

Digital Engagement, Diversity and Access in Museum Education

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Abstract In the wake of 2020's Coronavirus pandemic, museums and galleries across the world were forced to close and many of these institutions turned to programming activities online rather than onsite. This paper explores that move from the physical to the digital realm through two case studies within the Learning and National Programmes department at The National Gallery in London. It addresses the obstacles and benefits of online working with two very different audiences, young people in education and a community group of people living with mental health difficulties. The paper seeks to elaborate on the specific challenges of working with these audiences and contribute to the development of best practice in the field.

Keywords Museums. Digital. Learning. Communities. Young people. Entertainment. Public engagement. Diversity. Inclusion. Mental health. Wellbeing.

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1 Introduction

In 2020 galleries and museums across the globe faced a crisis. For many in Europe it was the biggest since the Second World War. From March 2020 to March 2021, because of the ongoing Coronavirus pandemic, institutions in the UK, large and small alike, had first to operate under restrictions and ultimately close their doors during three national lockdowns. The impact of restrictions on social mixing was unsurprisingly dramatic: during the last quarter of 2020 alone, government-supported museums and galleries saw an 89% decrease in visitor attendance. In the absence of traditional audience engagement, institutions were left to explore new ways of reaching their public online rather than onsite (cf. DCMS 2021). The National Gallery in London was no different.

The question of ‘access’ and how it relates to the arena of digital programming in museums can be very hard to tackle. Culture and heritage institutions are frequently concerned with attempts to engage with larger audiences and increase visitor numbers, but much of the focus in the past has been on stimulating them to come to us, to visit a physical site. While the pandemic has had a devastating effect on many people’s lives, it has also highlighted how enriching digital, at-home engagement with these same institutions can be, and has helped us to reassess what it means to engage with cultural institutions, and to consider the many different forms that ‘access’ can take. No doubt we will see many new and enriching perspectives on this subject as a result of the 2020 pandemic. This paper aims to offer a contribution to that conversation, providing an insight into some of the best practices developed by the National Gallery’s Learning and National Programmes Department (henceforth ‘learning department’). In particular, we will explore two digital initiatives, elaborating the challenges and obstacles faced in the process of moving to an online format, and reflecting on both the positive and negative aspects of museum access in the virtual realm.

The programmes discussed in the present paper were very different in nature and scope.

The first engaged with young adults and sixth form students, with a majority from backgrounds that are currently underrepresented in the arts and heritage sectors. The second centred on therapeutic and creative community workshops for adults experiencing mental health difficulties. In order to facilitate activities and ensure positive outcomes, the department partnered with organisations that had a proven track-record of working with these specific audiences. Before we can fully appreciate the intricacies of these collaborations, and the actioning of strategies for digital engagement, we need to briefly discuss how they are situated within the Gallery’s digital programming.

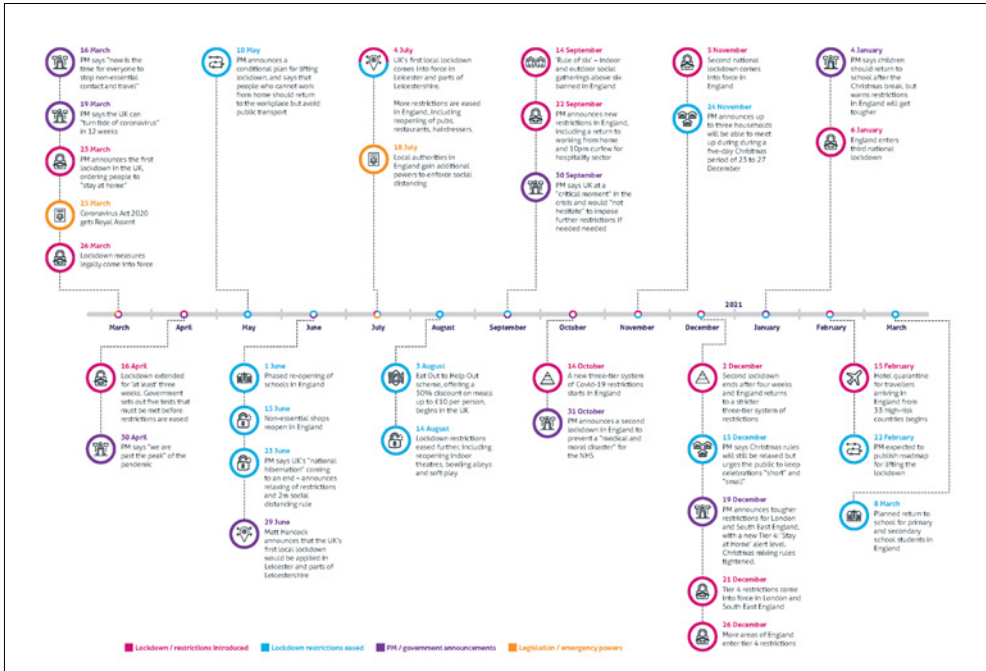


Figure 1 Timeline of UK Coronavirus lockdowns, March 2020 to March 2021. Institute for Government analysis, CC BY-NC 4.0 (<https://www.instituteforgovernment.org.uk/charts/uk-government-coronavirus-lockdowns>)

2 The National Gallery and Digital Engagement in Early Lockdown: An Overview

In March 2020, the unprecedented impact of a global pandemic forced the Gallery to rapidly reconsider its relationship with its national/international audiences. A quick look at the timeline of UK Coronavirus lockdowns over the last year reveals how public health necessities forced an overall reconsideration of what constitutes museum access [fig. 1]. Social mixing, gathering in groups and using public transport were to be avoided, and school education was confined to home. Accordingly, visitor numbers decreased by 86.43% in October 2020, which was the best performing month of the year, with numbers dropping as much as 98% in November 2020 compared with 2019 figures (cf. DCMS 2021). How could the Gallery uphold its commitment to ensuring “the widest possible access to the national collection of paintings”, the central tenet of its access policy? Reviews in 2010 did not include any reference to live-streamed learning, let

alone digital engagement via video conferencing software platforms.¹

Although nobody could anticipate that video conferencing and webinars would become a common practice for remote learning and cultural consumption,² the Gallery could trust some very encouraging indicators related to the pre-existing digital offer. Visits to the Google virtual tour were up 642% compared with the period before the advice to ‘stay at home’, an increase of over 3,000% on the same period the year before. And visits to the virtual tour pages were up 506% in April 2020 compared to the period before lockdown, an increase of 2,000% when compared to the same time the year before. The Gallery’s social media channels experienced a similar uptick. From the 16th March, Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube all experienced an increase in followers – particularly the YouTube channel which, it should be noted, contains the most in-depth content of all the Gallery’s social media platforms. From March to October the Gallery produced 32 new films which have garnered 2.3 million views, averaging approximately 72,000 views per film with most people watching from start to finish. This in turn, generated 170,000 views of the website content, where people remained on average for 5-18 minutes on a single page (Shevlin, unpublished).

Unquestionably the appetite for online content was increased from the moment the doors were closed, however, the question for the learning team concerned how to best serve our very specific audiences in terms of learning and outreach programmes. Three factors, in particular, were crucial for the successful development of learning initiatives delivered through digital platforms.

1. A sizable in-house team of professionals with consolidated experience in museum education. This enabled the learning team to respond quickly to changing circumstances, develop new ideas, design original content, and collaborate in a way that would simply not have been possible if relying on educators and artists hired as independent contractors. The National Gallery is also fortunate in being a large enough team and indeed institution, which, exploring new ideas and piloting new models of working, carries only limited risk. We are able to weather a certain degree of failure, a fortunate position which is not always the case across cultural organisations at large. The 2017 Independent Review of Museums in England (The Mendoza Report) noted that “over the last 10 years, although nominally maintained, funding overall has re-

¹ Cf. The National Gallery Access Policy, 2010: <https://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/about-us/organisation/policies/access-policy>.

² Cf. Bakhshi, Humphries, Haq 2020, for a thorough analysis of how cultural consumption changed during lockdown.

duced by 13% in real terms, with some museums seeing larger cuts". These considerable funding cuts led to a perception of museum learning as confined to the informal education of children and therefore, sadly, as a disposable asset (Mendoza 2017, esp. 55; Canadine 2018).

2. A commitment to engagement versus entertainment. The major benefit of online programming is the potential to reach vastly increased numbers of people. Undeniably, more entertainment-driven or lecture-based programmes at the Gallery have benefitted from increases in audience numbers of over 300%. However, this expansion is only appropriate for a 'one size fits all' kind of event and it does not address issues relating to pedagogy, inclusion and wellbeing. While over 1,000 participants for educator-led lectures, or over 10,000-40,000 views for entertaining and educational YouTube videos can certainly be considered a great achievement,³ when it comes to more individually enriching audience engagement and long-term learning, one-to-one support and group discussion bring about the best outcomes for the participants and thus necessitate smaller groups. Fortunately, the senior management of the learning department sees the value in both approaches and is willing to support small-group learning, where the measures of success are based on quality of experience, rather than numbers of participants.⁴ Connected to this approach, and reliant on the possibility for interaction and discussion, is the idea of building a sense of community through the department's programmes. Developing relationships and promoting wellbeing and togetherness through our programmes are aspirations that were severely impacted by the pandemic and the subsequent move to online provision (Soderstrom, Bjork 2015; Chen, Wu 2015; Brinkley-Etzkorn 2018).⁵
3. The use of modelling as an effective pedagogical strategy for museum education. As early as 1977, it was demonstrated that learning is exceedingly laborious, or even hazardous, if people have to rely solely on their own cognitive abilities (Bandura [1977] 2019).⁶ In fact, best practices in museum ed-

³ For instance, see the series *A Curated Look* and *Decoding Symbols in Art* on the Gallery's YouTube channel.

⁴ We are deeply grateful to Karen Eslea (Head of The Learning and National Programmes Department) for her support and insightful comments on the final draft of the present paper, and to Anne Fay (Public Programmes Manager) for her invaluable help.

⁵ Cf. also Liu, Elms 2019, with further bibliography.

⁶ Cf. Eggen, Kauchak 2001, with further bibliography.

education reveal that processes of any kind need to be demonstrated, technical jargon has to be clarified with appropriate explanation, and new concepts and ideas require questioning from the learners. This type of audience-led approach encounters a plethora of obstacles in the online setting where audio delays, interruptions and switched-off cameras all present considerable barriers both to fluid conversation, and to creating a supportive space for discussion. The non-verbal cues, which may be obvious when educators and audience are sharing a space, are suddenly impossible to pick up on, and the mood and attitudes of participants are much harder to gauge. For this very reason, we introduced team-teaching as normal practice in the learning department's programming: this enabled the sharing of sophisticated contents and, at the same time, modelling of the learning process and prompting of the audience, eliciting their contribution throughout Q/A sessions (cf. RICHES Project 2016, with further bibliography).

Over the last year, these three factors proved to be essential for the production and delivery of digital learning activities on a weekly basis. The National Gallery's learning team was able to offer a regular schedule of highly customised, free-of-charge, online initiatives, and reconnect with a wide range of audiences that risked being completely alienated by the ongoing pandemic. Responses from teachers, parents, young adults, and the public, in general, were overwhelmingly positive regarding the quality of content, level of engagement, and accessibility. All of the factors mentioned above have a bearing of the two case studies that follow.

3 Young Adults and Peer-Learning: 'A Night with Art History Link-Up'

In November 2020, while a second lockdown was enforced in the UK, a live online workshop for forty-six form state-supported students was organised by the learning team in partnership with Art History Link-Up (henceforth AHLU). The educational charity was founded by Rose Aidin in 2016 to provide free A-Level Art History and Extended Project Qualifications for secondary-education students who do not have the opportunity to study this subject through their state schools.⁷ Fewer than 8 state-maintained schools in the UK currently offer Art History A-Level, while over 90 fee-paying schools do provide

⁷ In the UK except Scotland, A-levels are qualifications in specific subjects typically taken by school students aged 16-18. The equivalent in Scotland is the Higher. A-Lev-

the course, contributing to perceptions that Art History is a subject which only the most privileged can connect with. This is a perception that has a real impact on the subjects people choose to study at university; in 2019 the number of students from state-maintained schools that applied to History of Art courses at Cambridge University was 35% (UAS Cambridge 2020, esp. 16).⁸ The subject had the second lowest percentage of applicants from state schools across the arts, humanities and social sciences, second only to Classics. Numbers are moving in the right direction and yet still reflect a ratio of state-educated to privately-educated students that remains far from representative.

Based in London and running its courses on Saturdays at both the National Gallery and the Wallace Collection, AHLU has been particularly successful in attracting students from backgrounds that are significantly underrepresented in the creative and heritage sector. This charity may thus hold the potential not only to increase students academic achievements, but also to open up possible future career paths. Integrated into the formal A-level study, students have the opportunity to meet curators and other museum and arts industry professionals, giving them an academic qualification, and therefore a contribution to UCAS points,⁹ as well as an introduction to the industry and the jobs and roles available. Involvement with AHLU may constitute the only opportunity for many students to study art history, but it may also represent the only chance for young people, whatever their background, to get involved in the culture and heritage sector. Progress has begun to take place. A look at the most recent Arts Council's annual diversity survey reveals that the percentage of 'BME'¹⁰ staff at Major Partner Museums (more than 2,000 institutions across the UK) was 5% in 2017-18, which constitutes a 1% rise on the previous year. This compares to 12% at the arts council's other National Portfolio Organisations (about 663 institutions), and 16% in the general population (cf. ACE 2019). Figures for museum attendance across

els are generally, though not always, necessary in order to progress on to university level education in the UK.

8 Partial data for Oxford University can be found in AASR Oxford 2020; remarkably, Art History is not listed among the subjects. Cf. also Perera 2019. It is worth noting that only 6.5% of the population attend fee-paying schools; those with a private education are disproportionately represented at the UK's most prestigious universities, with Oxford and Cambridge welcoming 31% and 32% respectively. Cf. Adams 2020 and Stoyanova, Hunter, Graham 2020. Data available on <https://www.admissionreport.com/>.

9 The UCAS (The Universities and Colleges Admissions Service) Tariff is used to allocate points to post-16 qualifications. Universities and colleges in the UK may use it when making offers to applicants.

10 BME stands for Black and Minority Ethnic background. It is often seen today as an outdated term but has been used in the ACE report and so is reproduced here in quotation marks.

the sector reflect the same tendency. In 2018, 41% of all visitors were over the age of 55, while the proportion of young people (16-24) did not rise above 10%, 81% of which came from white backgrounds (cf. AA 2018). The National Gallery is striving to diversify its audiences and encourage young people of all backgrounds to feel that the arts and cultural sector is for them. The AHLU workshop was devised to respond to the urgency to give young people an opportunity to have their voices heard and their identities represented.¹¹ In other words, the workshop wanted to be an event ‘by’, rather than ‘for’ the young people. This aspiration was then achieved with a three-way approach.

Firstly, the event was offered online, which overcame the most common economic barrier – access to public transport.¹² Millennials and Generation Z are the most hyper locally-minded audiences, with 40% travelling less than 15 minutes to get to a museum (cf. AA 2018). The online format made it possible for 50% of participants to be based outside London and, therefore, able to access an art collection far from where they live. However, an online event posed a number of other challenges: how could watching screens offer the same hands-on experience of artworks that students would have during an in-person gallery visit? How could participants understand the display of the collection and the location of the rooms within the building, especially if they were not familiar with or had never visited the National Gallery?

To overcome these and many other issues, we had originally planned to live stream the event from the Gallery. With the support of two in-house audiovisual technicians, we wanted to offer an after-hours virtual tour, where participants could interact live and ask cameramen and presenters to stop in front of specific artworks. Unfortunately, the second national lockdown was enforced two days after we had made all the required arrangements and completed successful rehearsals. This option went straight onto the backburner and a new solution had to be found promptly, as the staff was soon to be no longer allowed onsite. We then undertook a carefully-planned photo shoot of over 300 pictures. A selection of this material was finally projected and commented on during the workshop to recreate the visitors’ journey in the building and explain the organisation of the collections by artistic schools and historical periods. The ultimate purpose was not the artificial recreation of a real-life experience but

11 Carlo Corsato is most grateful to Margaux Portron (Young People’s Programmer), responsible for the Young Producers Programme, for having supported the organisation of the AHLU workshop with passion and great generosity.

12 It should be noted that, while this event worked with young people who had access to digital devices and a reliable internet connection, this is not the case for all young people, many of whom have limited or no access to appropriate devices and internet connections.

rather the creation of an appetite for an in-person visit. The success of this strategy was confirmed by an evaluation survey conducted after the event: all participants confirmed their intention to visit, possibly by a friend or family member, as soon as travelling was safe.

Secondly, the content was developed and presented by two of the Gallery's 'Young Producers' (henceforth YPs). The Young Producers Programme was a long-running scheme within the learning department and involved young people (aged 16-25) for a full year, giving them the chance to organise public events and conduct public talks among a variety of other opportunities. Two talented YPs, 19 and 20 years old respectively, were equipped with project development skills and trained in public engagement by 3 professional educators under the supervision of the young people's programmer.¹³ Weekly meetings were organised and YPs could discuss the topics and themes they wanted to present; this resulted in a list of nine topics, exploring big concepts like tolerance, success, resilience, loneliness; these were linked to twelve paintings in the National Gallery collection, which included great masters, such as Botticelli, Michelangelo, Rembrandt, Bonheur, Manet and Van Gogh [fig. 2]. YPs were also coached through the scripting process and trained in presenting skills. In particular, speakers needed to consider that screen fatigue reduces audience attention and rapid back-and-forth conversations are badly affected by slow internet connections. Group and individual rehearsals were therefore organised and YPs acquired the confidence and skills to simultaneously present and interact with their online audience [fig. 3]. As a measure of success, the evaluation survey recognised that YPs were considered knowledgeable, passionate and engaging, with one respondent saying that "these speakers were spectacular, they kept my attention and I felt I learnt a lot" (Corsato, unpublished).

Finally, the event promoted peer-learning and direct engagement. Young people are more independent thinkers and want to learn, create and curate their learning experiences. They thrive on activities in which their peers model the learning process and explain how to take ownership of new ideas (cf. RCMG 2004). However, the workshop's digital format could potentially become a barrier: the participants had to keep cameras and microphones switched-off for safeguarding reasons and the YPs had no real sense of their audience. While on the one hand digital interaction can alleviate social pressures associated with being together and boost confidence in voicing opinions, on the other, not being able to share the same physical

13 The production and delivery of the workshop *A Night with AHLU* required two project managers (Educator Carlo Corsato, Young People's Programmer Margaux Portron), two facilitators (Young Producers Olvia Eccleston and Juriyah Juyel), three trainers (Educators Carlo Corsato, Kate Devine, Jenny Staff).

Food 4 Thought 12th Nov 2020 6pm
Find Yourself in the National Gallery

Who We Are?

First Impressions
Antonio and Piero del Pollaiuolo, *The Martyrdom of St Sebastian*, 1475, Bm 59
Gustav Klimt, *The Man in the Moon*, 1915, Bm 58

Romance
Sandro Botticelli, *Venus and Mars*, about 1485, Bm 58

Tolerance
Giovanni Battista, *The Assassination of St Peter Martyr*, about 1555-7, Bm 55

The Future's in Our Past

Legacy
Jan Vermeer, *Woman with a Pearl Necklace*, 1668, Bm 25
Gustav Klimt, *Young Man holding a Skull*, 1908-9, Bm 25

Success
Rembrandt, *Self-Portrait at Age of 63*, 1669, Bm 22

Time 4 Love
Pierre-Émile Baudouin, *The Marriage of St Catherine and Two of Her Sons*, 1876, Bm 29

Be Heard!

Resilience
Rena Bonhoeffer, *The Horse Fair*, 1855, Bm 44

Talent
Edward Munch, *Concert of a Café*, 1892, Bm 44

Loneliness
Vincent van Gogh, *Van Gogh's Chair*, 1888, Bm 43
Gustav Klimt, *Man with a Hat*, 1915, Bm 43



Figure 2 Handout for the online workshop *A Night with Art History Link-Up* (Graphic Design: Carlo Corsato). The National Gallery, London, CC BY-NC-ND 4.0

space may impact on the social aspects of the experience. We adapted to these challenges by adopting a twofold engagement strategy. First, high levels of interaction were enabled through interactive polling, in-meeting chat, and live Q/A available throughout the entire workshop. Secondly, to enable peer-learning and minimise adult intervention, young people's programmer and educators played only a supporting role; they monitored the video conferencing software platform and mirrored the audience in their questioning. The main purpose of this approach was to give full agency to young people by acting as a sounding board for their ideas, letting them take the lead and shape the content according to their interests. At the beginning of the workshop, the audience was given the power to vote for the themes and artists they wanted to explore. After a short briefing on how to use the digital platform, AHLU students could choose the workshop's content from an interactive poll that appeared on their screens. To facilitate an informed decision, they were provided with a digital handout in the form of a PDF menu, scripted by YPs in collaboration with educators [fig. 2].

The evaluation conducted after the event confirmed the success of this strategy. AHLU students described the National Gallery as



Figure 3 Olivia Eccleston (above) and Juriyah Juyel (below) presenting the online workshop *A Night with Art History Link-Up*. The National Gallery, London, CC BY-NC-ND 4.0

a “place where important questions can be asked and discussed” (Corsato, unpublished). It should be also noted that the vast majority of participants expressed an interest in attending, producing and delivering other events with the same format. This project certainly paved the way for a new approach that values young people as active protagonists of museum engagement, rather than as a passive audience to entertain.

4 Museum Education and Wellbeing: Portugal Prints

In February 2021 the Gallery’s Communities and Access Programmer was contacted by the organisation Portugal Prints about the possibility of arranging a regular tour and practical workshop at the National Gallery for their service users.¹⁴ Portugal Prints is a London-based artists’ community that offers creative programmes for people living with mental health difficulties.¹⁵ They are part of the mental health charity Mind in the boroughs of Brent, Wandsworth and Westminster, and open to referrals from people by a number of different routes. The charity has established a long-running and highly successful pro-

¹⁴ The Communities and Access Programmer was Anna Murray, and the Learning Assistant for the programme was Rachel McGiven.

¹⁵ Kate Devine wishes to thank the staff at Portugal Prints for their invaluable contribution to the success of the programme. In particular: Marta-Trias Gamito (Senior Creative Facilitator), Tatjana Damjanovic (Fundraiser and Creative Facilitator), Rebecca Jelly (Creative Facilitator), and Patrick Conlon (Manager).

gramme of art workshops, gallery visits, and exhibitions, and fostered a wonderfully welcoming and supportive community of staff, volunteers, artist-participants, and partner organisations. At the time of writing, Portugal Prints supports a community of 35 artists from a range of interests, training and backgrounds, most of whom rely on state support. The community is approximately 60% male, 40% female, with 50% aged between 50 and 60, statistics which reflect the make-up of the smaller group we worked with on this programme.

It was arranged that The National Gallery would host monthly visits from the Portugal Prints artists, a small group of around 12/15 participants supported by staff and volunteers from the charity. The sessions would comprise a short tour and discussion in the Gallery, followed by a practical art-making workshop in a dedicated workshop space. The importance of having the same National Gallery staff each month was paramount to maintain the sense of trust and community that the group had built together.¹⁶

The first session in the Gallery involved a visit to the temporary exhibition *Young Bomberg Old Masters* (Cork 2019), followed by a screen printing workshop. The feedback from the session was generally positive with particular emphasis put on the making activity, its physicality, and the fact that it was not something the group was able to do in their smaller studio space at the Portugal Prints site. In addition, the sense of collaboration was noted, the idea of working together, supporting each other and sharing. The educator had been able to chat to each of the artists individually, either casually during the session or when helping with the printing process, and by the end of the day felt that staff and artists had developed a warm rapport already.

Having said this, some difficulties were also brought to light. The overcrowded nature of the Gallery, which is a perennial problem, had triggered feelings of anxiety in some of the participants, and the physical effort of walking through the building and standing up for about 20 minutes in the exhibition space had been a struggle for a few people too. In practical terms, for some it had been hard to see the paintings properly among the crowds, and others who arrived later found it difficult to catch up with the group inside the large, sometimes confusing gallery space. While these were all difficulties that could have been, at least partially, alleviated with better planning and more staffing, the nature of the public gallery space is such that crowding and the discomfort and anxiety it can cause are some of the most difficult aspects to tackle for many of the groups we facilitate.

By June we were able to go back to the charity and offer them an online version of our initial arrangement and, by the end of the year, we

16 Sessions were developed and delivered by Educator Kate Devine with the support and advice of Learning Assistant Rachel McGiven.

had been able to provide seven online sessions for the group, each one taking place on a virtual platform and each comprising an exploration of a particular theme and a short practical making workshop. Our approach had to be flexible and adaptable as we navigated different levels of lockdown. For several months all the participants attended from their respective homes but as restrictions were periodically eased the charity was able to open up its own studio to a limited number, meaning it was possible to arrange a blended teaching format, where some of the artists were together in a studio, with others tuning in from home. While numbers have been steady at these online workshops, we are still falling a few short of the number who attended our initial gallery sessions - the reasons for this may be various, but certainly an unfamiliarity and even distrust of video conferencing software has contributed.

Of course, a further hurdle has been our limited access to materials. When participants were able to come to our workshop at the Gallery, a whole host of materials was available and if any artists felt like doing something different to the planned activity, their needs could be accommodated; the sessions were, at least in part, led by them and their likes/dislikes. Moving online has meant planning simpler practical sessions with fewer materials to cope with the necessity of sending materials by post. Pared-down workshops have also been necessary to tackle the difficulty of modelling the activity online, but also that of supporting making and trouble-shooting along the way. The scope and complexity of the practical activities, therefore, diminished a little [fig. 4].

The relationship between the educator and the group has also changed somewhat. As previously stated, the role of an educator is as a facilitator, not a teacher or instructor in the traditional sense; where in the gallery space it was natural to initiate conversation and even debate around artworks, facilitating discussion online is a different and more stilted process, especially when participants are not yet used to the format. While some amount of back and forth is of course possible, anyone with experience of online teaching will understand the hesitant nature of such attempts, the inevitable extra time it takes and the fatigue that sets in. The effects on the sense of community are significant, with the role of workshop leader or teacher becoming more pronounced and less integrated.

One of the consequences of the digital platform is a reduction in one-to-one interaction, the difficulty of having a quiet word in the ear about something that you are struggling with, or do not understand. These casual interactions are extremely valuable when it comes to fostering trust and a sense of equality, and they are missed in the online setting. This said, the general mood and atmosphere in these online workshops has been a positive and convivial one [fig. 5].

While for many participants the move to online sessions may pale in comparison to being in the gallery in person, for others the anxiety

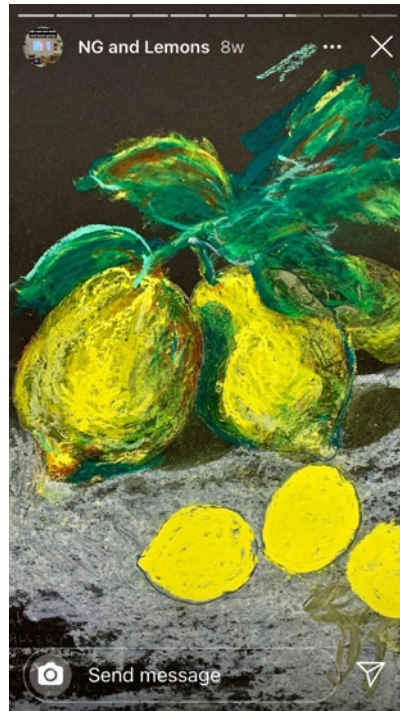


Figure 4 Artwork produced during a session with Portugal Prints. The National Gallery, London, CC BY-NC-ND 4.0

induced by busy rooms and new places was somewhat allayed by this digital format, in this sense it may be a more inclusive way of working.

Feedback from a survey conducted in January 2021 revealed that most participants would like to have the option to return to onsite programmes but they also valued having the option to work remotely too, preferring a blended format going forward wherein it would still be possible to attend from home or the Portugal Prints studio. The option of attending online also means that people can attend wherever they are in the country, or however they are feeling physically or mentally, the ability to drop out or take a quiet moment being so easy. So there are certainly pros and cons to this transition, but continuity of some kind of making sessions with us has certainly been appreciated and enjoyed.

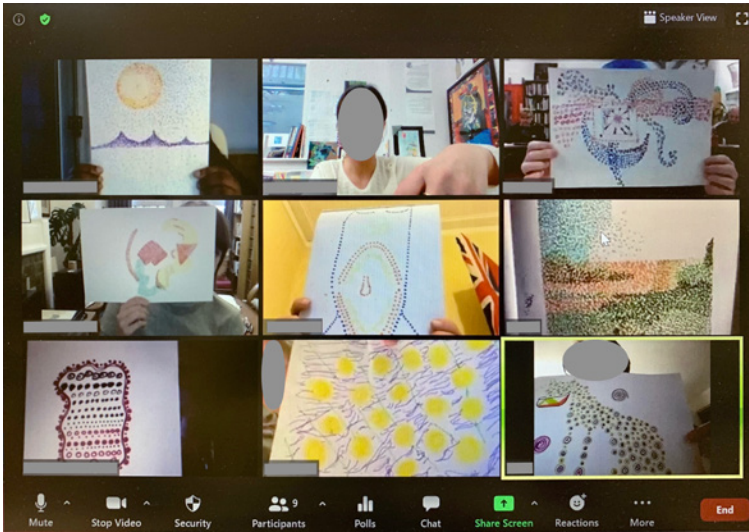


Figure 5 Live session with Portugal Prints. The National Gallery, London, CC BY-NC-ND 4.0

5 Conclusion

While moving to online learning formats has had its challenges and drawbacks, it has changed the way we think about museum access and engagement. As the world becomes more inclined to consume culture online, events like *A Night with Art History Link Up* prove not only to be a successful alternative to onsite programming, but an opportunity to share and learn new skills in working with online audiences and digital technology. For the artists at Portugal Prints, the ability to continue attending online workshops has not only provided some diversion in monotonous lockdown periods, but also enabled the gallery to maintain and grow our relationship with that community, and even to consider how a blended onsite/at home model might provide the best access to our collection and our workshops in future.

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