

# Ceramics Activities in Nightingale Hammerson's Clapham Home By Emily Hall



Back in November I attended the 11th National Dementia Congress in Brighton and had the great privilege of being an ambassador for the importance of growing old creatively through the work I was exhibiting from residents at Nightingale Hammerson.

I have been Ceramics Activities Lead at the organisations Clapham home since 2011 but pottery has been running for over 20 years among other creative activity such as painting, textiles, singing and poetry. The home is pioneering in terms of facilities and care provision; there are approximately 180 residents ranging from residential to nursing and living with dementia. In the time I been there I have been developing pottery classes and projects that are both inclusive to all and sensitive to the needs of each individual. To do this, with the support of a fantastic activity team, care staff and volunteers, I structure group classes, on-floor and one-to-one activities that always ensure I can work closely with each residents.

It is hugely rewarding to see the residents developing their own style and it is important to allow for their creative freedom and adapt the clay techniques to suit each physical ability and personal interest. Whether it's just making a simple mark on a page, digging a nail into clay or creating a functional object or sculpture, everyone can express something. It has been said that art is 'good for the brain' because it connects you physically and mentally to something and that makes for a very rewarding and therapeutic exercise.



Which is why it was a great opportunity to be able to exhibit at the congress and promote how integral it is as a tool to communicate and be expressive; and to exhibit on behalf of those living with dementia, work *made by* them, not made for them or designed for them but their own artwork.

The display featured 'The Creative Mind' exhibition, a series of landscape drawings and paintings, charting the journey of one resident Rosalind Fleck's creative talent from childhood, adulthood and her later life living with dementia. The work visually demonstrates her changing creative perceptions and highlights a powerful connection between art, the brain and the hand.



Her work is characterised by her great attention to the smallest details, drawn with the skill of a draftsman's hand and an artist's eye for colour. While her work has changed in many ways in her later life living with dementia, evolving more abstractly, there is still this attention to detail and colour in her style. It highlights the journey her creative mind is taking to create art even with dementia.

As well as the artwork, there was a display of pottery made in the weekly ceramics classes. Each piece of pottery tells a story about the way clay can be used to benefit each residents physically and tell the story of the individual maker through the themes they've chosen or surface expression and colour choices.

My aim with all the work is to celebrate the power of artistic expression and how much we can learn from the creative minds that continue to make art, even with dementia.

Nightingale champions it's person centered care and therefore has allowed me to adapt how I work to meet the diversity of the residents so that as many people benefit as possible. It has also given me great scope to develop my teaching practice and I now freelance in another seven homes in South London and Surrey.

For more information about me and my work please visit my website [www.emily-hall.co.uk](http://www.emily-hall.co.uk) or email at [info@emily-hall.co.uk](mailto:info@emily-hall.co.uk). And for information about Nightingale Hammerson please visit [www.nightingalehammerson.org](http://www.nightingalehammerson.org)