

Tate

Building confidence for volunteers with support needs

Overview

- Front of House volunteers
- Building Confidence project
- Using Theatre of the Oppressed
- Social model of disability
- Barrier busting exercise
- Measuring and evaluation

Volunteers Team

- Volunteers Team at Tate are part of our Visitor Experience Department
- We work with approx. 240 public-facing Volunteer Visitor or Family Hosts
- Around 8% of our Visitor Hosts have a learning or support need.
- We strive to make our volunteer opportunities accessible and inclusive and work to support our hosts with learning needs.

Front of House Volunteers

- Front of House volunteers welcome the public to Tate Britain and Tate Modern.
- They assist visitors to find their way around complex, large and sometimes overpowering buildings.
- They direct visitors to the information they need to make their visit enjoyable.
- They provide a warm welcome.
- They engage visitors with our collection and exhibitions.



Building Confidence project

As a Volunteer Coordinator working with volunteer hosts with support needs, I attended Tate's (Schools and Teachers) [*Diggin' the Gallery*](#) event for young people with special educational needs and disabilities. The project was really inspiring.

I thought we could also use physical theatre techniques to work with our supported volunteer hosts to improve their confidence and ability to deliver excellent visitor care.

I designed and delivered a series of workshops in collaboration with a community drama practitioner (Tereza Araujo). The workshops were designed to support the hosts to take an active role in giving directions, to talk about an artwork, and to improve their understanding of visitors' needs.

Diggin' the Gallery



Project Objectives

Participants in the workshops would feel more confident:

- talking to and welcoming Visitors
- using the Tate Britain Gallery Map
- showing and talking about two artworks in the Tate Britain Collection

The project set out to help boost the confidence of the volunteers taking part, by practicing using some tools and techniques that had been adapted to take into account their learning styles. Our focus was on building confidence in their specific volunteer role, (not more generally building self-esteem).

Using Theatre

- The Visitor Host role is akin to a performance, where an individual may have to deliver a speech or use their body to express, in order to represent an institution.
- We noticed that some of the hosts with support needs respond and learn better using roleplay and nonverbal communication.
- At the same time that theatre techniques might assist Supported Hosts in their learning journey, there is a movement in the retail sector towards training staff to provide excellent customer care using 'retail theatre'.
- Some of our art engagement activities for the public, or staff, demand a more engaging approach – playful theatre games can assist with this too.

Augusto Boal and Theatre of the Oppressed

The workshops drew on the theories of Augusto Boal (1931-2009): A Brazilian author, playwright and director who served one term as city councillor in Rio de Janeiro from 1993 to 1997. He is most well known as the founder of Theatre of the Oppressed, a dramatic form of popular education now used by social movements in more than 70 countries. — *Wikipedia*

‘The games and exercises are designed to give the participants time to know each other, have an open dialogue in an open platform, to engage and have fun’. (Tereza – community drama facilitator)

Augusto Boal and Theatre of the Oppressed

- *Theatre of the Oppressed* is a system of Exercises, Games and Special Techniques. It seeks to help men and women to develop what they already have within themselves: theatre.
- It offers to people an aesthetic way to analyse their own past, in their present context, so that they can create their future, instead of waiting for it to happen.
- *Theatre of the Oppressed* helps the people to rediscover an artistic language that already they possess; helps people learn to live in society through the theatrical game.
- Oppressed are those individuals or groups that have, socially, culturally, politically, economically, racially or sexually lost their rights in/to dialogue or, who have been deprived of the exercise of this right.

Augusto Boal and Theatre of the Oppressed

‘Facilitation is a bit of theatre. As human beings, we have to orchestrate our own openness, and choreograph a chance to think differently about challenges we thought we already knew inside and out. Outside help is essential—someone unattached who can take all the raw elements of our voices, our differences, and our shared interests—as done when we stage a play—and combine them together into an experience that moves people.’

Drama warm up games to music

Funky chicken, clapping games, breathing exercises, walking exercises, competition game (working in teams fill up the space), mirroring and leading, shaking the body, making/ repeating sounds.





Exercise: Warm Up!

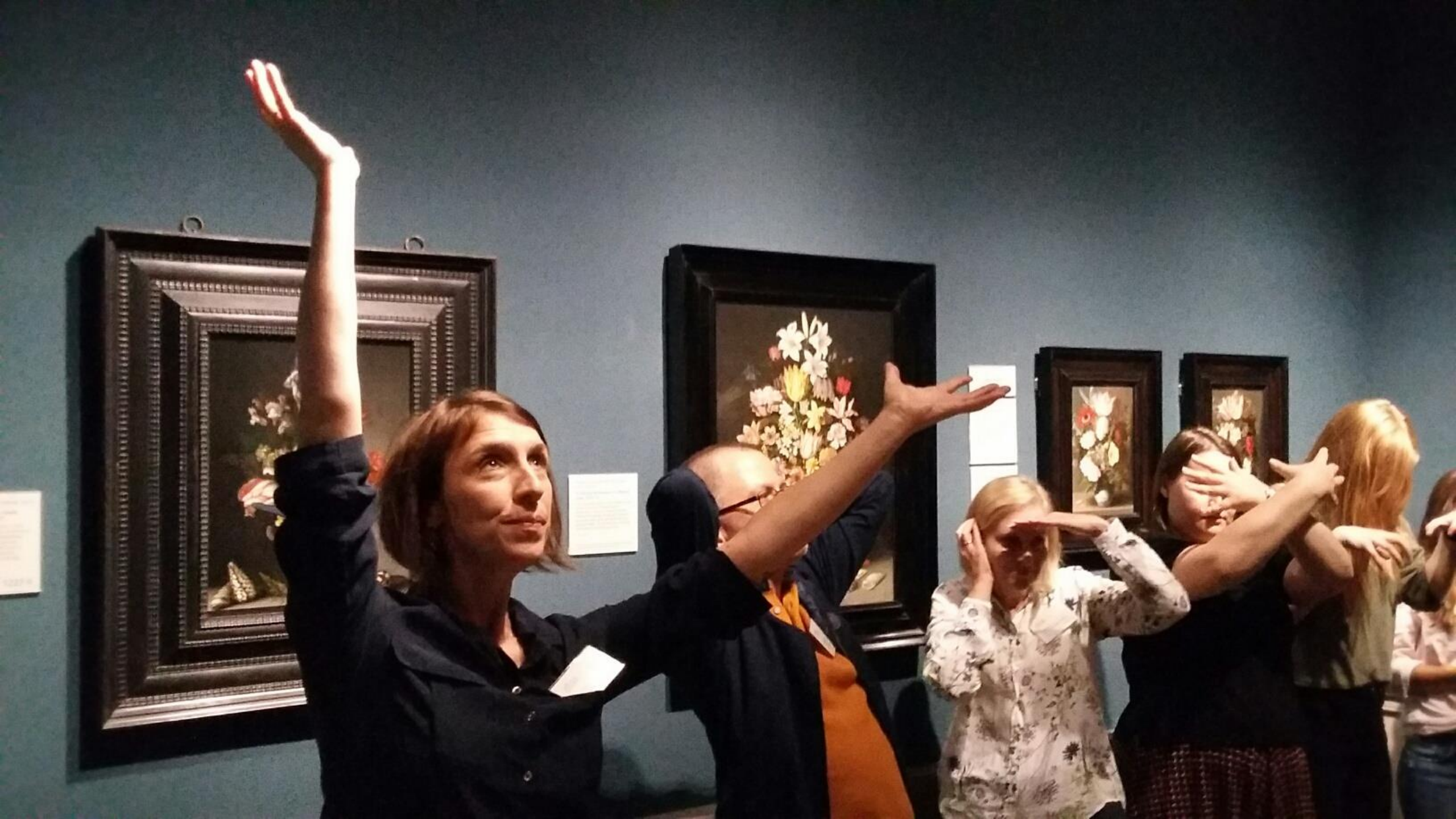
Move your chairs back - we are going to try out some exercises to introduce yourselves to each other on your tables.

Theatre of Image

‘Freeze Image’ technique – individually and as groups, Used to explore:

- How could you present yourself as a host through a freeze image?
- How could you represent what is happening in an artwork?
- Groups showing different situations – Visitor Host and Support Worker not paying attention to a visitor; Visitor Host and Support Worker paying attention to an unhappy visitor; Visitor Host not being supported by their Support Worker; Visitor asking something that the Visitor Host doesn't know, but that the Support Worker does.





Exercise: What's your freeze image?

- Can you introduce yourself in a freeze image?
- What does this feel like?
- What did you have in common?
- What does your freeze image say about you?
- Could you have tried a different freeze image?



Forum Theatre





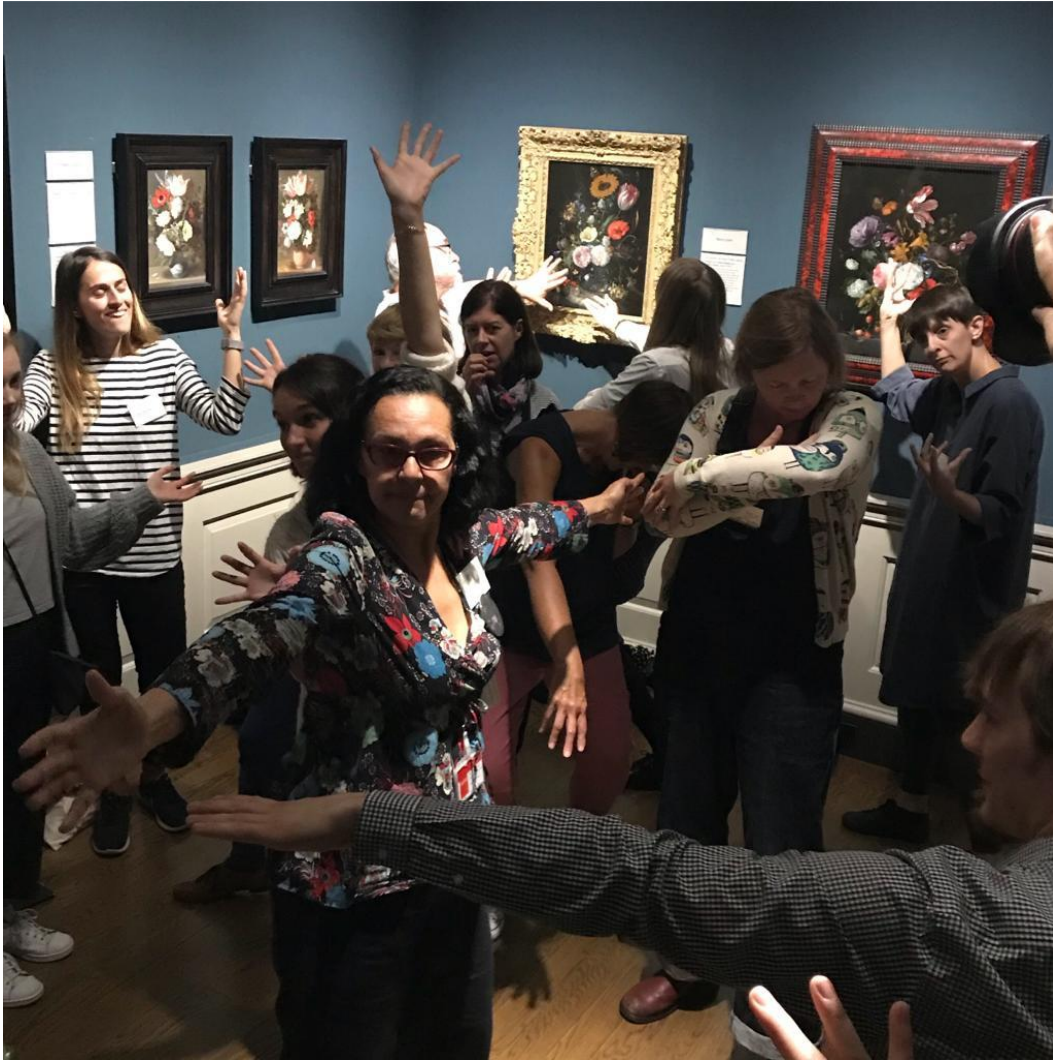
Large printed map



Collection Conversations



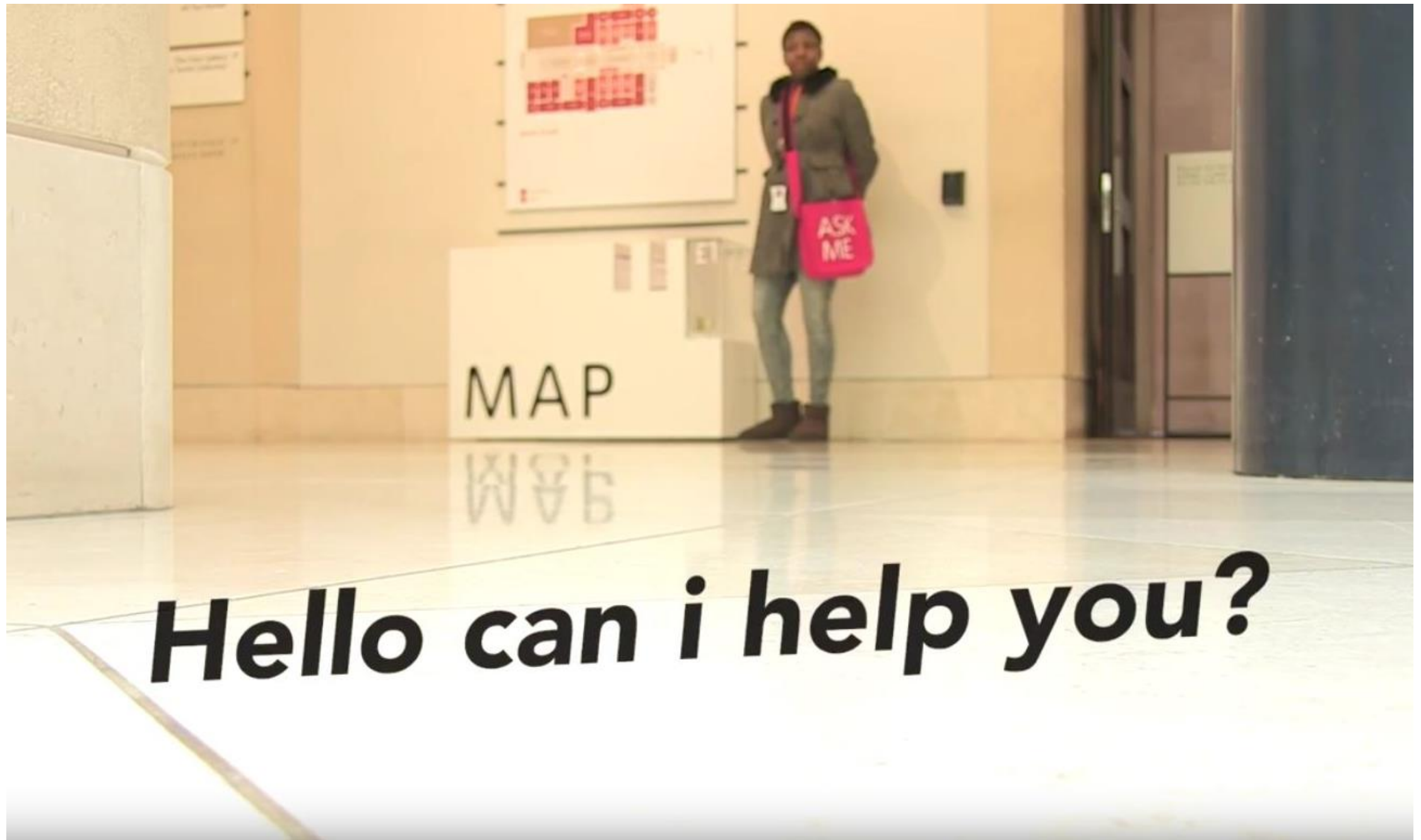
Sensory Collection Conversations



‘Really enjoyed it! Definitely brilliant ideas to take us out of our comfort zones but strangely made me feel more comfortable to then connect with the other people. Will definitely be having a go with a couple of these activities with our learning volunteers with SEN.’

Further adaptations we are exploring

- Audio guides
- Badges
- Visual stories and easy read text
- Turning artworks into large jigsaws to explore and develop vocabulary
- Different methods for feedback (Give & Gain, roll of paper, fabric)
- Storytelling, Mindfulness, and Creative journaling



What grounds our approach?

- Valmie has volunteered at Tate Britain since 2015. She has gone on a real journey to develop her abilities to interact with our visitors and to give them the information they need.
- In many ways Valmie is the volunteer who has inspired our Building Confidence project, because we found that she learns best through role play.
- When Valmie started to volunteer she told us ‘I like the work very much, especially meeting people and chatting with them. When I started there I was explained what my job would be, and now am showing people around. They ask me questions, and I show them for example where the toilets are, or where the café is. I wish I could work more days a week at Tate.’

Models of Disability

- Attitudes and conceptions of disability have changed over time. There are a number of ways of thinking about disability that still permeate society:
- Religious or Tragedy/ Charity model
- Individualistic or Medical model
- Social model

Social Model of Disability

‘The social model of disability says that disability is caused by the way society is organised, rather than by a person’s impairment or difference. It looks at ways of removing barriers that restrict life choices for disabled people. When barriers are removed, disabled people can be independent and equal in society, with choice and control over their own lives. Disabled people developed the social model of disability because the traditional medical model did not explain their personal experience of disability or help to develop more inclusive ways of living.’

What ‘disables’ are geographical, attitudinal, linguistic, technological and institutional barriers.

Barrier Busting Exercise – 20 minutes

- In groups – discuss barriers in relation to your organization or volunteer roles. What barriers can you think of that are:
 - geographical
 - attitudinal
 - linguistic
 - technological
 - institutional
- Present findings

How did we bust our own barriers?

- The team looked at what they do well and at where they had concerns and questions.
- We are good at being welcoming, adaptive, being supportive, and finding ways to interest our volunteers in art.
- We carried out a barrier busting exercise and what came out as our main concern was how to make an inclusive journey for our volunteers with learning or support needs.
- Broadly our answer to this was to adapt – to think about how our communication could be more inclusive, and how we could use alternatives to written materials.

Measuring and evaluation

- Use of outcome frameworks to set out aims and outcomes for specific projects
- Use of baseline check ins with volunteers with learning support needs to develop learning plans to support their volunteering journey.

Asking:

- What is your preferred way to communicate (in the gallery/ from at home or offsite)?
 - What are you doing well now?
 - What does your best look like, and how do we get there?
- Considering how to make your evaluation tools also accessible/ adaptive to the needs of volunteers with learning difficulties.



Questions?

Fleur Donnelly-Jackson, Volunteers Manager, Tate

fleur.donnelly-jackson@tate.org.uk

Walney Virgilio, Volunteers Coordinator, Tate Britain

walney.virgilio@tate.org.uk