

The O-ACE Project - how can online museum content be beneficial for mental health?

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#UMGPackedLunch | November 2021



Gardens,
Libraries
& Museums



Aim

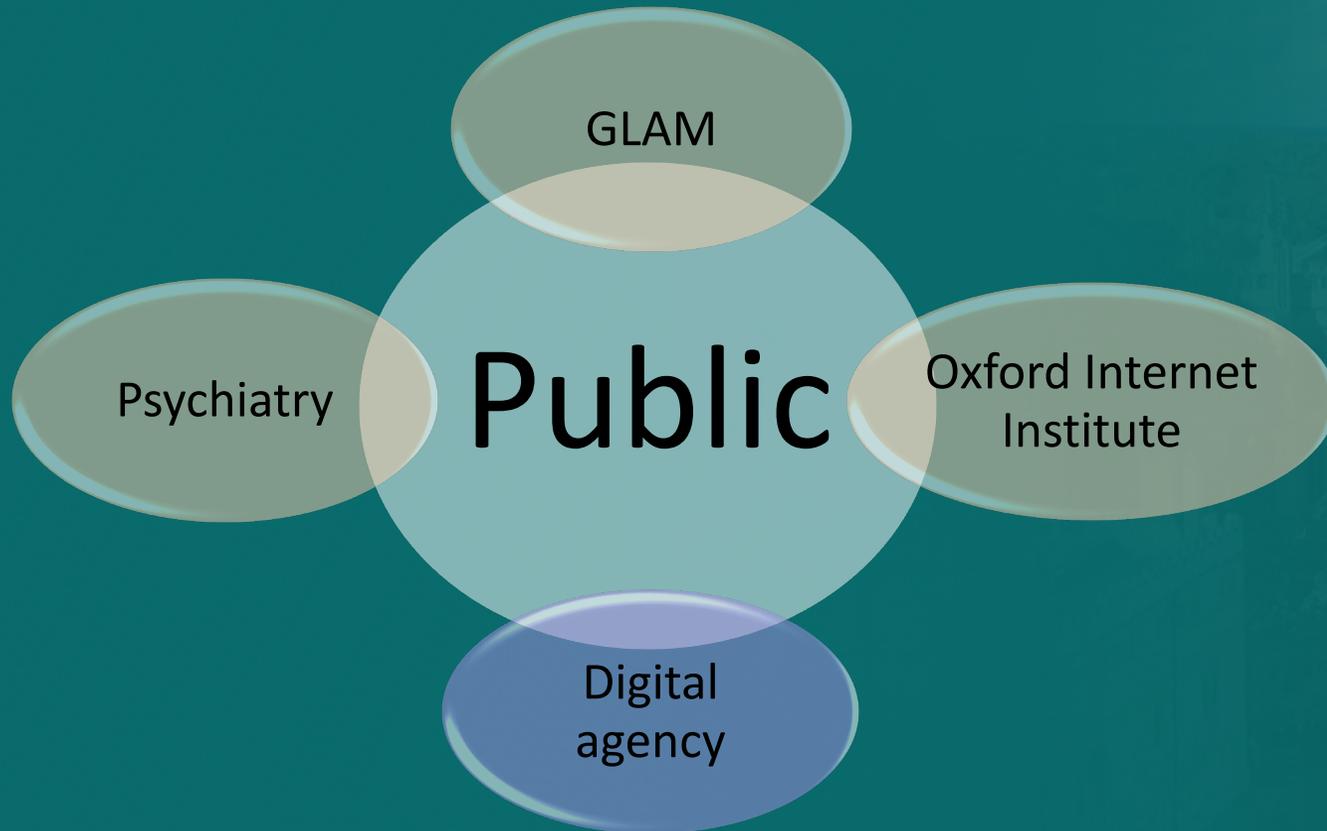
Research and test innovative approaches to improve mental health and wellbeing beyond medication and traditional therapies

COVID-19 circumstances:

- Closure of museums and increase in online content
- Worsening mental health impact and reduction in services

Background

University of Oxford COVID-19 Research
Response Fund (April 2020) - £40k



Process

	What	#
Phase 1	Systematic Review	13,000 studies
	Sector Scrape	10 case studies
	Baseline Survey	1,056
	<u>Follow-on Survey</u>	176
	<u>1-2-1 Interviews</u>	13
Phase 2	Co-design groups	31
	Experiment (randomised control trial)	413

} Core components



Headlines: SURVEY

- Established arts lovers used OCC more during COVID-19 and saw greater MH benefits.
- Young people 16-24 smallest respondent group but:

	Young people	Rest of sample
Non-white	26%	9%
Diagnosed MH issue/treatment	25%	16%
Self-diagnosed MH issue (K10)	77%	44%
Ashmolean web first-timers	48%	33%

PLEASE WEAR A
FACE COVERING



Headlines: INTERVIEWS and FOCUS GROUPS

1. **Immersion** helps shift attention away from self (mindfulness isn't for everyone).
2. Sought comfort and strength in **human connections**, shared experiences and **stories of resilience**.
3. **Importance of flipping the narrative**, giving a platform for those who didn't fit in or marginalized by history:

“I find it difficult to look at Western art and only see people who look like me in the background or not even there.”

4. **Wanted to hear other people's perspectives** to encourage empathy and reduce black-and-white thinking.





Welcome
Zoom in to explore

Being Christian
Creating art for spiritual repatriation

Being Nur
Immigrant, politician, tiger-slayer, and the secret power behind the Mughal throne

Being Vernon
Artist who pushed boundaries for women in the early 20th century

Being Abu'l Hasan
Master painter and child prodigy who fused Indian and European art

Being Ethel
Artist who pushed boundaries for women in the early 20th century

Being Paul
German Jewish refugee who built a new life and career in Oxford

Being Lizzie
Artist, poet, model who challenged Victorian beauty standards

Being Tomoe
Female samurai warrior immortalised in Japanese culture

Being Ibrahim
Pioneer of African Modernism

Being Lowry
Artist who rejected awards

Being Gwen
Overlooked artist who lived life on her own terms



Want to share your viewpoint?

If you would like to, please tell us your viewpoint on the art or stories you see here – did it help give you perspective? Did you feel connected or reflected? Were you inspired? You will also be able to let us know if and how you want your viewpoint to be shared.

SUBMIT →



RCT - advertising and testing with YP

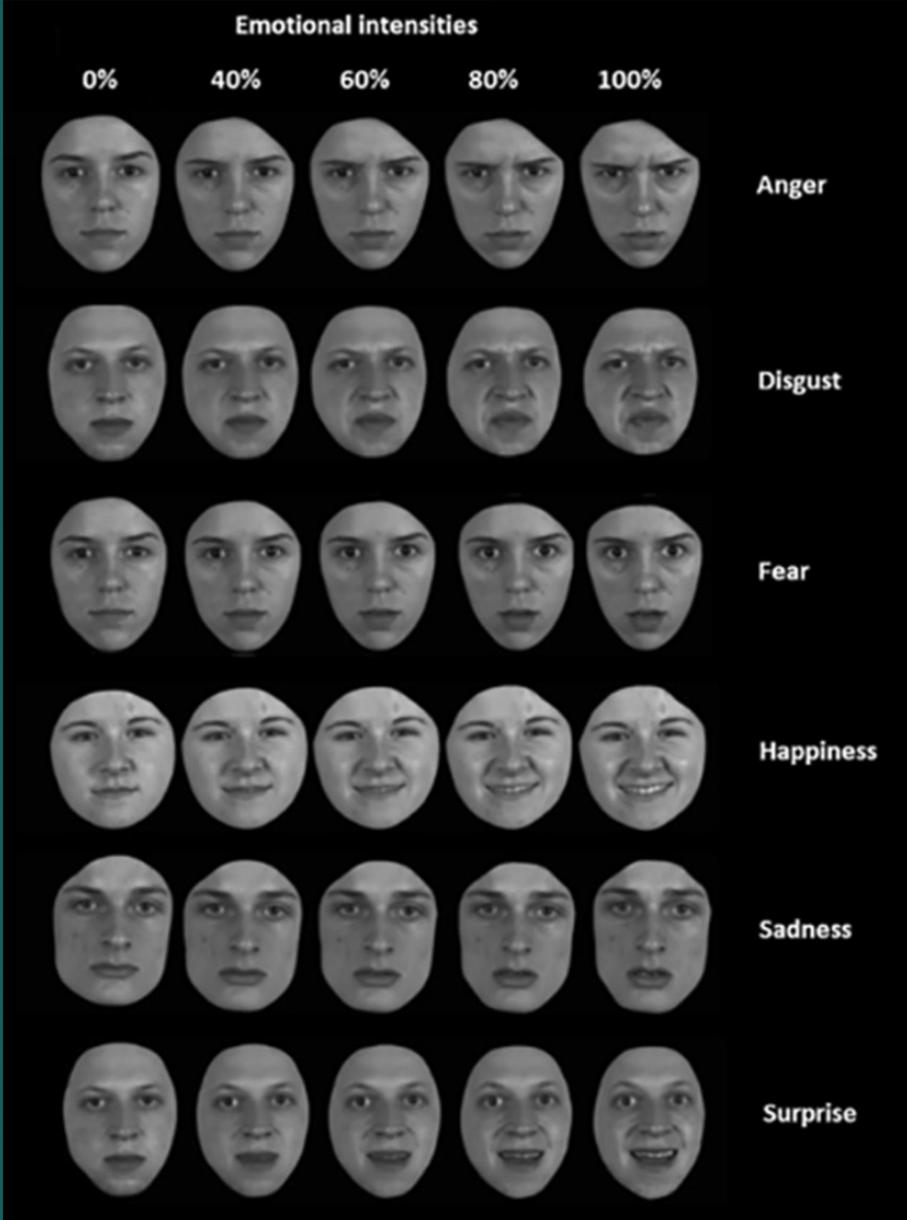
MUSEUMS ONLINE & MENTAL HEALTH

CALL FOR YOUNG PARTICIPANTS

MUSEUMS ONLINE & MENTAL HEALTH

CALL FOR YOUNG PARTICIPANTS

The image shows two vertical posters side-by-side. The left poster features a young man looking through a circular opening in a wall. The right poster features a young woman with curly hair seen from behind, looking at a museum display. Both posters have the text 'MUSEUMS ONLINE & MENTAL HEALTH' at the top and 'CALL FOR YOUNG PARTICIPANTS' at the bottom, with a white logo at the very bottom.



Findings from randomised control trial

1. Engaging with online cultural content does not affect positive mood, but reduces negative mood (= helpful as a coping strategy).
2. Effect is more marked the intervention, and in males and those from ethnically diverse backgrounds.

“It was noticeable that I felt more inspired to go and do things and more motivated for a few hours after engaging with the content.”

Outputs/Outcomes

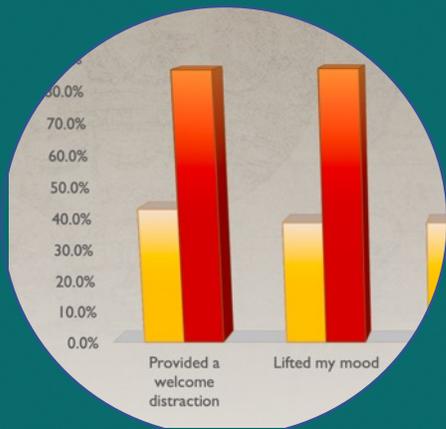
New web tool 'Ways of Being'. 11 Human Centred Narratives, 50,000 words.



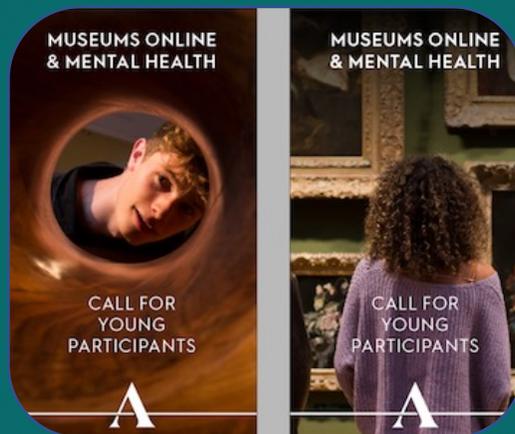
Co-producers want to be part of follow-on studies



4 peer-reviewed papers in open-access psychiatry journals



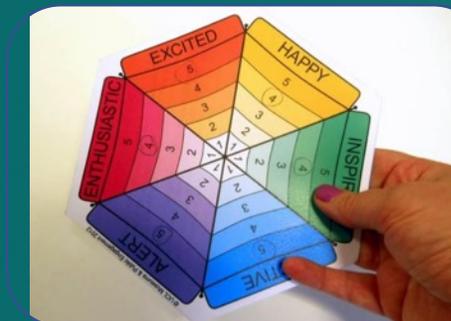
Rich data: 1200 surveys, 30 hrs interviews, focus groups and user testing



413 participants 16-24 in Randomized Control Trial with high retention, 90% would take part in research again.

'Wellbeing' adopted as pillar of GLAM Strategy 2021-23

Gardens, Libraries & Museums



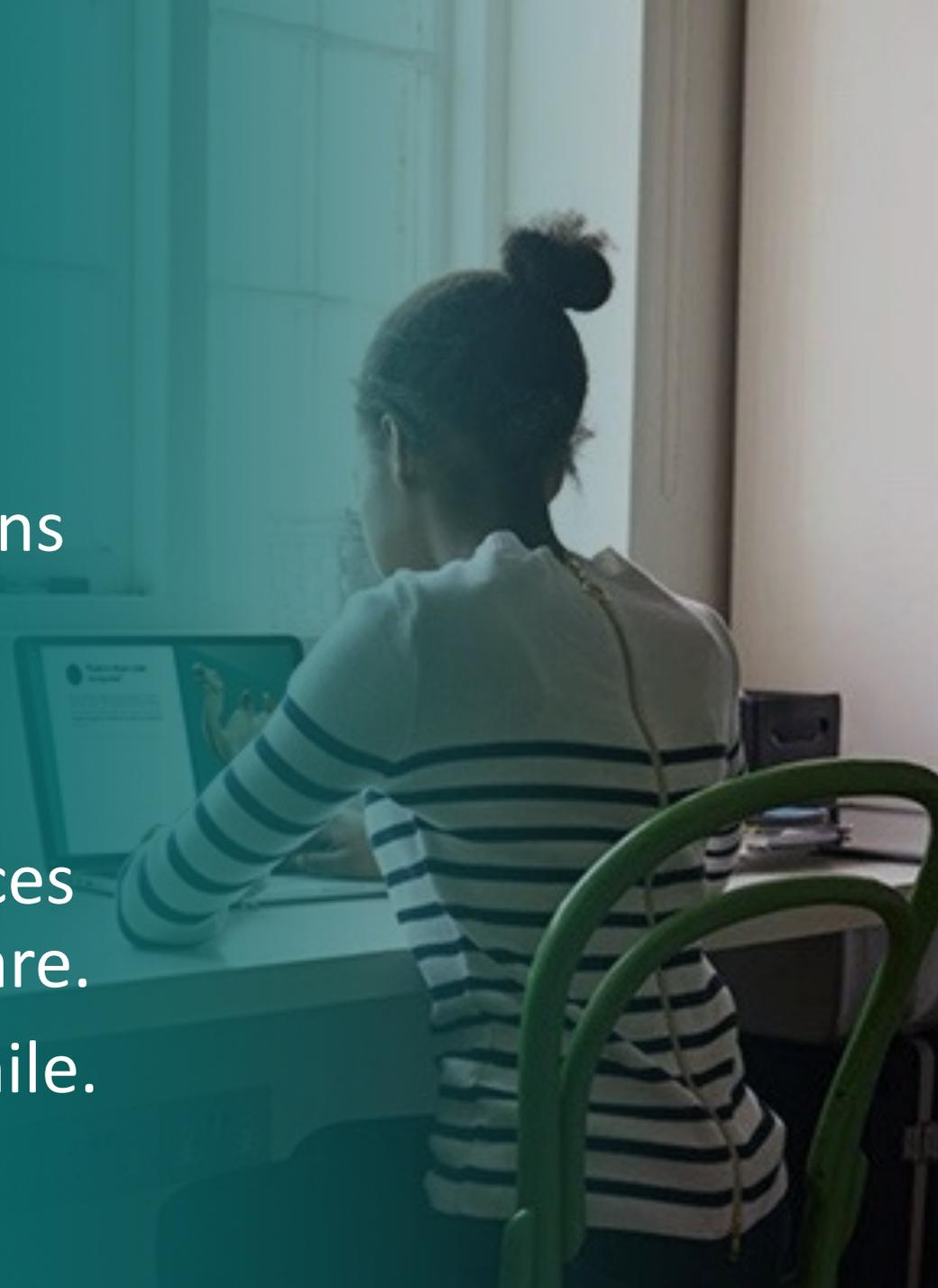
Rise of wellbeing measures to evaluate impact of participatory cultural activities (e.g. UCL's excellent Wellbeing Umbrella)



Sector awareness: Presented at OxGLAM, UCL, MuseWeb MW21, Kids in Museums, Centre for Creative Brain, University Museums Group, British Library

Takeaways

1. Working with other academic departments in your own university to bring a rigorous and interdisciplinary lens to 'user research'.
2. Regular users of culture (online and offline) get the most mental health benefits. Museums can engage audiences at a young age as part of lifelong self-care.
3. Co-production – intensive but worthwhile. Do research with people, not to them.



<https://glam.web.ox.ac.uk/oace-project>

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