ideas
© AS

Each participant wrote their answers on separate pieces of paper, which were hung on a clothes line using pegs, grouping responses with similar themes, which were then used to formulate collective statements.

The eighth clause was added late on the final day.

This process gave everyone an opportunity to express their needs and contribute to the principles guiding our time together.

The resulting manifesto provided a shared reference point for how we wanted to participate, create, and work alongside one another.

We:

1. Enjoy ourselves.
2. Listen, look, and learn with curiosity.
3. Respect and accept each other's freedom to create without fear of judgement.
4. Are here to create; we are here to make.
5. Challenge with respect and compassion; it is not a competition.
6. Connect through our shared experience, trust, and vulnerability.
7. Look after, and celebrate, ourselves and each other.
8. Accept that language and expression include the use of expletives, such as swearing.

Day 1 ended with a reflection, framed by the questions overleaf, on what had been achieved and what was to come for the following day.

What these words or ideas mean to us in practice?

Are any of these saying something similar?

Is anything important missing?

What would help us disagree without dismissing one another?

What would help someone say they need a break, more time, or a different way to participate?



End of day one reflections
© AS

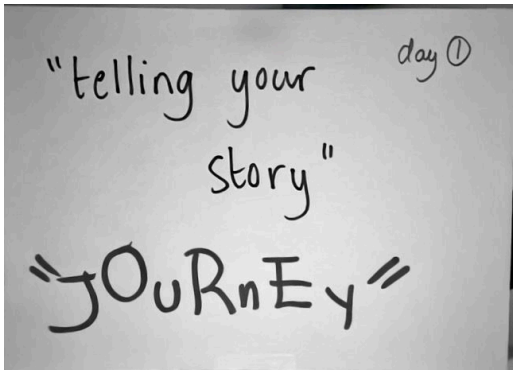
Identifying Themes

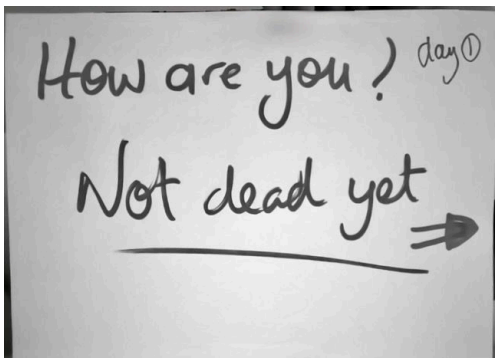
To help identify themes emerging from our initial discussions the project lead asked participants to think about their experiences of living with incurable cancer, noticing and documenting what felt:

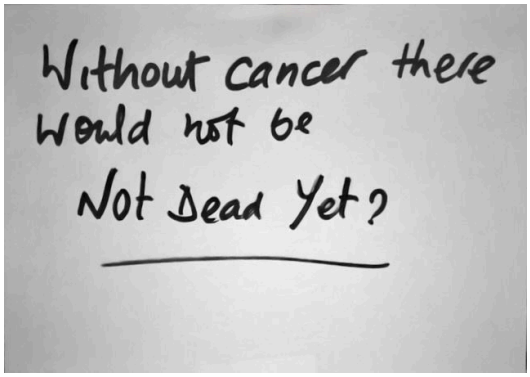
- Important
- Infuriating
- Niggling
- Overlooked
- Worth celebrating

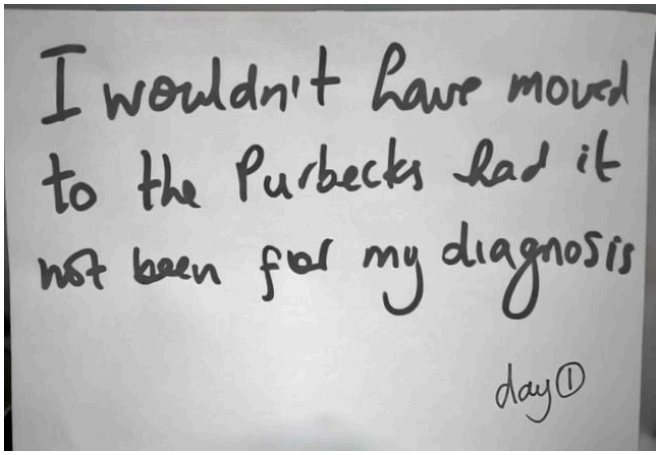
The manifesto served as the base from which to engage in dialogue with each other, bearing in mind that some of the topics that were likely to arise would need to be given room for empathy, compassion, respect, and acceptance.

The project lead explained that by identifying themes early on the residency it would set the direction in which participants would want to take any creative work resulting from the three days of collaboration.

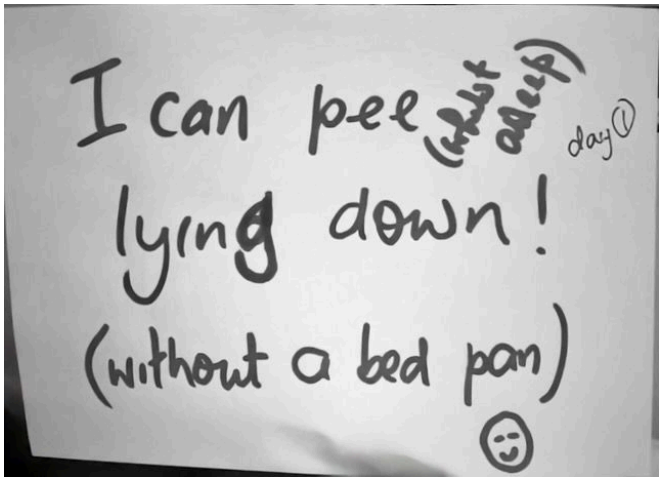








Connect through our shared experience, trust, and vulnerability.





Day Two - No longer strangers

Returning to the Lighthouse for day two of the residency felt peculiar to all participants; aware that we had spent a full day thinking, collaborating, creating, analysing, and reflecting, the start of a new day with people we had only met in person 24 hours before suddenly did not feel so strange. This is the feedback that greeted the author that morning as we all settled with our preferred hot drink.

Before moving onto the scheduled activities of the day, participants were asked to consider: *“Is there anything we learned from yesterday that needs adding to our manifesto?”* The manifesto remained visible for anyone to recap, and consider whether additions were needed.

The project lead was keen to move the residency from exploration towards ownership, though the aim was not to leave with a fixed exhibition plan. Recording selected themes, emerging individual intentions, possible collaborations, and a materials/needs list, would contribute towards the goal of clarity without enforced

closure.

Collaborative Making: Clay

The Vessel

A collaborative creative activity focused on responding, adapting and adding without

erasing. Participants were given the same quantity of air-dry clay, and invited to respond to the following prompt:

“*Today we are going to build something that*

changes every time it reaches another pair of hands. Create a beginning — a base, hollow, curve, wall, opening or form. It does not need to represent anything”

Approximately three to five minutes were allowed to begin creating a form, and participants were instructed to pass their “beginning” piece onto the person to their right.

The person receiving it was instructed to modify it only by adding to what was already there rather than remove or destroy it.



Adding to the “beginning”
© AS

The following were optional/suggested actions:

"*wrap, texture, extend, enclose, open up, or build onto the existing structure.*"

This process was repeated until all of the beginning pieces had rotated and returned to its original creator.

Four very different small scale clay "sculptures" were created, each evolving in unpredictable directions as they were rotated around the table.



Collaborative Making: Clay
© AS



The Vessel taking shape
© AS



"…a base, hollow, curve, wall…"
© AS

On completion, participants were invited to reflect on this form of collaborative creative activity.

These questions provided a framework for reflection:

What was it like receiving something somebody else had begun?

When did you follow the existing form and when did you take it somewhere unexpected?

What changed when you were asked to add without erasing?

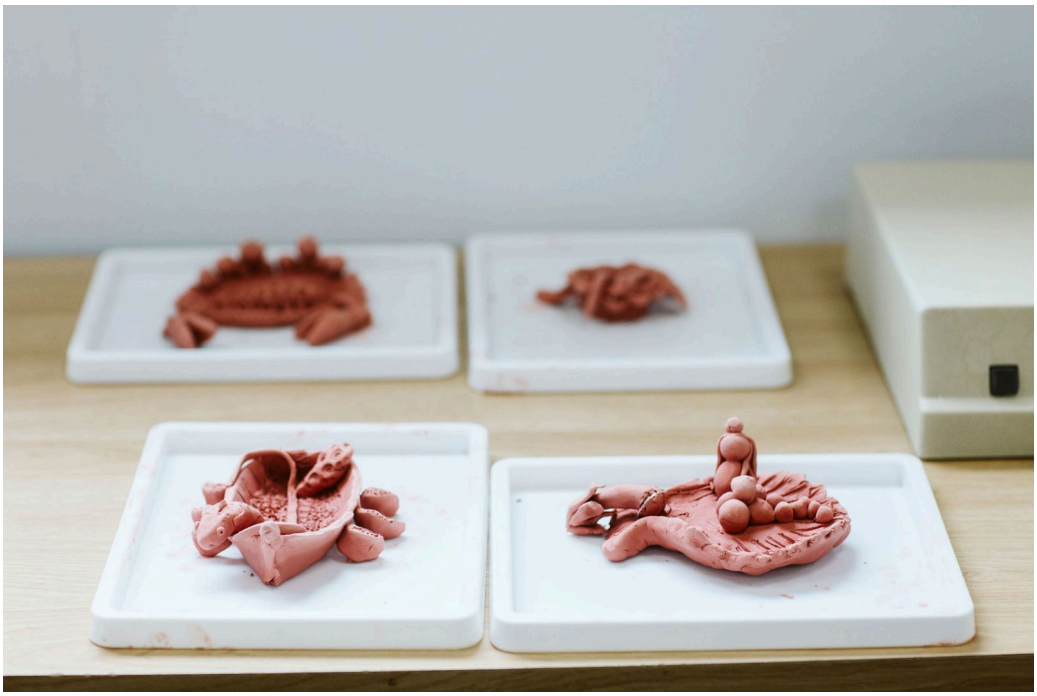
What does this tell you about collaborating while retaining individual creative voices?



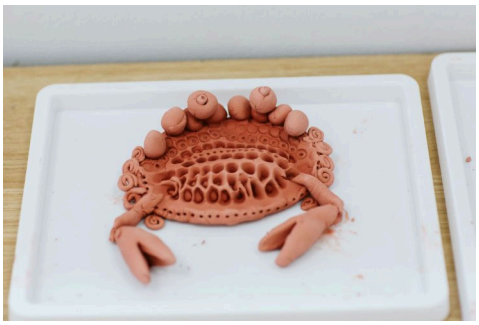
Creating “The Vessel”
© AS



A boat in clay
© AS



Four small-scale clay sculptures
© AS



Is it a crab?
© AS



A stranded maid?
© AS



Creativity in clay
© AS

“Our voices (unique and diverse) are represented in each of the pieces, whilst also creating a sense of unity”



Hands moulding clay
© AS



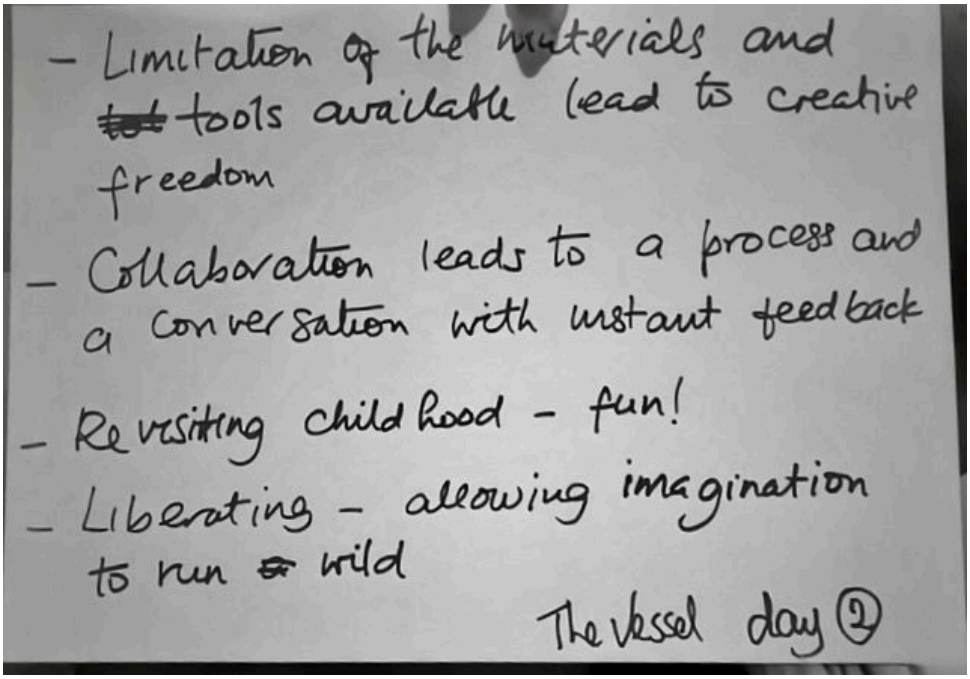
A snake slumbers
© AS



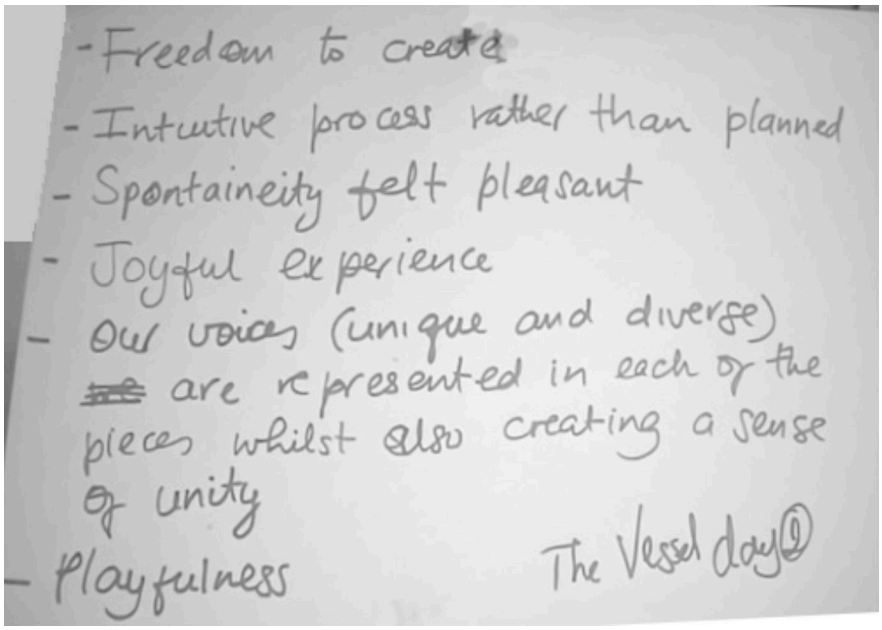
The finishing touches
© AS



Sharing reflections on creating with clay
© AS



Reflections on creating with clay
© MB



Reflections on creating with clay
© MB

From Themes to Artwork

Artists' Proposals

The project lead had set out a firm intention that outputs from the residency should be artist-lead, born from experimentation and exploration, and shaped through connection and collaboration.

Having experienced three collaborative creative activities, "The Landscape of the Mind", "Our Manifesto", and "The Vessel", the afternoon of day two was dedicated solely to opening the space to each individual artist, inviting each of them to express what, within the crossroads of incurable cancer and artistic expression, drew their attention, what they wished to explore, what media and/or processes they could imagine using.

Participants were reassured that this was simply an exercise of "what if" rather than a commitment to follow through.

As project lead, the author's role was to observe, listen, identify connections between participants' practices and ideas, scribe as needed, assist in expanding or pinpointing concepts and context.

To facilitate the flow of ideas, the project lead offered as example her own preoccupation with the environmental impact of her ongoing cancer treatment, by displaying three months' worth of medical packaging she had started to "save" as partial evidence.

Which posed the question, "*could all of this packaging be turned into artwork?*" and addressing the proposed project's criteria of utilising reclaimed materials to create artwork.



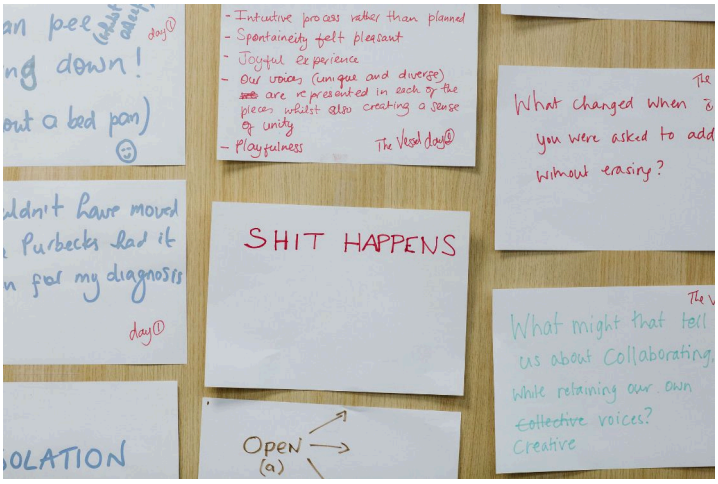
Three months' worth of medicines' packaging
© AS



Pondering the environmental impact of cancer care
© AS

Participants all agreed that honesty about all facets of their experience of living with incurable cancer was the starting point for any work to be produced.

It felt important to embrace humour as well, recognising that against all odds and expectations, there have been positive facets to each of the participants' own perspective of being exposed to the health system.



Honesty, a theme embraced by participants
© AS

The following questions guided this part of the day:

- What feels like it wants to remain an individual piece of work?
- Where might two or more practices meet naturally?
- Could there be one collective piece, several smaller collaborations, connections between individual works, or a mixture of all of those?

Collaboration

Discussions turned to collaboration and whether as a cohort we wanted to implement a closed model or an open model of collaboration.

Whilst all participants agreed that it was an important aspect of the project, after consideration of the advantages and disadvantage of each model, the consensus became one of a more fluid model of collaboration, which evolves as the project takes shape and ideas become tangible output.

Traditional collaboration models present challenges in engaging intended communities, risking either artistic integrity or appearing insulated. Rigidity can also stifle the future viability of the project.

Not Dead Yet? proposes an alternative collaborative model in which participation, contributions and dialogue are layered and built upon in stages.

Layered Collaboration

PROPOSED COLLABORATION MODEL

A protected creative core. Wider community contributions. Open public dialogue.

IN PRACTICE: CURRENTLY DEVELOPED WITH FOUR ARTISTS

Cohort size can vary with participants' access needs, available resources, and the support each host organisation can provide.

01 CORE CREATIVE CIRCLE

CLOSED / PROTECTED

A small, supported cohort of artists with lived experience of incurable cancer, either personally or through caring for a loved one.

Co-design creative questions, prompts, and exhibition structures. Establish the artistic language through trust, vulnerability, and mutual care.

SPACE TO CREATE, WITHOUT PRESSURE TO EDUCATE.

02 EXTENDED COMMUNITY CALL

SEMI-OPEN

The wider incurable cancer and caregiving community, beyond the host location. Respond to accessible prompts through postcards, short texts, or audio. Selected contributions form mosaics, soundscapes, or textile installations.

CURATED CONTRIBUTIONS, WITH CLEAR CONSENT.

03 PUBLIC RESONANCE CHAMBER

OPEN INTERACTION

The general public, healthcare institutions, and allies.

Join the dialogue through structured visitor responses and community workshops at host arts organisations and partner venues.

PUBLIC RESPONSES SURROUND THE ART; THEY DO NOT ALTER IT.

CREATIVITY THAT SUSTAINS THE PROJECT

CONSENT AND CARE

Agree credit, anonymity, moderation, permitted uses, and withdrawal limits before collecting or publishing contributions.

CREATIVE RIGHTS AND FAIR PAYMENT

Agree how work may become publications, editions, or merchandise. Set permissions, attribution, creative approval, and fair artist payment in writing.

REVENUE THAT SUSTAINS PARTICIPATION

Sales income covers agreed production and selling costs, and artist remuneration. Remaining surplus supports project activities, future artist participation, and creative opportunities.

Merchandise requires agreed commercial permissions. CC BY-NC-ND alone does not permit commercial use or sharing adaptations. Artists can retain copyright while licensing agreed uses.

Working proposal; contribution routes, commercial permissions, and payment terms to be agreed.

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Proposed structure

The group shaped the structure of a possible future exhibition which would support the development of collaborative and individual work.

Collaborative work

The collaborative work would consist of a central interactive piece which engaged in a board game, reflecting a similar concept to that of Monopoly or Pandemic.

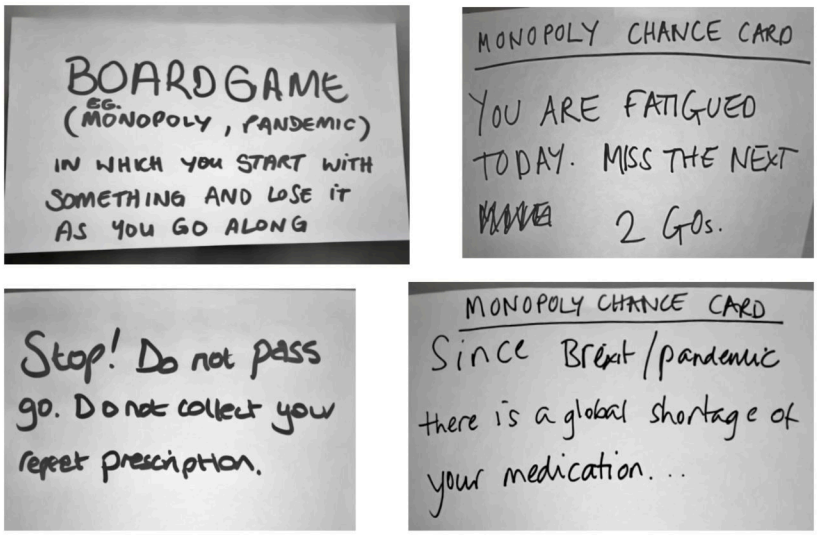


Exhibition planning
© AS

Visitors, instead of a game of accumulating (wealth, points, etc.), or racing to be the winner, would be exposed to the “Spoon Theory”; each throw of the dice presenting them with the possibility of losing or gaining spoons, depending on the task they are asked to complete. The piece would be tactile, and scaled such as visitors would become the counters as they journey around the board game.

This piece would reflect the common themes identified in day one, refined throughout the duration of the residency, and further consolidated as the participants continued to develop work post-residency.

At the time of writing, this concept is under development.



A concept under development
© AS

Individual work

The group moved onto considering what individual or interdisciplinary work could further represent themes that were more heavily weighted towards each participant's unique experience of incurable cancer.

There were nuanced differences in how each participant navigates the healthcare system, employment, finances, relationships (romantic, familial, friendships, professional, etc.), social interactions, feelings of belonging.

The group identified factors such as age at diagnosis, gender, ethnicity, relationship status, fertility and/or parenthood, socio-economic background, as having an impact on the perceptions of healthcare professionals, employers' expectations, and society in general, in turn affecting the decisions each had to take to overcome obstacles in continuing to live and full life.

These discussions touched on subject and issues which are of a sensitive nature to each participant. Participants expressed their frustration at not having an effective forum for the rest of society to expand their understanding of the emotional impact and practical consequences of living with their unique diagnoses and treatment paths.

In practice each participant agreed to produce work (one to three pieces) which addresses their unique perspective, exploring alternative media, and/or collaborating with each other to explore innovative ways to execute ideas.

The group have maintained contact and met virtually to continue developing the ideas that emerged during the residency. Further in person meetings are scheduled in 2027.

Closing Day Two

Participants closed day two of the residency with a short reflection guided by the following questions:

- What became clearer today?
- What are you excited about?
- What still needs thinking about?

The group also began to identify materials, equipment, space, technical support, access requirements and anything that would need to be sourced, according to the agreed structure of a future exhibition and the work that would emerge.

Community engagement was considered, thinking about ideas for making it possible and what would be needed to execute it.

What would be considered a success, how would it be measured?.

The group agreed to build into the exhibition plan an element of community participation, enabling audiences to respond to the works, making use of online tools, for example a virtual gallery, as well as analogue forms such as drawing, writing, and repurposing materials.

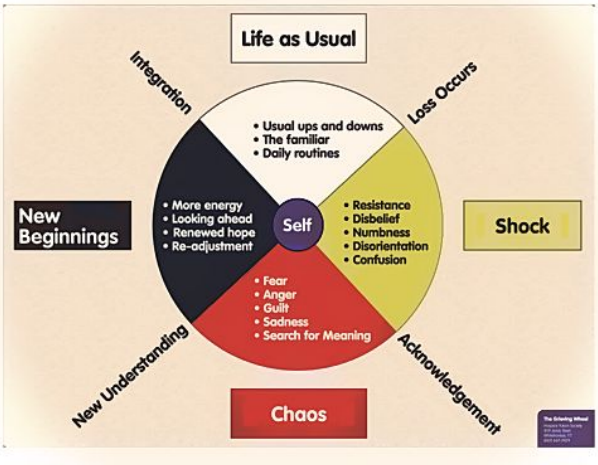
Day Three

The purpose of day three was about taking care of the work already documented, consolidation and looking outward. By the end of the day, participants would have a portfolio of creative intentions to develop, a collective vision for how an exhibition can communicate what it is to live with an incurable cancer diagnosis, ideas for meaningful community involvement, a practical roadmap, and realistic commitments to remain connected.

The group were also joined by Kathy Lett, a BACP registered psychotherapist who would be facilitating some of the discussions for the day and be available to provide emotional support to the participants.

Starting the day with reflecting on Our Manifesto, themes, and the exhibition roadmap, participants took the opportunity to demonstrate to Kathy some of the ideas emerging.

Kathy introduced the concept of “Wheel of Grief”, enabling participants to explore whether their experiences of living with incurable cancer resembled the cyclical nature of grieving. Participants welcomed being able to reframe their emotions and feelings with a fresh perspective.

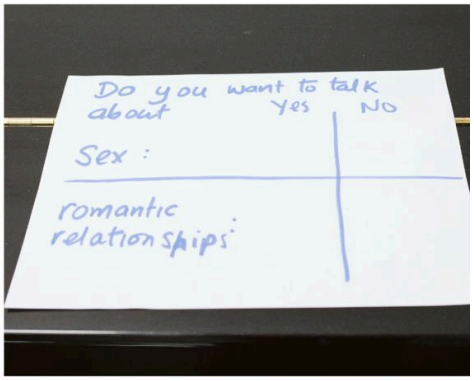


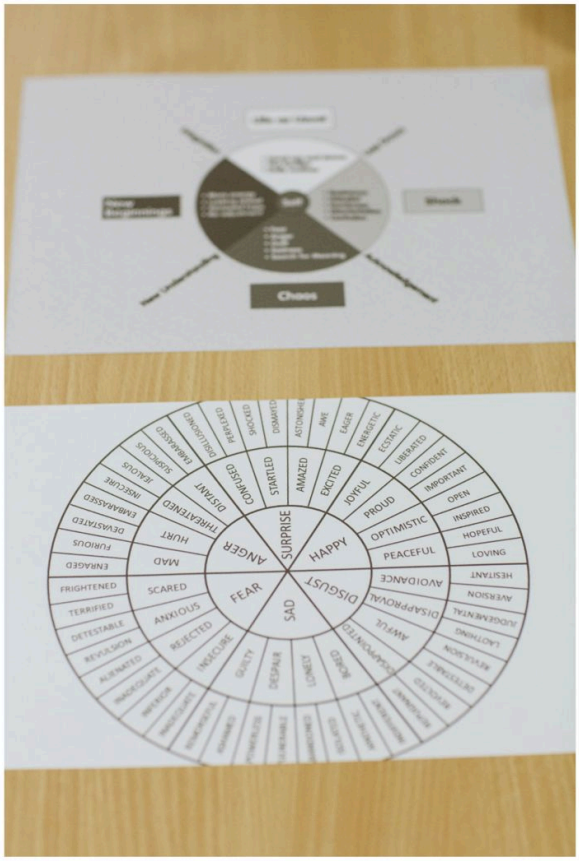
The Wheel of Grief
© AS

The project lead also provided the group with a chart of emotions to support further discussions around navigating our diagnoses, the healthcare and benefits systems, as well as the normal ups and downs of life.

Participants were encouraged to describe emotional states as a triad referring to the chart, and expanding where/if necessary, whilst being reassured that opting out was available to all of us.







Addressing emotions
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Collaborative Making: Assemblage

The Evidence

This collaborative making activity focused on exchanging found objects, individual interpretation and collective assembly as a form of story-telling.

Participants were each provided with one small shadow box a central collection of safe tactile found objects: beach stones, keys, fabric scraps, yarn, old game pieces, tiles, gears, paper fragments and other small materials. They were also invited to bring their own found objects which might have some significance for them, no need to explain why.

Each participant was invited to choose five to seven objects that caught their attention visually, texturally or intuitively; each choice representing what other people see; something they don't see; something that has changed or been lost; something ordinary or everyday; joy, humour, pleasure or love; uncertainty; or something that keeps them connected to life.

The next step involved trading two objects with the other participants. The exchanged materials then became part of their individual assemblage.

For the final step, each person was invited to arrange and secure the objects inside their individual boxes, by layering, leaving negative space, adding simple backgrounds, all changes were to be temporary and fully reversible.

Finally all of the shadow boxes were brought together as a grid so that separate works become one collective assemblage.

Reflection

The group finished the activity with a reflection guided by the following questions:

- Is there something in somebody else's section that connects with you?
- How did exchanging materials alter what you thought you were going to make?
- What can you see in the whole that you could not see in the individual pieces?
- What does this collective object tell us about the three days we have spent together?

The group remarked how the activity reflected each person’s personality and creative process, expressing the many facets of a person through temporary “collage” sparked ideas and desire for exploration, as well as a being a safe platform from which one could imagine experimenting with diverse media.

The accessibility of working with found objects made it a useful tool for future idea generation.

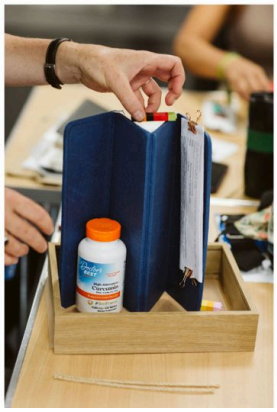
Having to “trade” objects with other participants, albeit briefly and temporary, provided and element of jeopardy, which stretched the imagination.













Collaborative Making: Assemblage
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Imagining the Exhibition

All of the activities in which the group engaged, the discussions, the idea generation, and the collaborative making, culminated in a skeleton map for a future exhibition which all of the participants agreed would contribute towards the aim to the project:

> *"To create opportunities for artistic expression, collaboration, and conversation, placing lived experience at the heart of the creative process."*

As we continue to work together the following criteria will inform the structure, format, delivery, and promotion of future exhibitions.

- What should people experience?
- What should people understand?
- What should people feel?
- How should people participate?
- Who isn't in the room yet? How do we reach them?
- What might happen beyond the gallery walls?

The process of creating will involve appropriate opportunities for evaluation, adjustment, and where appropriate responding to the audience's experience.

As a group we are keen to engage with health service professionals, charities, people living with incurable cancer and their loved ones, policy makers, local government, and culture networks.

What next?

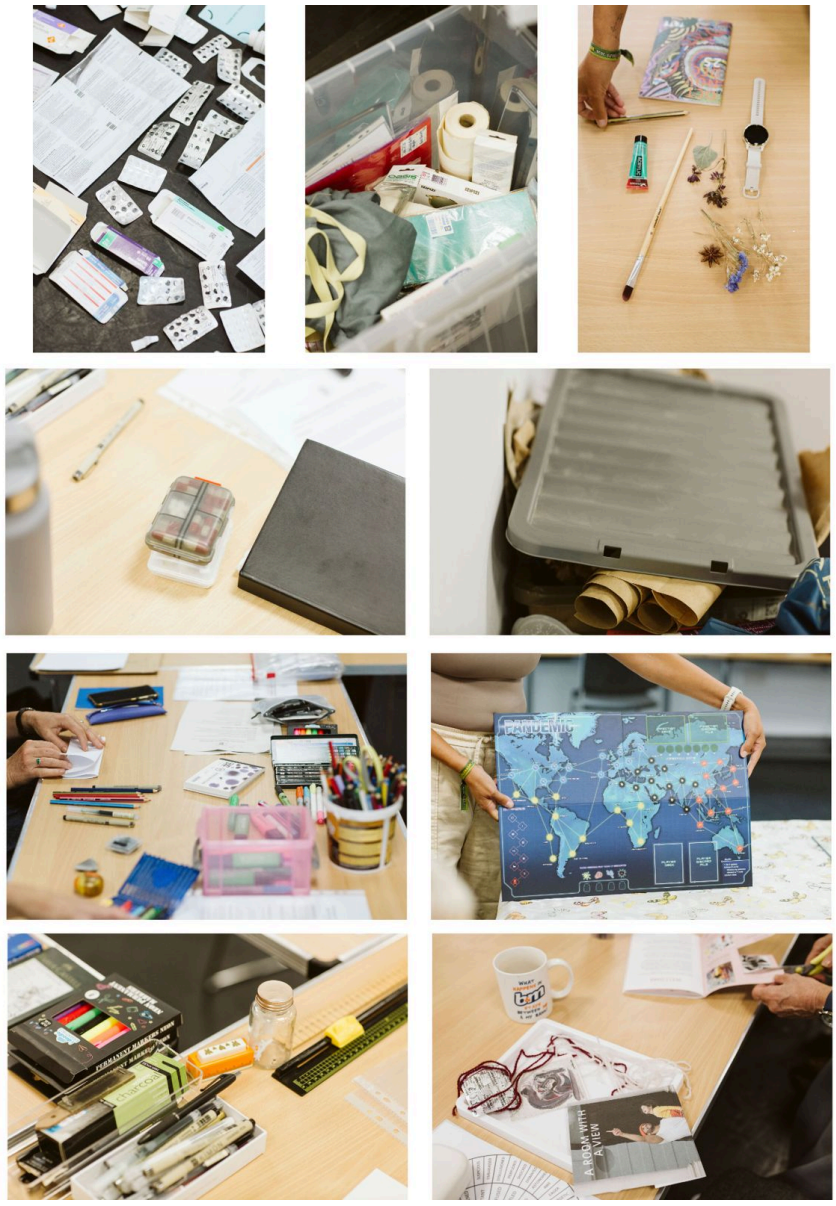
The project lead continues to explore funding opportunities beyond the current crowdfunding campaign to ensure creatives and collaborators involved in the project are fairly remunerated for their input, time, and skills.

The three-day residency was delivered using mostly recovered and reused materials, sourced from local charities and the author's own archive.

Wherever possible, participants will attempt to incorporate recovered materials to execute their ideas.

Community engagement activities will seek to include people who might not feel that arts or creativity is for them and will provide a platform for audience participation.

People living with incurable cancer can at times face barriers to access creative opportunities and cultural experiences. The project lead is committed to engaging with arts organisations across Dorset with a view to delivering the concept in some of the most rural areas of the county.



Working with recovered materials
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Participant feedback

Participants completed reflection forms before the residency and evaluation forms afterwards. This made it possible to compare their hopes and concerns with their experiences over the three days. These responses represent the three participating artists other than the author.

Before the residency, participants hoped to meet other artists, share experiences, work together, and develop ideas for an exhibition. They wanted to make work they felt proud of and begin a creative process together.

Some felt uncertain about their artistic abilities or nervous about meeting new people. One participant wanted more clarity about how the residency would lead to an exhibition and when it might take place. Participants also asked for room to express different experiences and ways of working, and flexibility to manage their health needs.

Changes in confidence and connection

Participants chose a score from 1 to 5 for each question, with 1 being the worst rating and 5 the best. The table shows the average scores across the three participants, rounded to one decimal place.

Question	Before the residency	After the residency
How confident do you feel in your creative practice?	1.7	4.0
How connected do you feel to other artists or a creative community?	1.7	4.3
How comfortable do you feel sharing or exploring lived experience through your creative practice?	2.7	4.3

All three participants felt more confident in their creative practice and more connected to other artists after the residency.

Two participants also felt more comfortable exploring lived experience through their art. Their scores rose from 1 to 5 and from 3 to 5. The third participant's score fell from 4 to 3. The feedback does not explain this change. Continuing to give participants choice over what they share, and how they share it, remains important.

What participants valued

Participants described gaining inspiration, new ideas, friendships, and freedom to experiment. The creative exercises and conversations helped them respond to one another's work and explore different ways of making.

Participants were struck by how well the group worked together. Sharing personal objects and their meanings also left a strong impression. The feedback highlighted the value of play, spontaneity, and having space to explore emotions through art.

Taking the work forward

All three participants identified new relationships or opportunities to collaborate. They wanted to continue meeting, share ideas developed after the residency, work on the collective board game, and create individual artworks. These responses show that the residency helped the group establish connections and a direction for future work. Further meetings will help turn those ideas into pieces for the exhibition.

Learning for future residencies

The feedback offered practical suggestions for improving the experience.

- Explain clearly whether personal objects used in an activity will be changed temporarily or permanently.
- Consider a longer residency. One participant suggested five days, allowing a slower pace, more conversation, and more time to make.
- Keep future meetings and activities flexible, recognising that treatment may affect a participant's availability.

The author views the feedback as an encouraging account of what the three days made possible.

"Inspiration, connection with other artists, learning new things about myself and new ways of being creative and making things"

Participants left with greater creative confidence, stronger connections, and ideas they wanted to pursue together. Staying in touch will help establish how these early outcomes develop into continued collaboration and completed artworks.

Acknowledgments

I would like to express my gratitude to The Lighthouse for reading my proposal and believing in my ability to deliver this project. The opportunity to turn ideas into something tangible, besides being present for my children, is what continues to motivate me to get out of bed every day.

Realising “Not Dead Yet?” has challenged me in ways that I had not envisaged. In my Sanctuary 2026 application I proposed to bring together a cohort of people with two things in common, cancer and creativity, to challenge preconceived notions of of life with incurable cancer.

Which leads me to the three other creatives who joined me for those three days in early September.

I am so grateful that they took the risk to apply, and trusted me to guide them through this process of collaborating, creating, and connecting.

From their very immediate feedback, the residency delivered much more than they ever expected, and I can say this is the case for me too, I had high expectations of myself. Those expectations were exceeded I believe because of the high quality of participants who were engaged, eager, and willing to participate in each of the activities, with enthusiasm, respect for each other, giving and receiving constructive feedback.

I have also had the privilege of being supported by Kathy Lett and Alexandra Szigeti, who both did not hesitate to say yes when I approached them to get involved in the project. They have contributed their time and skills without expecting any remuneration, and have been kind, considerate, warm, and generous with their advice and patience. Thank you so much Kathy and Alexandra, I will make it up to you with coffee and cake!

The residency wouldn’t have been possible without the financial contribution of the many people who have backed the project’s crowdfunding campaign. Some are known to me, others complete strangers who believed in the project. It is reassuring that people are willing to hand over their money to make sure the project is successful.

Marbellys Bayne
Project Lead

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