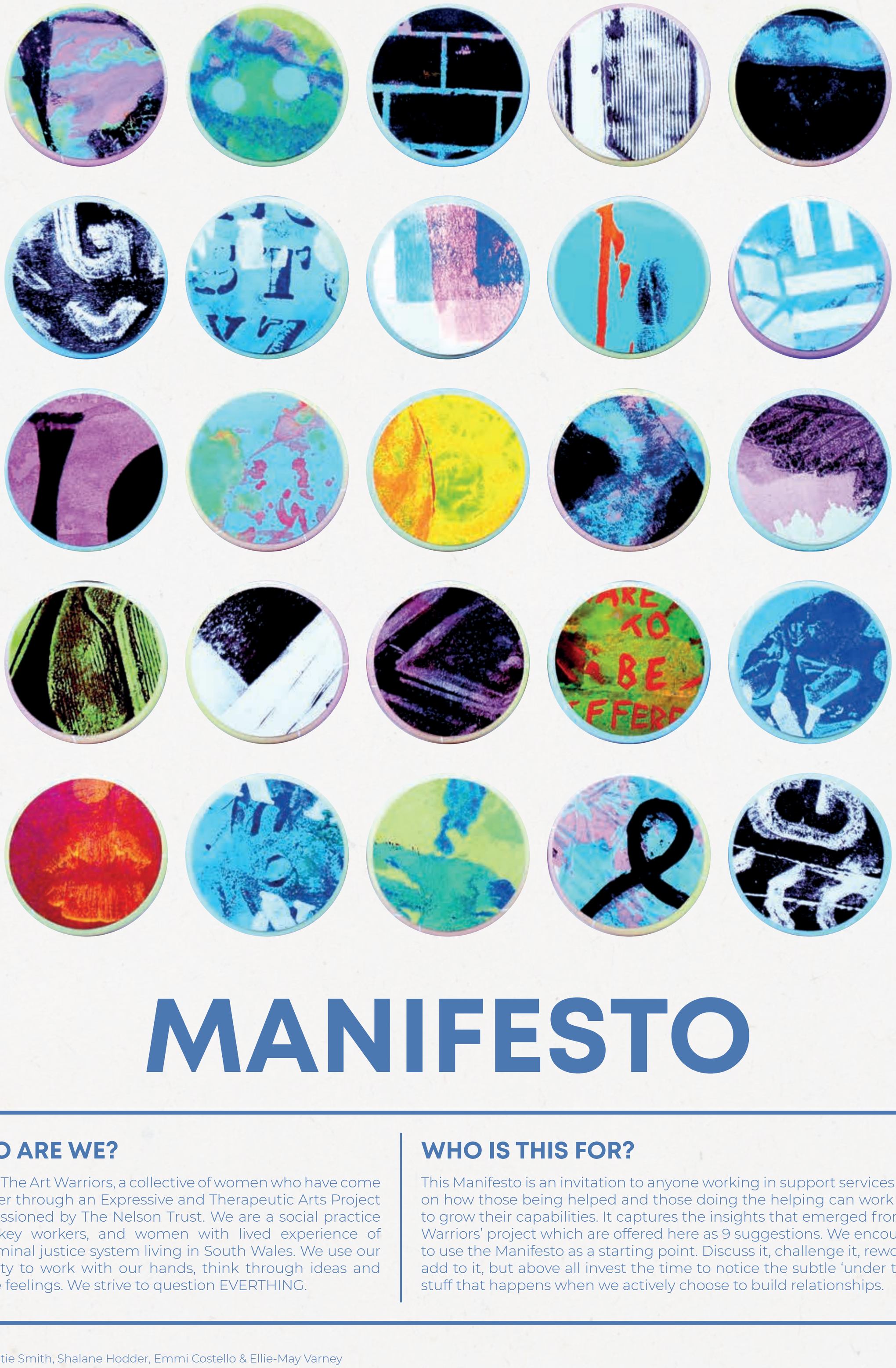
THE ART WARRIORS'



MANIFESTO

WHO ARE WE?

We are The Art Warriors, a collective of women who have come together through an Expressive and Therapeutic Arts Project commissioned by The Nelson Trust. We are a social practice artist, key workers, and women with lived experience of the criminal justice system living in South Wales. We use our creativity to work with our hands, think through ideas and explore feelings. We strive to question EVERTHING.

WHO IS THIS FOR?

This Manifesto is an invitation to anyone working in support services to reflect on how those being helped and those doing the helping can work together to grow their capabilities. It captures the insights that emerged from the Art Warriors' project which are offered here as 9 suggestions. We encourage you to use the Manifesto as a starting point. Discuss it, challenge it, rework it, and add to it, but above all invest the time to notice the subtle 'under the radar' stuff that happens when we actively choose to build relationships.

Authors: Katie Smith, Shalane Hodder, Emmi Costello & Ellie-May Varney

nine suggestions to cultivate creative spaces that promote self-determination

1 build respect

Start with a conversation. How will you work together? Share your expectations, hopes, and fears. What's OK and not OK in this space? What does everybody need in order to thrive? Create an agreement not a set of rules. Invest in it and keep it central to the work. Revisit, rewrite and edit it as stuff comes up.

2 nurture relationships

Handle relationships with care and sensitivity. Recognise the impact that past experiences of abandonment, instability, and insecure attachments have on our ways of being. Focus on consistency and reciprocity. Offer and receive help based on need rather than role. In a relational space we all care for each other.

3 listen deeply

Our life experiences shape us. Be curious about the kaleidoscopes that others see the world through; how might they be different to yours? How might they affect the way that we show up in a space? Listen with your eyes. Be gentle with each other. Respond to what people bring with kindness and compassion. A listening space is a safe and trusting space.

4 act with agency

You are the expert in your life, bring this sentiment into the space. Freestyle, adapt, deconstruct, and subvert activities to suit your needs. Trust yourself and your intuition. Use the law of two feet. If at any time you find yourself neither learning nor contributing, use your two feet to move yourself to a place that you'd rather be.

5 trust the process

Let go of any preconceptions of what the work should look like. This is the difference between having a really good compass and a detailed route map. Open yourself up to what you don't know yet. Let stuff emerge, don't force it or try to predict it. You will end up exactly where you need to be.

6 have courage

Learn the rules and break them. Make mistakes and celebrate them. Learn to fail and fail better. Move out of the shallow end. Get comfortable with being uncomfortable. Don't let fear or complacency hold you back; you will be surrounded by good people who will hold you up.

7 celebrate growth

Make time to reflect on what you are learning. Check-in and check-out; focus on your thoughts, feelings, and behaviours. Notice what shows up when you explore, connect, and interact with the world in a different way. You will be growing your capabilities; measure what's changing and recognise the work you're putting in.

8 recognise power

Change happens when there is a shift in the dynamics of power. Observe how power operates in your space. How can you create parity between the roles of helper and helped? If you call yourself a collective and everyone participates in an equitable way, can you dismantle the hierarchy of power you usually exist within?

9 value authenticity

Show up as yourself. Step into vulnerability. Be prepared to flex professional boundaries, dissolve defences, and deconstruct walls brick by brick. It is liberating to be your true self. Let go of external demands and the expectations placed on you to perform a certain role. Don't censor yourself, this space welcomes all of you.

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