

Volunteering at Falmouth Art Gallery contributed towards my graduation with a first class honours degree from Falmouth College of Arts.

An integral part of the History of Modern Art & Design programme I was studying at College was the requirement to complete two weeks work placement in a suitable environment. As I was juggling my studies with being a househusband and looking after my two young children, my options were limited – I would not be working in large London based museums like some of my fellow students. For pragmatic reasons I chose to look for somewhere local to work and Falmouth Art Gallery fitted the bill. Until that point in early 2002, the Gallery was somewhere I visited occasionally when the latest exhibition was of interest, however from the first time I contacted Brian and the rest of the staff I felt as if I had always been part of the team. It is no surprise to me that the Gallery is recognised for its work with families – working at the Gallery feels like working with family. I have continued to volunteer at the Gallery even though I completed my assignment long ago.

My initial interest was in gallery education and I helped Clare with several workshops working with school groups, adults with special needs and family groups. We enabled the visitors to work with clay, collage, printing and other media on themes inspired by the current exhibitions. As well as housekeeping tasks like setting up, supplying materials and clearing away I got the opportunity to work with a variety of people who enjoyed the chance to express their creativity. I found this work thoroughly rewarding and now bring my whole family along to workshops whenever possible, it's great to have protected time to be creative and inspires you to do more at home.

The second aspect of my work at the Gallery is being involved with hanging the exhibitions. I have had the privilege of handling works by Picasso, Matisse, Moore and Turner amongst many others. It is always a pleasant surprise near the end of a hang to turn around after working up close and see how the exhibition has come together. Brian took me along to an art object handling training session and always takes time to explain what to do; this advice was valuable when, as another part of the course we had to curate our own exhibition.

Volunteering has given me an insight into the world of galleries and museums that no classroom based course could; it combined practical skills with theory in a real context. It has also introduced me to some very friendly and talented people who have made me feel part of their team. I hope that I will be able to put my experiences at Falmouth Art Gallery and my degree to use professionally in a gallery or museum environment; however I intend to continue to carry on volunteering because of one major reason – its great fun!