



Bristol Heart Institute

Name of Organisation

Willis Newson Arts Consultancy **Client:** University Hospitals Bristol NHS Foundation Trust (UHB)

Title of project/programme

Bristol Heart Institute

Dates of project/programme

2007-2009

Summary

This is an award-winning public art scheme that saw the integration of a series of artworks within the newly-built Bristol Heart Institute.

In 2007 Willis Newson was commissioned by University Hospitals Bristol NHS Foundation Trust to deliver a public art strategy for the new £61m Bristol Heart Institute, designed to be a regional centre of excellence for cardiac care.

Working closely with the Trust, project architects CODA, and the builders Laing O'Rourke, Willis Newson managed the development of a public art strategy for the new building, opened to patients in spring 2009. Eight stunning integrated artworks are the result. These range from a suspended sculpture in the atrium and an entrance lighting commission, to works for the ceilings of patient bed lifts. The programme aimed to support the patient's journey through the building and to create a sense of local ownership and pride. The artworks contribute to wellbeing by making the hospital environment feel less institutional and clinical, but no less functional. This project won the Building Better Healthcare Award for the Best Use of Visual Art in Healthcare 2009

"... the artworks integrate really well with the overall building design. The process we went through to deliver them was also exemplary in terms of working together and this was a major factor in the success of the project." (Dave Leverton, RIBA, Regional Design Leader, Laing O'Rourke)

Overview

'It is understood that the arts can help to create healthcare environments that are welcoming, reassuring, stimulating and personal and that are able to reflect the needs and values of the local community. Integrated arts commissions, changing exhibition spaces and other arts-based projects are seen as effective and 'value-for-money' means of creating impact and ensuring appropriateness.'(Willis Newson Arts and Health Evidence Review 2010 Final)

The arts strategy developed for the BHI aimed to:

- Deliver and contribute to a high quality, unique, beautiful and appropriate environment.
- Support and enhance the patient journey.
- Create a sense of local ownership and pride.
- Deliver artworks appropriate, and in context, to the work carried out in the building.
- Give value for money.
- Set a benchmark for future capital developments.

The Project was located at the Bristol Heart Institute University Hospitals Bristol NHS Foundation Trust, from 2007 – 2009.

An Arts Steering Group oversaw delivery of the commissioned artworks and met monthly throughout the process. This included representatives from Willis Newson, UH-Bristol, Above and Beyond (the funders), CODA architects, Fira landscape architects, Laing O'Rourke and patients. Consultation workshops with UH Bristol staff, key user groups and the local community informed the plan for the arts programme and the design development of each of the artworks.

At the start, all artists attended an intensive briefing to ensure they understood the design and build approach and to tour the site. They also met with BHI staff and were shown how different patient groups would experience and journey through the hospital. They then worked with members of the design team, UH Bristol staff and the local community to generate ideas. Initial designs were presented at open workshop events, allowing staff and patients to contribute feedback, and enabling discussion. The artists then continued to work closely with the design team, the P21 partners and the UH Bristol commissioning team on the integration and installation of their artworks.

The Bristol Heart Institute (BHI) is a new £61m state-of-the art hospital designed to be a regional centre of excellence for cardiac care. In 2007 Willis Newson was commissioned by UH Bristol to deliver a public art strategy for the new building, in collaboration with the project's architects and the Trust's P21 partners, Laing O'Rourke.

Willis Newson provided arts and health guidance, advice and project management throughout the project. An arts strategy was developed in

2007; it commissioned artists and managed the process of creating and delivering the final artworks.

Whilst each finished artwork is unique, they are all driven by responses to the architecture, interior design and the work carried out in the BHI, and inspired by the calming and uplifting theme of nature. Five of the eight artworks also refer to the local area of Bristol.

Commission: Endless Rings
Artist: Walter Jack

The Queen's Courtyard is an internal courtyard visible on the approach to the main reception and from within the building's main atrium. Walter Jack was asked to add interest to this space and to screen the view of the façade beyond. In response he created Endless Rings – a series of seven suspended sculptures. Each is a ring of tetrahedra which can be 'rolled' to create an endlessly opening and closing aperture. Each of the seven rings is set at a different point in the 'rolling' cycle. The rings are made of powder-coated aluminium. Walter worked with Fira Landscape Architects to create a complementary landscape for the space, with Laing O'Rourke to install fixing anchors and with the lighting contractors Hoare-Lea to procure in-ground up-lighters to enhance the sculpture after dark.

Commission: Wave – Entrance Lighting Artwork
Artist: Jo Fairfax

Wave highlights the approach to the building – which is tucked away and not obvious until you are nearly upon it – and welcomes people arriving at the main entrance. It references the pulse of the heart with a rippling laminate framework and thousands of fibre-optic strands which light up in coloured waves. Jo Fairfax worked closely with Laing O'Rourke on the structural aspects of the artwork. This ensured that the power supply and fixing brackets on the façade of the building were integrated into the construction process at an early stage.

Commission: Patient Bed Lift Artworks and Porters' Story
Artists: Marion Brandis

Marion Brandis created artworks for the ceilings of the patient bed lifts and the walls of the lift lobbies. These reassure, calm and distract patients on their journey between wards and treatment areas. Marion worked with Laing O'Rourke and lift suppliers, Schindlers, to enable the artwork to be produced onto the fabric of the lifts.

The two pieces – Light Behind and Filigree Leaves – relate to each other and are based on leaf and tree canopy images, a theme developed with close help from hospital porters, in particular John Mitchell and Ken Bryant. It was such a successful collaboration that Marion went on to support John and Ken in creating their own artworks. A series of their photographs of tree canopies, taken in the Bristol area, were printed, framed and installed in other parts of the hospital.

Innovation

As part of the Public Arts Strategy for the development of the Bristol Heart Institute (BHI), Willis Newson developed a series of aims for the arts programme. All the work was designed with these aims in mind, and it was in achieving these aims that it added value to the development.

Deliver a high quality, unique, beautiful and appropriate environment.

The artworks created are unique, elegant, well-made and robust and meet health and safety and infection control restraints. They create a calming, soothing environment and are sympathetic to and consistent with the building's design. They enhance the atmosphere of care and contribute to the feeling of quality, care and attention throughout the BHI. There is an aesthetic unity between the artworks, reflected in themes, colour and style.

Enhance the patient journey

The artworks are designed to enhance the experience of visitors to the building, and of patients and staff. This enhancement includes signposting the main entrance and reception and contributing to way finding throughout.

Deliver value for money

In an evaluation at the end of the project, key stakeholders noted that they recognised the arts programme as an excellent use of charitable funds. It represented value for money because it enabled a prominent presence of artwork through a relatively small injection of charitably donated funds. The artworks will continue to benefit patients and staff for a long period of time.

Generate ownership and pride

Although art will always be a low priority for some groups of staff, this programme generated a sense of ownership and pride within the community of the BHI and beyond. This was achieved through the consultation and communications process and by designing projects which engaged specific groups (e.g., hospital porters and a local school). There was extensive positive media coverage of the artworks.

Benchmark for future Trust capital developments

This project gave a clear example to show what can be achieved in future.

Deliver artworks which are within the context of the BHI

Artworks were developed which not only reference the local area, but which also reflected the interests and involved members of the hospital and local community in their creation.

Participation

Participation and stakeholder engagement

Staff and patient representatives and the project team took part in two artist-led visioning workshops, the outcomes of which informed the Public Arts Strategy. A range of people engaged with the arts programme during its implementation and artists worked with members of the design team, Trust staff and the local community.

At the start, all eight artists attended a two-day briefing at which an architect from CODA Architects and the senior design manager from Laing O'Rourke presented the design and build approach and led a tour of the site. Artists met with BHI staff and were shown the services and the different procedures carried out to enable an understanding of the journey of different patient groups through the hospital.

The design development for the artworks was driven by feedback generated through consultation with staff and patient user groups at two open workshop events attended by staff, patients and ex-patients.

Two specific commissions relied on engagement between artists and members of the hospital and local communities. A partnership project with St Michael on the Mount, a local primary school, resulted in the creation of external wallworks for the building. In addition, the artist working on a patient bed lift artwork collaborated with two hospital porters to generate the design for the ceilings and also supported them in creating their own photographic artworks.

Outcomes

The quality of the artworks delivered in this project has been recognised beyond the Trust, winning a Building Better Healthcare award for its success in improving patient experience in the building, and receiving a 'blue plaque' from the Bristol Civic Society.

An internal evaluation involving key stakeholders at the end of the project found that the project had been successful in meeting its aims, and generated recommendations for developing future art programmes.

Learning

"We learned a lot about communications and the value of having an arts strategy which we could use to communicate the rationale and the plan for art with a variety of stakeholders. Running workshops early on with a range of staff and stakeholders helped people understand the building development in relation to art and allowed people to air their views. Linking the Arts Steering Group into the group in charge of communications for the development as a whole was effective in communicating the arts as an integrated part of this new build – both internally and externally.

The main communication challenge we encountered was between the different Trust groups involved in approving aspects of the overall development. Differing terms of reference and a lack of common membership led to delays and tensions. This has emphasised the importance in future projects of considering the links and commonality needed between such groups. Also, it is important to allow time for artists to personally present their designs to more stakeholders, not just the Arts Steering Group.

In spite of a close relationship with the design and construction team, tensions arose during the artwork installations that could have been eased by having a Trust or Construction Co-ordinator available on site. The Co-ordinator could have fielded queries and supported artists during their installations as well as informing them of build developments and any structural or spatial changes as they arose.

We gained valuable insight into the benefit of involving staff and stakeholders in the whole process, including interviewing artists. They learned about the process of commissioning art, working with artists and what art can do in a health context and became advocates for the arts being established in future capital developments within their Trust and supportive of establishing an ongoing arts programme.” Joanna Espiner, Senior Project Manager, Willis Newson.

Critical success factors

The project was successful in meeting the aims set out in the original Public Arts Strategy. It was regarded as successful by the Trust in delivering a high quality, unique, beautiful and appropriate environment for patients and staff, enhancing the patient journey, delivering value for money, generated ownership and pride within the community of the hospital and beyond. This project was particularly successful because the commissioning of public art was integrated into the design and build of the new facility early in the process.

“An insightful briefing for artists where artists and stakeholders meet at the start of the project is essential to ensure clarity of roles and responsibilities and a common vision.

Keeping different groups of stakeholders, including artists, informed of the project as it develops is also key. Different methods of doing this were successful, including workshops, display boards and group updates. Having a committed Arts Steering Group is crucial – one which is formed early and which represents all sides of the project – clinical staff, design team and construction company, estates and facilities, commissioning and charitable funds.” Joanna Espiner, Senior Project Manager, Willis Newson.

It has led to further work with the Trust. Willis Newson went on to develop and implement an arts programme for the Bristol Haematology & Oncology Centre and is currently working on the implementation of an arts programme for refurbishment and new building work within the Bristol Royal Infirmary.

Funding and Resources

This project was entirely funded through charitable donations. The budget for the arts programme was £250k, raised through the Above and Beyond 'Heart of Bristol' appeal (http://www.aboveandbeyond.org.uk/appeal_intro.aspx).

Above & Beyond is the local charity that raises funds for all Bristol's nine central hospitals. They invest in projects that provide gold-standard care, and make a real difference to patients in Bristol. Working with inspirational local people Above & Beyond fundraise to:

- improve the hospital environment
- fund innovative research
- support and train hospital staff
- provide state of the art equipment.

Contact details for further information

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Case study available from: <http://www.willisnewson.co.uk/bristol-heart-institute-project.html>