

Lynn, open call exhibition artist

Lynn took part in an art for wellbeing group that is run by one of our Creative Project Assistants and takes place at her local community centre. Last year, the group submitted a joint piece of artwork to the Hebden Bridge Arts' Open Space 70 project and the tutor invited them to submit again. The theme of nature resonated with Lynn and when she was told about the story of 'The Man Who Planted Trees', she immediately envisioned a series of three images that would tell the story and was encouraged to submit this personal piece in addition to the group work.

Being chosen for the exhibition was "absolutely fantastic - to know it's been accepted, your heart goes!" When she visited last year's exhibition, Lynn enjoyed listening to people's reactions and it felt "like a dream - that's someone looking at my artwork." Being in a 'proper art space' and having a price on the work really enhanced the experience for Lynn and reflected the achievement: "I had to do a close-up photo of my name and [the] price."

Lynn had never done any painting and drawing before the Art for Wellbeing group but had always wanted to and now loves doing watercolours and sketches.

Lynn reflected on what she's learned from the art sessions that have been useful for both her artistic practice and her own wellbeing. Firstly, to "just carry on" through challenges - if mistakes are made "so what?" Although Lynn was disheartened in the early stages of learning new techniques, she was determined to carry on and practised. The encouragement from the group's tutor was key here, which extended to supporting Lynn through a difficult time: "she was there during a bad spell [...] painting and drawing really helped put things in perspective." When making art "all that went away for a few minutes."

Secondly, Lynn's "learned to look properly" and when she's out and about, she takes time to notice the way light falls or how a tree bends; she's "enjoying things more".

Lastly, Lynn's friends and family have noticed that she's busier and more outgoing. Lynn's confidence has grown during the project - she has started another new group, would like to submit to the next Open Call and has been attending other exhibitions: "I wouldn't feel that's above me now. I go in in my tatty jeans and know I have as much right to be there - I wouldn't have stepped in before."

Lynn heard about the exhibition through the group's tutor and she made a suggestion that information could be shared more widely, beyond Calderdale into neighbouring boroughs, putting up posters in bus stations and via council listings. Further reminders from Hebden Bridge Arts would also be helpful, so people can keep track of when events are on.