

Care & Magic by Ruth Beale Transcript

0:00 Audio

[Music]

0:02 Ruth Beale

My name is Ruth Beale and I'm an artist, I have a socially engaged practice, which means that I work collectively and collaboratively. And to me there's a real like political potential and working that way. I am interested in the way that culture is organised and distributed and made and remade, and like what our role is that - in that is individually, but also how we engage with sort of what is delivered to us. This project *Care & Magic* was commissioned by UP Projects as part of the *Edgware Centenary Programme* and I've been working with Edgware Library and Barnet Council. My project *Care & Magic* responds to all this research that I did into the history of the building and the area. And really sort of the potential and possibilities of what a library can be. I wanted to inject some care and magic into the building. And to sort of bring back some of that joy and excitement that I saw in those archive pictures around that what has happened here in Edgware Library. One of the things in the photo albums was this really brilliant collection of photographs from the 1980s of community activity that had happened in the library. So there was mural painting in here in the children's library, there was a visit from someone from the Royal Ballet doing a workshop in here. They had musicians like a harpist playing, a visit from the fire engine, and the police horses on the lawn. And I just got this really great sense of all of this stuff happening. And that somebody - the amateur photographs, someone's decided to document them and share them. I'm interested in this those individual activities and what they bring to the library. The programme of *Care & Magic* has been a series of workshops, interventions, actions in the library to inject care and magic. One of the things I did was invite a professional harpist, Natalie Lurie, to come and play in the main library. She performed 20th century music. And we had this really interesting conversation about how the development of harp music in the 50s and 60s, somehow really kind of goes along with the development of materials in architecture. So you've got this modernist music and in this modernist space. We had a visit from a magician for an event called *Books are Magic* with Edgware Primary School, where he did a magic show in the children's library. One of the acts of care was to restore the planters in the front of the library. So there's a long planter that was empty. And some of the original planters from when the library was first built - this have interesting cone-shaped planters. And I did that with the help of the Youth Reparations Service and a young person who came and volunteered and then carried on volunteering with the

library. I did two workshops with the community. One was flower pressing workshop with a local community organisation called Stonegrove. And we use deadstock books from the library to press flowers. And another was a printing workshop using that fragment of wallpaper that had been found in the library. So finally, what I think is both an act of care and magic was creating a new rug for the children's library. It's got a pattern from the fragment of wallpaper that we found. So it's got that bit of history - history of the library - from the modernist history of the library. And it has these motifs hidden in it tucked into it that were drawn by children from Edgware Primary School during the one of the workshops, and I just think it works really well in the library because it sort of pops with all of the books and furniture and colourful things that they've got here.