



Trailblazing Women: Kate Adams MBE



TRAILBLAZERS: World War One's Inspirational Women

Location: Hastings, East Sussex

Occupation: Artist, Advocate, Parent Activist and Co-founder of Project Art Works

Why are they a Trailblazer?

Kate is a visual-artist and co-founder of Project Art Works, the UK's leading artist-led organisation working with children, young people and adults with complex support needs. Established in 1997, it aims to explore new ways of collaborating with artists, galleries, psychologists, children, and adults and their families to create contemporary art in a meaningful way. It then promotes and disseminates artists' work through a wide range of projects, exhibitions, co-commissions, film, publication and digital platforms, and runs an Art on Loan scheme which encourages businesses and organisations to borrow work for display. Kate's experience as the mother of son with complex needs is central to the organisation's responsive and informed approach. It requires a high degree of knowledge and sensitivity to the ethical issues arising from the inclusion of people who cannot knowingly consent to their involvement in art and culture. Kate believes that knowledge is power and informed diplomacy the most effective means of achieving quality of life for people with complex needs and their families. In 2012, Kate was awarded an MBE for her services to art and disability.

What impact have they made on their community?

Project Art Works makes the right to make, participate and contribute to art and culture more accessible to people in the community who are often overlooked. By doing this they are enriching the cultural life of the whole community and giving the message that anyone can get involved and create art regardless of needs and abilities. Since it began in 1997 it has worked with thousands of people with complex needs and continues to offer support and friendship to them and their families. Project Art Works sets an example for the cultural sector to follow, radiating awareness and skills development to promote diversity in other art-making and cultural institutions.

What connections are there between Kate and the Trailblazers of World War One?

Art was used to unite, give a voice and as therapy by a pioneer female doctor in the early 1900s, Dr Helen Boyle (1869 – 1957) was one of Britain's first women doctors. Her first position was as an Assistant Medical Officer in an asylum in the east end of London where she became concerned that there was little provision for poor women exhibiting signs of early mental illness. Arriving in Hove in 1899, she worked at the Lewes Road Dispensary for Women and Children, a charity-run establishment that provided free medical attention to the poor women of the area. In 1905 she opened her own hospital, the ground-breaking 'Lewes Road Hospital', later called the 'Lady Chichester Hospital for Nervous Diseases' dedicated to the early treatment of poor women with early mental health problems, a class of patient who was being overlooked. Dr Boyle introduced pioneering techniques, such as art, poetry, fresh air, exercise, and group activity to increase the patients' wellbeing. Some of the art work created by the women was sold to raise funds for the hospital. Dr Boyle's techniques and hospitals were considered a huge success. She became the first female psychiatrist at the Royal Sussex Hospital and went on to co-found MIND.

How do they inspire your class to be Trailblazers of the future?

In Project Art Works, Kate is ensuring that everyone has the chance to create, regardless of different abilities and needs. She shows that artistic ability can be used to facilitate the meaningful work of other people.



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