



**blossoming
wards**



impact report

oxford, may — august 2023



welcome to our highlights

blossoming wards' mission is to **make art more accessible to both makers and recipients** and, in doing so, connect diverse local communities. we realise this mission by delivering free art workshops for oxford residents and gifting a portion of the pieces created to patients and staff at the oxford university hospitals. we do this because being creative enriches our lives and better our health.

contents

what art means to me	3
our work in numbers	4
about our attendees	5
about our workshops	6-7
about our artwork	8
hearing from attendees	9
hearing from hospitals	10
what's next?	11
a thank you essay	12
keeping in touch	13
appendix: finances	14

what art means to me

hi, yaning here. this project planted its seeds on this year's valentine's day when I learned that fresh flowers aren't allowed on hospital wards due to infection risk. I then stuffed a stack of post-its and a pen in my bag and walked to JR hospital, asking strangers to draw flowers for patients. realising that doing this regularly would need proper planning, I started **blossoming wards** a week later and applied to oxford hub's community enterprise awards for an initial round of funding. workshops then began in may.

I've been drawing for more than a decade, though I've received little formal training. until this year, I worked predominantly in graphite and ink; colour felt too scary. I use art to show care for others, raise funds for charity, and express myself as a form of catharsis.

if you're reading this, your support means the world. it's enabled local people to share their generosity with strangers and created new connections between us all.



Yw

yaning wu

founder, blossoming wards

our work in numbers

we've counted and counted again!

in the past

3 months



we've hosted

12 workshops



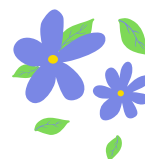
attended by

51 artists



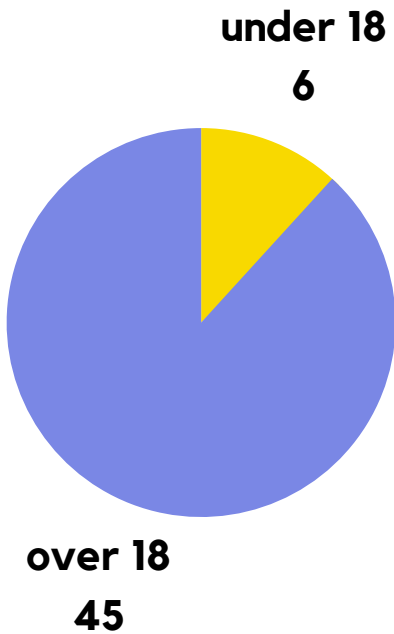
producing

125 pieces



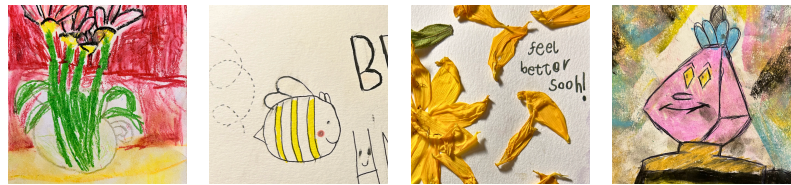
for hospital patients and staff.

about our attendees

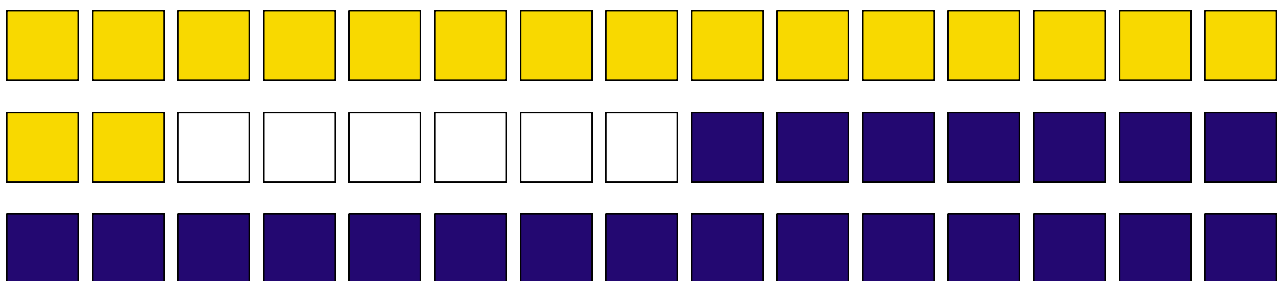


most of our attendees have been adults, though we have also hosted **six young artists** accompanied by their parents or guardians.

look at some of their work!



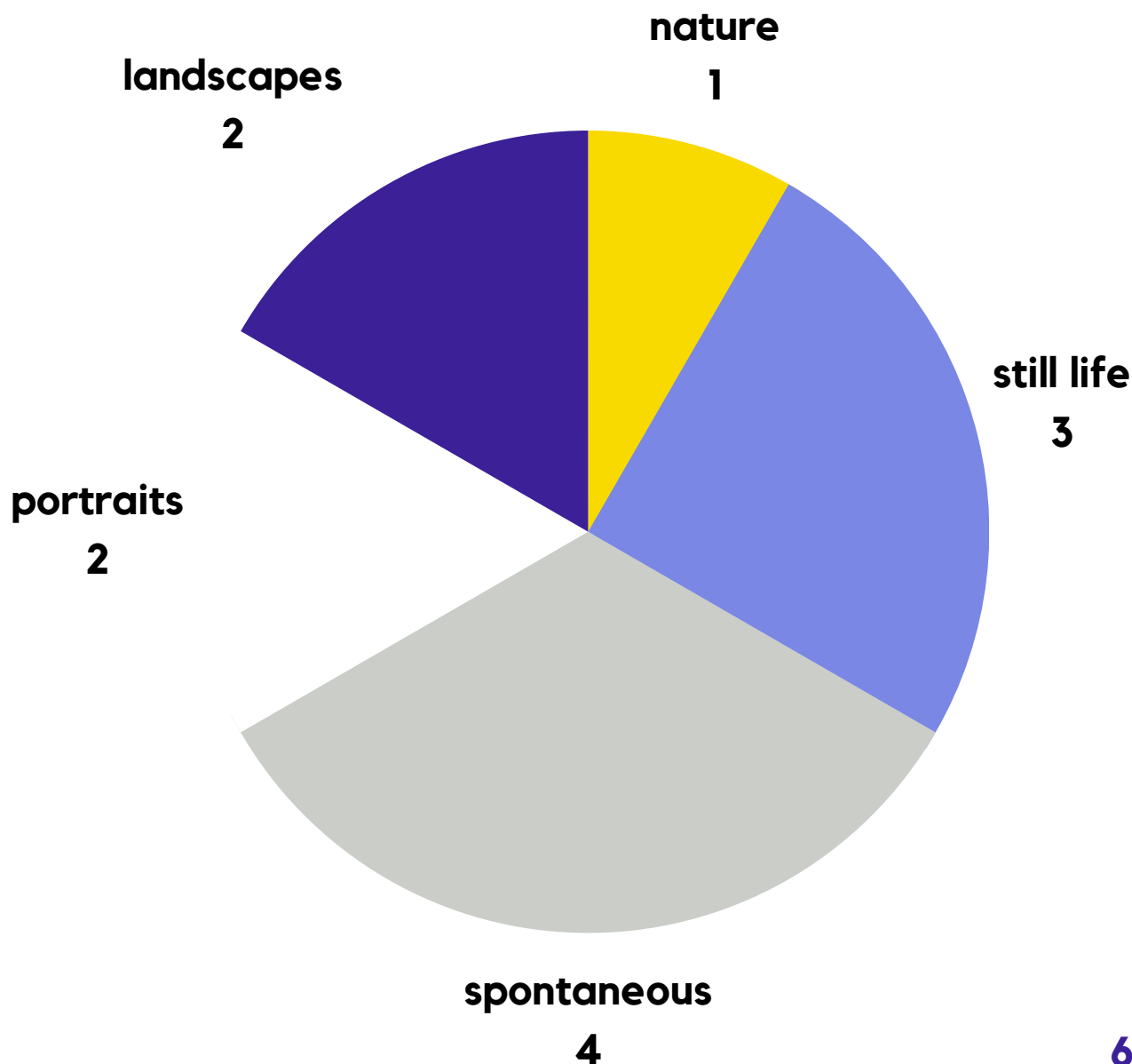
of our in-person adult attendees, **less than half** were students at local universities. this project seeks to bridge the gap between "town and gown", drawing from the warmth and lived experience of local people from all walks of life.



- student at the university of oxford or oxford brookes university (19)
- recent graduate of the above universities (6)
- non-student oxford resident (20)

about our workshops

each workshop lasts for **two hours**, though we have often run over chatting and clearing our space. most sessions have a theme decided beforehand by facilitators. however, **one-third** have allowed attendees to explore subject matter of their choice, helping us learn from every artist's ideas.



here's the schedule of a typical workshop:

1 getting to know each other

we begin by introducing ourselves and telling the group about what life looks like for us.

2 warming up

we then loosen our drawing hands with simple line- and shade-based exercises with our chosen media.

3 drawing flowers

we sketch fresh bouquets with increasing precision and produce one or more flower drawings with colourful media to gift to patients or staff.

4 introducing a new idea

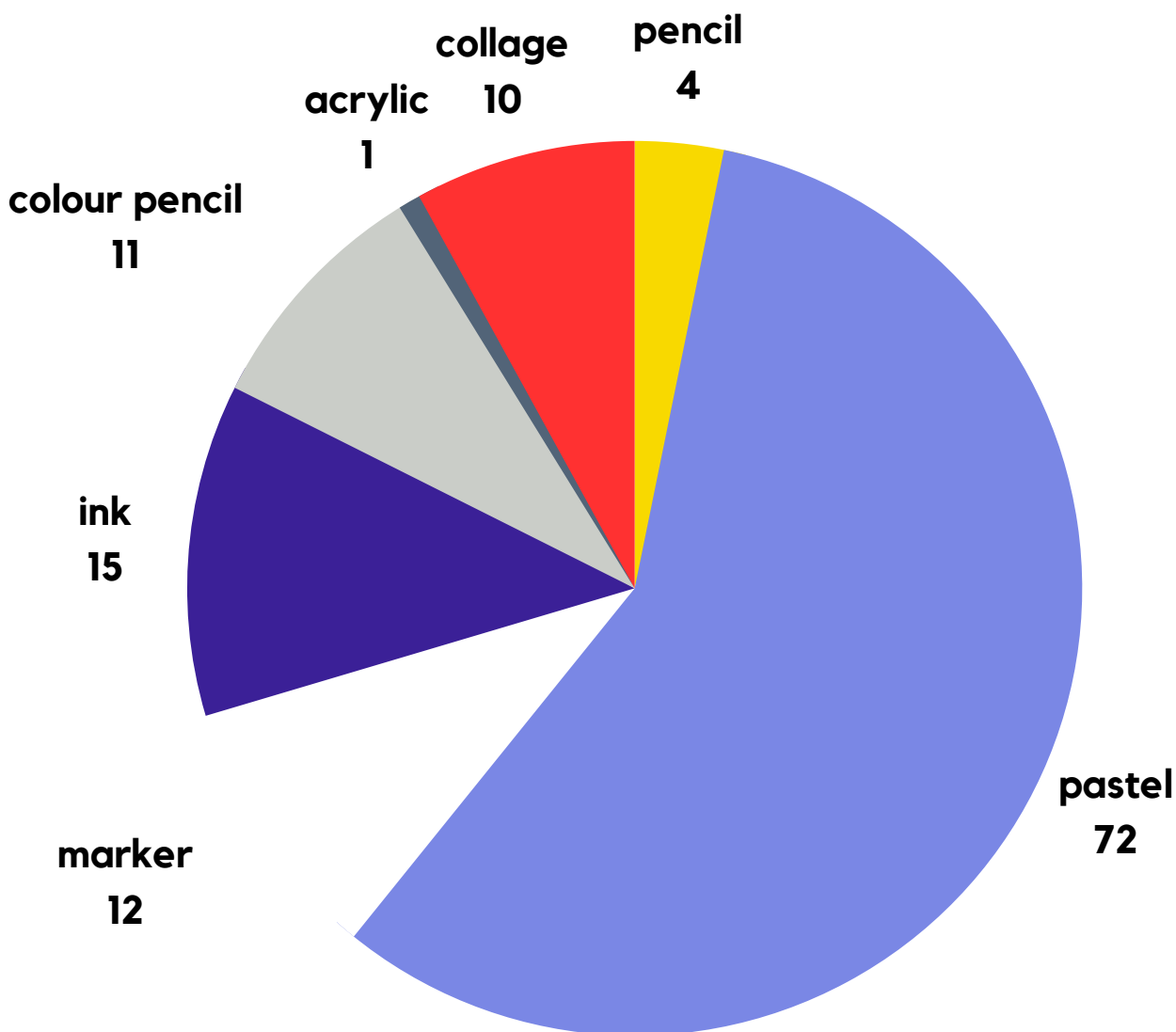
we then work with a distinct medium, theme, or reference suggested by a facilitator (or work spontaneously) to produce one or more refined pieces to gift.

5 writing a message

finally, we write short messages of hope and support to those receiving our artwork.

about our artwork

of the **125 pieces** our participants gifted to local hospitals, the majority used **oil or soft pastel** as a primary medium; these materials are easy to apply and produce bright and satisfying colours. some participants chose to use media familiar to them from previous art encounters, but all were encouraged to consider new ways of creating. we provided an array of materials and paper at each session.



hearing from attendees

"we found the workshop very meaningful especially for my little ones. they always want to be volunteers but due to their age limit, what they can do is also very limited. here you offer a chance for them to make good use of their interest of drawing as well as helping people"

session 10 attendee, parent of two

"thinking that my small artwork could have an impact on others makes me particularly happy and grateful"

session 5 attendee, neuroscience researcher

"it was a pleasure to take part in such a project being able to do something that we all love and knowing that is going to bring the smile on someone's face"

session 8 attendee, secondary school student

"[the workshop was] a great way to share in art practice and opportunity to offer something from the outside world to a space of healing."

session 10 attendee, professional artist



hearing from hospitals

"[the artworks] are a great conversation piece and generally bring a smile and appreciation [...]"

it feels good as a staff member to be able to give [a patient] something to keep, especially someone who doesn't have many visitors or personal possessions with them [...]"

we left [an artwork] on the desk of a colleague who had had a particularly hard week and she was quite emotional!"

sarah saunders

memory nurse specialist, oxford university hospitals



the john radcliffe hospital, headington
photo credit: oxford university hospitals



what's next?

these three months, and this report, are only the beginning! though I (yaning) will leave oxford in september, I intend to recruit a **new project leader** from our social impact community to continue delivering blossoming wards' workshops. I also plan to connect with interested artists, NHS trusts, and local residents across the country to **develop similar projects elsewhere**.

at the same time, I'll **critically reflect** on our existing practices so that we can maximise the difference we make to the lives (or afternoons or minutes) of workshop participants and artwork recipients.


right now, I believe we can improve our offering by:


- 1 centring patients and staff in service design**, i.e. by gathering feedback from hospital wards about what types of art individuals prefer to own
- 2 welcoming even more new artists and residents traditionally underserved by community art projects**, i.e. by formally training our facilitators in beginner instruction and exploring virtual workshop options
- 3 streamlining artwork delivery to hospital sites** to improve efficiency and reduce arts staff workload

a thank you essay

blossoming wards is made possible by the support, guidance, and belief of phenomenal people in oxford and beyond.

I owe the delivery of these workshops to **oxford hub** and its team, especially **róisín nolan** and **miriam chappell**, who liaised with me to apply for funding, recruit volunteers, and maintain high standards of organisational practice. 

I thank our workshop participants for teaching me so much about how to create, and I am especially grateful to our facilitators. **kian**, thank you for suggesting we use pastels (it's turned out well!). **lucy**, thank you for introducing me to the vibrant ruskin school community. **helena**, thank you for convincing us that portraits aren't as hard as we think. **siyu**, thank you for reminding me of the importance of this work. **sophia**, thank you for helping us experiment with new media. 

I am deeply indebted to **ruth charity**, **sarah saunders**, and their **JR hospital** colleagues for delivering our artworks with such patience and attention to detail. I am also grateful to the **patients** and **staff members** who gave our pieces new homes. 

I thank my colleagues at **kellogg college** and the **nuffield department of population health** for their interest in this project. 

finally, I thank my own community of family and friends. they observed my world shifting to focus on this work and took it all in their stride. for this, and for many other things, I love them. **12**

keeping in touch

your engagement with our work means the world. as blossoming wards continues to evolve, you can follow us on instagram (@**blossomingwards**) and visit our **website** for updated information about our workshops, facilitators, and gifted artworks. you can also send us a message through the site's contact form.

we are currently operating out of oxford hub's office at **36 little clarendon street, oxford, OX1 2HU**. if you see us making art, our doors are open! feel free to say hello — we'd love for you to join in.

thank you again for your support :)

best wishes,

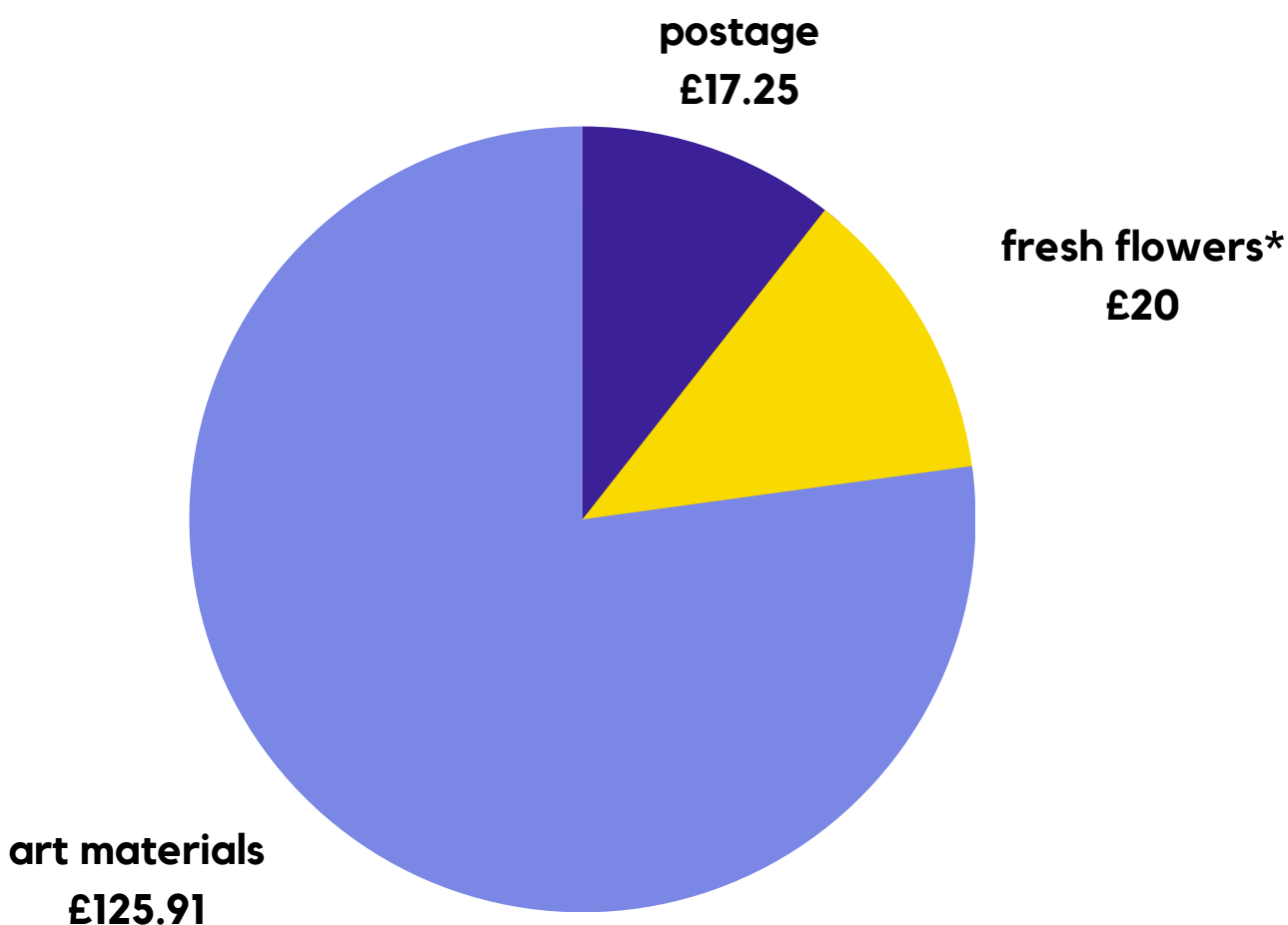


**blossoming
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appendix: finances

this project was fortunate to receive ~£500 via the community enterprise awards' "try it" grant in february.

to date, the project has spent £163.16, split between purchases of **art materials**, **fresh flowers**, and **postage**.



*after each session, we have gifted flowers to strangers, neighbours, or facilitators.