

Our thanks go to all individuals and groups involved with this project:

**Age Concern Milton Keynes**

Group Organiser: Alison Skelton,  
Louise Fenton, Kathleen Forth, Mary Huckie,  
Moira Izzard, Sharon Kinge, Jean Morris, Ann  
Westwater.

**Milton Keynes Mind**

Group Organiser: Sue Varley,  
Marion Billingham, Val Boreland, Janine Hazell,  
Rose Marshall, Eile Parrott, Alison Power, Fiona  
Smith, Emma Ward, Emma Wilde.

**Healthy Lifestyle Project**

Group Organiser: Marie Saint-Jury.  
Participants from this group would like to remain  
anonymous but their input and work is  
recognised and appreciated.

**Milton Keynes Gallery**

Nyla Elahi, Rosie Jackson, Victoria Mayes,  
Andrew Paterson, Adam Darby.

**Artist**

Françoise Dupré, assisted by Emma Riddell.

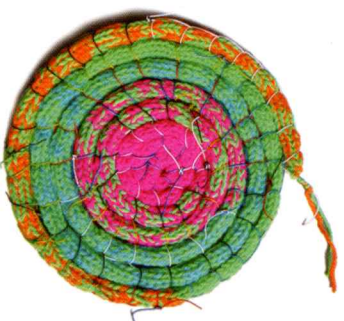
**Graphic Design**

Simon Meddings at Lionart.

**Photos**

Kate Broom, Françoise Dupré, Nyla Elahi, FXP,  
Emma Riddell.

Milton Keynes Gallery is the city's public art gallery, showing the best in contemporary international art.  
We regularly organise offsite projects in the community; visit [www.mk-g.org](http://www.mk-g.org) for more information.



Milton Keynes Gallery  
900 Midsummer Boulevard  
Central Milton Keynes MK9 3QA  
01908 676 900  
[info@mk-g.org](mailto:info@mk-g.org)  
[www.mk-g.org](http://www.mk-g.org)

A large print copy of this leaflet  
is available on request from the  
Gallery Information Desk or by  
calling 01908 676 900.

thecentre:mk

For better  
mental health

HEALTHY LIFESTYLES



AGE  
Milton Keynes  
Concove



Milton Keynes

MILTON KEYNES  
COMMUNITY  
FOUNDATION

Milton Keynes Gallery receives revenue funding from:



Milton Keynes Theatre & Gallery Co.  
Regent Cinema, 100 Regent St.



MILTON KEYNES  
COUNCIL

Milton Keynes Partnership



Supported by  
ARTS COUNCIL  
ENGLAND

# Milton Keynes Gallery

## exotic mk

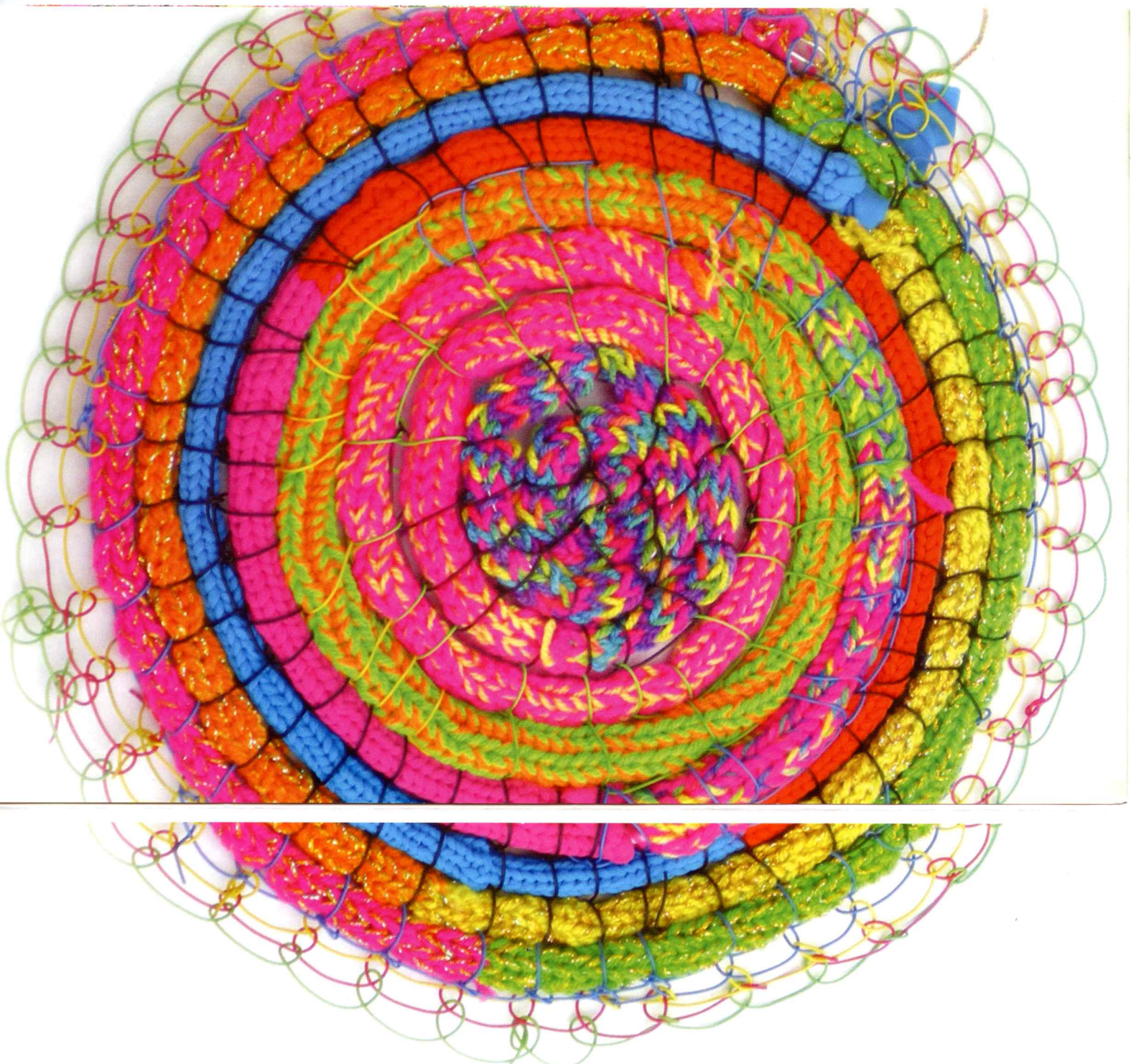
A collaborative project by artist Françoise Dupré,  
commissioned by Milton Keynes Gallery's Offsite Education Programme

Friday 10 July – Sunday 9 August 2009  
Shopping Centre Barrow by Middleton Hall  
thecentre:mk

Monday – Saturday 10am-5pm, Sunday 11am-4pm







For Milton Keynes Gallery's Offsite Education Programme, artist Françoise Dupré realised an art project that celebrates the ways in which people, in their daily life, transform their environment. Inspired by the highly colourful and personalised barrows scattered around the centre, Dupré presents this site-specific and community-based public art work that celebrates Milton Keynes' hidden exotic.

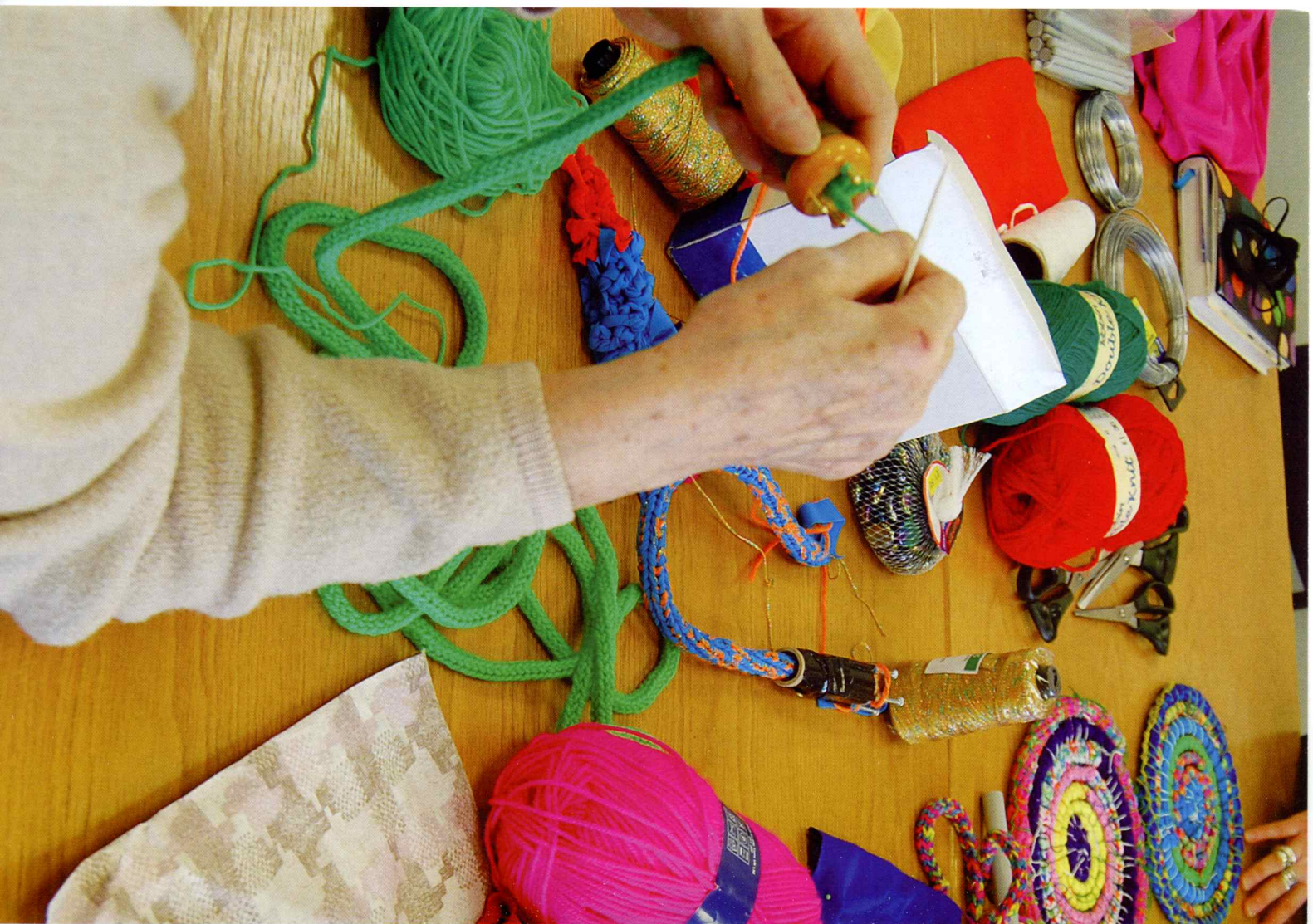
*exotic mk* was made in collaboration with three women's groups who each made a section of the final artwork – a barrow customized with knitting. Between January and June 2009, the artist visited Age Concern Milton Keynes (Peartree Centre, Peartree Bridge), MK Mind (York House, Stony Stratford) and The Healthy Lifestyle Project (Hedgerows Children Centre, Netherfield) for knitting and making sessions.

The French (spool) knitting technique was employed to make braids with a wide range of coloured lycra fabric and wool. Materials such as wire, metallic yarn and plastic bottle tops were used to create abstracted organic forms and colourful patterns. Participants' own designs and creative skills were instrumental to the development and realisation of the project.

“People's daily activities transform the environment. This is what makes a place special and Milton Keynes is no exception. Beyond the formal and functional aspects of the city's architecture, the indigenous, the organic and the colourful inhabit and prosper.”

**Françoise Dupré**





## When People Get Together

When people get together, they usually talk. Like birds on a wire, they chat – about everything and nothing – how the family is, what life is like. At bus stops and in bars, school gates and cinemas, people talk.

I visited Frangoise and two of the groups she has been working with for the *exotic mk* project. There was plenty of talk but it had a different quality to general chatter. When people get together, and they are doing something communally, they talk but with a different voice. Conversations flowed between chats and questions like: “How do you do that?”, “Can I have the scissors now?”, “I remember doing this with my mother!”, “That looks good.” and “What is this for?” Some of these questions are demanding, other statements are supportive, but what happens is the talk and the activity interweave – as it does when working, shopping, eating together, etc. As trust and consistency is built by the artist this talk/doing takes on a rhythm; a ‘to and fro’ between people where differences and similarities are exchanged in a constant free form. People get to know each other by a reciprocal switching between the task and conversation, conversation and task.

The work reflects this free form of dialogue in a musical cadence and form. Described to me as “jazz” by Frangoise, it’s easy to appreciate what is often lost in evaluating the outcomes of a community based art project – it’s a soft approach, building an art work that has at its heart the authenticity of experience for all those involved. It’s a music that is played without a score or formal composition.

The art of the work becomes ‘free form’, relying on the rhythm of interventions and approval that is shared and builds. Individual ‘pod’ forms collectively become heavily laden fruits just as individual notes become a shared ‘riff’ or refrain. Spirals spin into new pools of intricacies and movements as the parts become the whole. Everyone is involved in the ‘jam session’ which creates the new work and the random becomes relevant, just as it does in a good conversation. Experimental work finds its place in the sequence and improvisation becomes the individual’s contribution to the whole piece. *exotic mk* becomes a cool gig!

By Kate Bloom, Course Director, MA Art, Health and Well-being, Birmingham City University, BIAD.





*"We've had great fun making bright colourful work and had a good natter too. We are excited that we've been able to work with an artist and that our work is going to be in an exhibition."*

**Alison Skelton, Age Concern Milton Keynes**

#### **Age Concern Milton Keynes**

The Peartree Craft Club is one of many activities and services provided by Age Concern Milton Keynes for older people. We meet on Mondays between 1-3pm at The Peartree Centre in Peartree Bridge to share craft interests and ideas and learn something new. Contact Alison on 01908 557875.



*"Working with Françoise and the Gallery has been very inspiring and a totally positive experience for all the group. The opportunity to be involved in all stages of the project, from planning to the end display has been great."*

**Sue Varley, Milton Keynes Mind**

#### **Milton Keynes Mind**

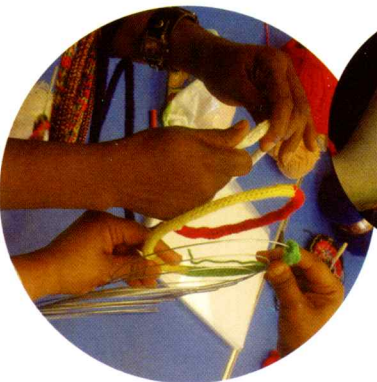
MK Mind is a registered charity supporting clients who are recovering from mental health issues. We provide support and information to help clients attain their personal goals. The project offers courses that include art, relaxation, cycling, basic skills and craft. To arrange an informal meeting to discuss your needs just ring for an appointment. Contact Sue on 01908 263660 or e-mail [info@mkmind.org.uk](mailto:info@mkmind.org.uk).

*"Working together as a group I think has made us become more close and share thoughts with each other."*

**Participant, Healthy Lifestyle Project**

#### **Healthy Lifestyle Project**

The Healthy Lifestyle Project aims to encourage women and their children under five to get fit and healthy (body and mind). The project targets Black and Minority Ethnic women but is open to every woman. We're a friendly group that meet every Thursday (term-time) between 9.15-11.15am at Hedgerows Children's Centre, next to Langland School in Netherfield. Contact Marie on 07766 215898 or 01908 239000.



## **Françoise Dupré Biography**

Born in France, based in London, Françoise Dupré studied Sculpture at Camberwell College of Art and History and Theory of Modern Art at Chelsea School of Art and Design. She is a senior lecturer in Fine Art at the Birmingham City University, School of Art.

Françoise Dupré exhibits widely in the UK and abroad. Her most recent exhibitions include: *Radical Lace and Subversive Knitting* (Museum of Arts and Design, New York and touring, 2007-2008), *joie de faire (the making of stuff)* (Memier Gallery, London, 2006), *Knit 2 Together Concepts in Knitting* (Crafts Council gallery, London and touring 2005-2006), *partenres* (Charles Darwin University Gallery, Darwin, NT, Australia 2004), *les merveilles de Françoise Dupré* (Can art galerie, Toulouse, 2002).

Her art practice is located in a wide range of socio-cultural contexts, including public and non-art spaces and she is renowned for leading community-based and residency projects. Concerned with the nature of the creative process and the condition and location of art production, Dupré creates works that celebrate the vernacular and creative skills that are invisible, marginal or being lost through migration, socio-economic changes and globalization.

Recent and forthcoming collaborative-participatory projects include: *here and there: Mostar* (French Cultural Centre, Mostar, Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2009); *St Alfege Millennium Project*, (Greenwich Parish Church of St Alfege, London, 2009-2012); *Project B: avlija* and *Project B: sebli* (with artist Myfanwy Johns, architect Sabina Fazlic and the Bosnian Cultural Centre-Midlands, Birmingham Architecture Week and New Generation Arts, Birmingham, England, 2007-2008). Her French (spool) knitting projects include: *joie de faire (the making of stuff)* (John Radcliffe Hospital, Oxford, Alexandra Reichardt Memorial Award, 2006), *Fugium* (Crafts Council England, London, 2005), *de fil en aiguille... snath nase* (Irish Museum of Modern Art, Dublin and Kilkenny, 2003-2004).

For more information about the artist visit:  
[www.axisweb.org](http://www.axisweb.org)