

Annual conference 2025

# Art therapy and collaboration

8 November 2025  
Wellcome Collection  
& online



### Keynote speaker: Claudy Jongstra

#### Reconnecting through wool – collaboration, craft, and the senses

Internationally renowned artist Claudy Jongstra will share her vision and practice, exploring the power of collaboration and the profound value of natural materials—particularly wool. Working collaboratively with schools, institutions, and organisations, Jongstra invites others to experience the power of wool, its soft texture offering a sensory-rich experience to stimulate all our senses and hand-head coordination.

In an increasingly digital and fast-paced world, her work offers a return to slowness, to making, and to feeling. Through the artisanal practice of making a felted piece of wool, Jongstra demonstrates how slow design can soothe, heal, and restore our sense of presence.

[Claudy Jongstra](#) is renowned globally for her monumental woollen art installations and her artworks are part of many collections. She maintains a herd of indigenous sheep and runs a biodynamic farm to grow dye plants – effectively combining her artist's practice with ecological stewardship. Jongstra is dedicated to transferring knowledge and skills to younger generations and to strengthen society by focusing on collaboration.



### Helen Jury and Ali Coles

#### **Collaboration: Drivers, directions and dimensions**

What does collaboration mean for art therapists? Drawing on examples of innovative practice from around the world alongside their own professional experience, Ali and Helen will explore the drivers, directions and dimensions of collaboration in contemporary art therapy. Spanning collaboration with people, places and processes, they will discuss key issues in relation to art therapy theory, values and ethics, drawing on the views of both therapees and therapists.



[Ali Coles](#) is an art psychotherapist working within NHS secondary adult mental health services in Gloucestershire. She teaches on the MA Art Psychotherapy course at the University of South Wales and has been an associate editor of the [International Journal of Art Therapy](#). She was awarded a PhD by Publication in 2024.

[Helen Jury](#) is an art psychotherapist, and supervisor. She is visiting lecturer on master's art psychotherapy clinical trainings, an external examiner, and teaches on the MASC in Creative Health at UCL. Between 2010 and 2024, she was also an associate editor of the [International Journal of Art Therapy](#). In 2010, she set up the MA Art Psychotherapy at University of South Wales, leaving in 2016 to pursue doctoral research.



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### Niki Power, Claire Hills-Wilson, and The Lawnmowers Independent Theatre Company

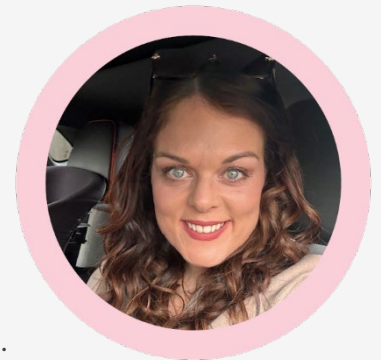
#### **'Love' is the magic ingredient: Co-researching art therapy with people with learning disabilities using inclusive and creative methods**

Nicki Power, Claire Hills-Wilson, and The Lawnmowers Independent Theatre Company's, five-year partnership is built on trust, shared creativity and honest challenge. Through accessible arts-based inquiry they've deepened their co-production relationship, used creativity to disrupt academic barriers, and shaped accessible art therapy research. They will reveal the messy magic of genuine co-production and how it's changed them all!



[Nicki Power](#) is an art therapist and doctoral fellow at Queen Mary University of London, supported by Barts Charity. Her co-produced research explores group art therapy for people with learning disabilities and mental distress using creative, inclusive methods. Nicki is Strategic Lead for Art Therapies (Learning Disability) at East London NHS Foundation Trust, working on system-level change through creative transformation. Active nationally and internationally in professional leadership, teaching, and publication, Nicki has worked with people with learning disabilities since 2011.

[Claire Hills-Wilson](#) is a creative methods specialist with 17 years' experience in stage management, performance, and storytelling, now focused on arts-based approaches to research and social change. As Patient and Public Involvement Coordinator with Lived Experience Academy Research project, she designs inclusive, creative processes to make complex ideas accessible. Drawing on theatre skills, lived experience, and work with different people in particular people with learning disabilities. Claire fosters collaboration between researchers and communities, ensuring richer, more meaningful research outcomes. Previously Claire was Artistic Director of The Lawnmowers.



[The Lawnmowers Independent Theatre Company](#) is a producing theatre-arts company run by and for people with learning disabilities, based in the North-East of England. They were formed in 1986 and now offer theatre, dance, music, DJ, and technical training, plus youth projects. They teach in universities nationwide, deliver educational programmes on health and social care issues, and run [Research Abilities](#), a lived experience research consultancy with the NIHR. Through creative collaboration with health and social care researchers, they make research more accessible, meaningful, and impactful for people with learning disabilities.



### Catherine Gallagher & Rachel Young

#### Sensory Synergy: Art and occupational therapy in collaboration

This plenary demonstrates a unique - if unconventional - synergistic and child-led approach, highlighting the collaborative work between occupational therapy and art therapy. It will show how the theoretical frameworks and practices integrate and complement one another to create an effective intervention.



**Catherine Gallagher** is director of Charnwood Arts Therapy Service and an HCPC-registered art therapist since 2009. She trained in art therapy at the University of Hertfordshire and holds a postgraduate diploma in systemic thinking and practices from the University of Derby. Since 2017, she has also worked as a clinical supervisor.

Catherine has worked in diverse settings and supports individuals affected by trauma. She has an interest in sensory-based, relational approaches and values cross-disciplinary collaboration, which draws from psychoanalytic, psychological, and systemic theories.

**Rachel Young** trained as an occupational therapist at Northumbria University and has been an HCPC/RCOT-registered occupational therapist since 2012, specialising in mental health. She has worked across a range of settings, including inpatient and community services, and has experience in managing and establishing a new NHS service.

Rachel completed her Ayres Sensory Integration practitioner training and supports individuals who have experienced trauma and individuals who are neurodiverse. She values collaborative working with other professionals.

Rachel and Catherine collaborate in their work at [Quorn Hall School](#), a specialist therapeutic school for children and young people with autism and social, emotional and mental health needs.



### **PARALLEL SESSIONS** - Only available with in-person tickets.

If joining in-person, you will attend **one** of these sessions:

#### **Clare Miles**

**Welcome! Come in! Giving a voice to unaccompanied asylum seekers through collaborative art therapy.**

Clare will share the experience of collaborative art therapy with refugees, and how collaboration allows their voices to be heard and experiences shared. You will be encouraged to respond to the session title 'Welcome! Come in!', sharing something about yourselves with others through images or words.



**Clare Miles** is an art psychotherapist and former nurse and midwife. She grew up in East Africa and lived in South Africa and is now settled in the UK. Her work is primarily with unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people as a therapist and manager for the [Baca Charity](#). Clare has found collaborative art therapy can enable important stories to be heard, speak to social justice and create a sense of belonging for those who have lost their countries, communities, families and homes.

#### **Sue Bulmer**

**Art-based reflective practice groups for teams - exploring benefits and challenges**

This interactive workshop invites you to explore challenges and benefits of establishing arts-based reflective practice groups in professional settings. Through discussion and creative reflection, we will consider how art therapists can support connection, cohesion, understanding and emotional wellbeing in teams.

**Sue Bulmer** is a UK-based HCPC registered art therapist and artist. After qualifying she worked with children and young people in the third sector before joining the NHS. She now works in a specialist perinatal trauma and bereavement service where she offers individual art therapy and group work for clients experiencing perinatal bereavement and loss, birth trauma and tokophobia. She facilitates a monthly arts-based reflective practice group for multidisciplinary staff focusing on the different aspects of loss encountered in day-to-day working.



### **Dr. Unnur Guðrún Óttarsdóttir**

#### **Joint mirror drawing in art therapy and museums**

In this workshop, you'll be introduced to and invited to participate in joint mirror drawing, where two people mirror each other's drawing simultaneously on one piece of paper.



[Dr. Unnur Óttarsdóttir](#) has practiced art therapy for 35 years in private practice and various organisations. She has also been exhibiting her work as a practicing artist for over 20 years. She lectures at the Iceland University of the Arts and the Continuing Education department at the University of Akureyri. Unnur conducts research at Reykjavik Academy and has published, lectured, and taught internationally on art therapy, joint mirror drawing, art educational therapy, memory drawing, and grounded theory methodology.