



## **Dementia inclusive in-home resource**



## Introduction

At the National Gallery of Ireland, we believe that our collection should be accessible to everyone and we aim to provide a public programme that is inclusive and accessible to all of our audiences. As part of this wider access programme, the Gallery has been providing free facilitator-led dementia-inclusive sessions on site at the Gallery and in the community over the last five years. The In-home resource is a new project to enable people with dementia and carers to enjoy art within their own home.

## In-home Resource

Engaging with the arts is great for your health and well-being. We hope that this resource will be of value and that our national collection of artworks can be enjoyed.

This resource has been designed as an aid for the carer/ health professional to assume the role of facilitator. It includes a step-by-step guide, and advice on how to conduct one of our sessions from the comfort of home. We have included five artworks from our collection to explore in this resource; these are works from our Irish, French, Dutch and Italian collections.

If you have the means to use digital platforms such as ZOOM, we can arrange for a member of our team to partake in the session. We are also available answer any of your questions relating to the content of this document. For contact details and further information on our range of dementia inclusive services see page 21.



## Dementia-inclusive discussion and practical art session

### What will we be doing?

The session involves two activities:

1. A discussion followed by
2. A practical art session that focuses on one artwork

### Is this for individuals or groups?

The sessions are suitable for individuals and small groups.

If you are working with groups, we would advise limiting the number of participants. Our maximum capacity for our onsite activities is eight people. A small group helps to maintain an informal atmosphere and makes it easier for the facilitator to bring all participants into the conversation.

This is also an advantage during the practical art activity. During this activity, it will be necessary to spend one-on-one time with each participant to provide support and encouragement.

### Do we need to know about art before we start?

No! This resource is designed to help everyone look at and enjoy art. **Everyone's opinion is valid and nobody needs to be an expert!**

### What will we need?

The session should take place in a quiet space with minimum distractions.

For this activity, you will need a screen to display the artwork. You will ideally need a TV screen if you are working with groups; a computer screen will suffice if you are working with an individual.

For the second part of the session, the practical art activity, you will need a table and some basic art materials i.e. paints, brushes, paper. We will go into this in more detail in the section Practical Activity below.

### How long will the activity take?

Allow 45 minutes for the entire activity: that's approximately 15-20 minutes for the discussion and 20-25 minutes for the practical activity. Always start each session by announcing what exactly is about to take place.

Flexibility with time may be necessary particularly if one part of the session is going well. However, it is important keep to the allotted time as much as possible.

### **The discussion activity**

Put very simply, this conversational session involves looking at an image of an artwork from the Gallery's collection and having an informal chat about it. The emphasis is on teasing out observations from the participants, rather than bombarding them with facts. You don't have to be an expert on art to explore an artwork and express a view. Every observation made by the participant is valid and can be fed into the wider discussion. Art may be an intimidating subject for some, so it helps to create a relaxed atmosphere from the beginning. Laughter often facilitates engagement, so if possible try and use humor when introducing the session.

During the discussion, the facilitator should avoid lengthy explanations as this can lead to comprehension and attention difficulties. The facilitator is a moderator who keeps the discussion alive by asking short, leading questions and gently guides the conversation back to topic if needs be. We break the discussion up into the following steps.

1. Observation
2. Description
3. Interpretation
4. Imagination

### **Step 1. Observation**

The first part of the discussion session is observation. Ask the participants to sit and look at the painting on the screen before you begin an open discussion about it.

### **Step 2. Description**

Asking questions is a great way to encourage and support conversation that will describe the artwork. A great icebreaker question, “What do you see?” .You can follow up with questions like “What makes you say that?” Here you are gathering a visual inventory of what is visible in the artwork. Be prepared for responses that are interpretation rather than description and guide people back to describing what they see.

### **Step 3. Interpretation**

Move from describing all of the elements, to interpretation of what the participants have named. The facilitator’s job is to reflect back what has been said and to keep encouraging the discussion: “What does that mean to you?” “What do you mean by that?”

### **Step 4. Imagination**

Continue with deepening questions: “Say more about that?” etc. You are connecting and relating to the participant’s life.

For each artwork, we have listed a number of key facts to help support the discussion. This information can be used to prompt further conversation or to validate what someone has said. You can also use the information as a way of taking the conversation further or in a new direction. For example, “This artist was famous for painting outdoors. Have you ever seen an artist paint outside?” But be careful not to shut down discussion!

## The practical activity

Creative activities can be very therapeutic, especially when you lose yourself in the process of making an artwork. It is the same feeling we get when we read a good book or hear a beautiful piece of music. At the Gallery, we believe in the “head, hand, heart model” of learning. The hands on experience of doing something creative after having just closely looked at and talked about the artwork, allows participants to tap into their creativity.

There are so many ways a participant can create art, through painting, drawing, sculpture or photography. For people with limited dexterity, modelling clay is often a great option as it has the advantage of being malleable and tactile. However, there is something very special about painting. The act of putting paint to paper is very satisfying on a sensory level and can yield immediate results; for these reasons we recommend painting.

The most important thing during this activity is that the participant is applying paint to the paper or canvas. You can encourage participants by suggesting “making a mark” not copying the artwork. The aim is not to recreate the artwork, but to use it as a jumping off point. Some people will look at the pristine blank sheet of paper with anxiety, afraid to mark it. Others will start painting straight away. Like the discussion session, the art activity is not a classroom situation. The facilitator’s role is not to give tips but rather to encourage engagement. The aim is to have an experience in the moment rather than create a masterpiece.

Getting participants started on the activity can be the most challenging part of the exercise. Here are a few tips on getting the session under way:



## Preparation

Have all the materials ready and laid out invitingly. Each participant should have:

- two sheets of A4 cartridge paper
- one brush, a jar of water (to clean the brushes)
- a ceramic plate with a few squirts of paint (just the primary colours will be fine)

You don't have to splash out on the finest artist quality supplies but try to get the best quality you can afford. Materials like brushes, paper and paint are available in discount shops as well art supply stores. If possible, use acrylic paint, as it dries quickly and produces a nice result.

## Getting started

You can announce that you are going to paint a landscape and ask all the participants to put their brushes into the blue paint and create the sky using the blue. The first mark has been made and can act as the compulsion to keep at it. You should seek to incorporate some of the ideas that were spoken about during the discussion, by suggesting certain elements, like trees or boats. But the most important part is to let them be free.

## Reluctance

Some participants will say that they can't paint and will refuse to partake. Very often, this is due to embarrassment about what the outcome might be. Ensure the participant that the exercise is about enjoying the process of painting and that their work won't be subject to critique at the end. Be very encouraging – use phrases like “Give it a try and see what happens”. Remind them that they have two sheets of paper and that one of the sheets can be used to make a warm-up painting. It might be necessary to start the participant off by, for example, painting a tree and then encouraging them to add the leaves. Make sure to have extra paper available.

## Take a break

It's good to take breaks; it allows participants to relax and it's an opportunity for the facilitator to gauge how the group as a whole are doing with the exercise. The facilitator can ask questions like, “Is everyone enjoying the activity?” or “Does anyone want to talk about how they're



doing?” This gives the facilitator an opportunity to refer to points made in the earlier discussion. Again, it’s important not to be too regimented; announcing a break doesn’t mean everybody has to stop and if some participants are in a state of flow with the artwork, let them continue.

### **Finishing Up**

This session should last approximately 20 minutes, however the facilitator’s intuition should be used to bring the activity to its natural conclusion. You can use phrases like, “Everybody is doing great; we’ll finish up now shortly”. You can finish the session with a question like, “Did everybody enjoy the activity?”

You could also ask if anybody would like to volunteer to speak about or show their work.

### **In summary**

Everybody has their own personal responses to artworks. Some people are drawn to the colours, some to the subject matter, and others to the composition. Creating an activity that explores these responses in an informal environment is key to the success of the session. Although the person in your care who lives with dementia might not be able to remember everything about the artwork you’ve been looking at, they can still enjoy having taken part in a pleasurable and creative experience.



## The Artworks

This is selection of artworks from the National Gallery of Ireland's collection. More information about the works are available on to our website [www.nationalgallery.ie](http://www.nationalgallery.ie)

### ***Argenteuil Basin with Single Sailboat (1874)***

By Claude Monet (1840 -1926)

### ***A Thunderstorm: the Frightened Wagoner (1832)***

By James Arthur O'Connor (1792-1841)

### ***The Peasant Wedding (1620)***

By Pieter Brueghal, the Younger (1564 -1638)

### ***A Banquet-piece (c.1620)***

By Frans Snyders (1579-1657)

### ***The Holy Family with Saint John in a Landscape (1494)***

By Francesco Granacci (1469 -1543)

### ***Argenteuil Basin with Single Sailboat (1874)***

By Claude Monet (1840 -1926)

#### **Facts about the painting:**

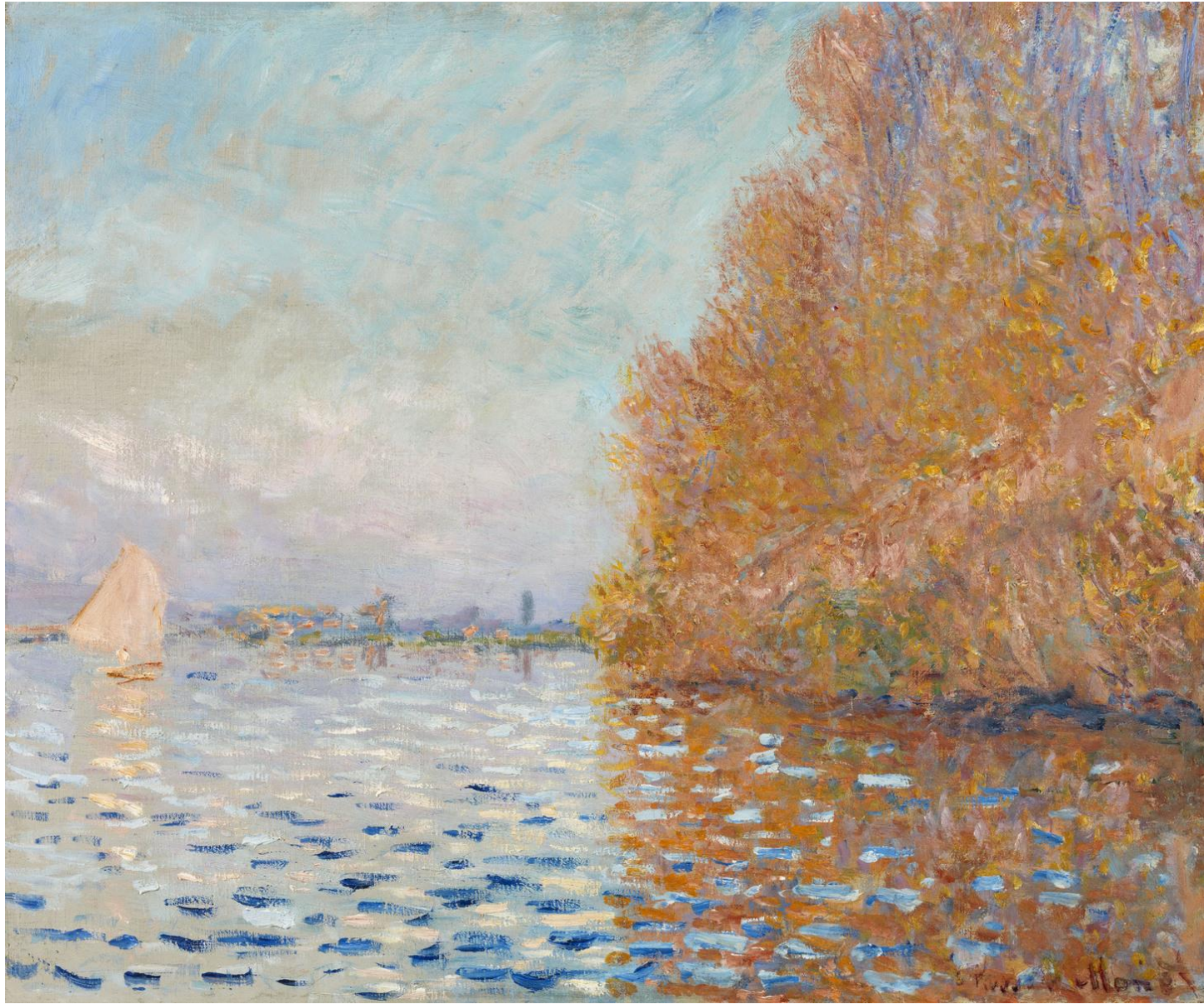
- It was painted in 1874
- The artist, Claude Monet, painted it while in another sailboat which he used as a floating studio
- Argenteuil is an area north of Paris on the river Seine

#### **Facts about the artist, Claude Monet:**

- Claude Monet was a French painter
- He was born in 1840 in Paris
- He was one of the founders of Impressionism
- He liked to paint landscapes outdoors and is famous for using vibrant bright colours
- Some of his most well-known paintings are his Water Lilies series

#### **Facts about Impressionism**

- Impressionism started in France in the 1860s
- The Impressionists were a group of artists that included Claude Monet, Augustus Renoir and Edgar Degas
- The Impressionists wanted to capture the light and colour of the moment and therefore painted quickly
- They often painted outdoors
- They used rapid brush strokes and often used unmixed colour.



## ***A Thunderstorm: the Frightened Wagoner (1832)***

By James Arthur O'Connor (1792 -1841)

### **Facts about the painting:**

- This painting is regarded as one of James Arthur O'Connor's finest works
- It is an example of a landscape painting in the style of Romanticism. Romanticism was a 19<sup>th</sup> century style of painting that celebrated the dramatic in the natural world.
- The painting depicts a stormy night where a bolt of lightning startles the horses of a wagoner on his travels
- The wagoner is dwarfed not just by the huge elements of the landscape but by of the drama that unfolds around him.

### **Facts about the artist, James Arthur O'Connor:**

- James Arthur O'Connor was a distinguished Irish landscape painter.
- He was born in Dublin in 1792
- O'Conner was self-taught and became known for his meticulous detailing in his paintings





### ***The Peasant Wedding (1620)***

By Pieter Brueghel, the Younger (1564 -1638)

#### **Facts about the painting:**

- This painting was painted in 1620
- It is a genre painting, which means it is a scene of everyday life
- The scene depicts a Flemish country wedding
- The painter is making a mockery of the behaviour of people during a marriage feast
- The figures are deliberately caricatured and comical
- There is drinking, dancing and flirting taking place
- In the background, we see the bride sitting quietly at a table. The wedding dowry is being discussed by the people either side of her

#### **Facts about the artist, Pieter Brueghel, The Younger:**

- Pieter Brueghel the Younger lived between 1564 and 1638
- He was a Flemish painter
- He was the son of Pieter Brueghel the Elder and brother of Jan Brueghel the Elder
- Like his father, he painted crude and caricatured peasant scenes
- He also painted landscapes, religious subjects and village scenes







### **A Banquet-piece (c.1620)**

Frans Snyders (1579-1657)

#### **Facts about the painting:**

- This painting is an example of a still life, an artwork that depicts inanimate objects
- The painting depicts food such as fresh fruits, vegetables and a lobster. There are also cutlery and dishware on view
- It was painted in Antwerp in 1620. Antwerp was a marketplace for exotic fruit and vegetables in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries
- It is a large painting and it is believed that it may have been intended to decorate an aristocratic dining room

#### **Facts about the artist, Frans Snyders:**

- Frans Snyders was the leading Flemish artist famous for his still-life and animal paintings
- During a career that lasted about 50 years, he produced an enormous amount of artworks. This included more than 300 paintings and about 100 drawings.
- Snyders was very successful and was able to demand high prices for his work from noble patrons.



### ***Rest on the Flight into Egypt with the Infant Saint John the Baptist (1494)***

Francesco Granacci (1469-1543)

#### **Facts about the painting:**

- This work was painted in Italy during the late 15<sup>th</sup> century during a period known as the High Renaissance
- It depicts the Holy Family as they rest after they escaped from Bethlehem and travelled to Egypt
- The flight into Egypt is a story recounted in the Gospel of Matthew
- In the foreground, the virgin and child are greeted by the infant St John the Baptist
- In the background, St Joseph leads a donkey forward
- The painting is widely regarded as Granacci's masterpiece

#### **Facts about the artist, Francesco Granacci:**

- Francesco Granacci was an Italian painter during the Renaissance period
- He was born in 1469 in the city of Florence
- Biblical figures in colourful landscapes are typical of his work
- Granacci and the artist Michelangelo were friends. They were both pupils of the artist Domenico Ghirlandaio

#### **Facts about the artist, the Renaissance:**

- The Renaissance was a period in art that began in Florence in the 14<sup>th</sup> century
- It was marked by a renewed interest in the culture of the ancient world
- The Renaissance spread across Italy and Europe from the 14<sup>th</sup> to the 16<sup>th</sup> century
- During the Renaissance artists aimed to create paintings and sculpture that appeared realistic.
- In painting, artists were interested in depicting the impression of distance between people and objects. This developed into a technique called perspective
- The most famous artists during the Renaissance were Leonardo da Vinci and Michelangelo



## More Information

If you would like more information or avail of other dementia inclusive services at the National Gallery of Ireland, contact Caomhán Mac Conlomaire in our Education Department

(T: 01 6633507 | E [cmacconiomaire@ngi.ie](mailto:cmacconiomaire@ngi.ie))

### Our service in brief

- **Come to us:** If you would like to visit the gallery, please get in touch and we can arrange a free guided tour for you
- **Go to you:** We can facilitate a workshop tailored for home or care settings.
- **Meet Online:** We can facilitate a zoom workshop at a time and date that suits you.

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