Recovery

EXHIBITIONS AT THE
INSTITUTE OF MENTAL
HEALTH

WINTER 2013
I am delighted to introduce *Recovery*, the sixth exhibition in the Institute of Mental Health. The theme of the exhibition explores ideas around recovery from mental health problems. The concept of recovery is now central to policy and practice in the field of mental health care but what does it mean to those experiencing mental illness? The exhibition responds to questions such as; what helps and what hinders recovery? Is it a useful concept?

The exhibitions in the Institute have grown in success and recognition with an increasing number of artists submitting their work for display. We now have increased wall space to show artwork in the Institute headquarters to respond to this demand. We are particularly keen to facilitate the exhibition of artwork by mental health service users who may not have shown their work previously or for whom it may otherwise be difficult to find exhibition space.

We welcome your feedback and ideas for future exhibitions.

*Dr Victoria Tischler*
Institute of Mental Health Arts Coordinator
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I suffer from Seasonal Affective Disorder (S.A.D.) or winter-time depression. I first really noticed this when I was a student in my late teens. For some time, I did not really know what to do about it. More recently, research into the condition has highlighted the importance of exposure to daylight during the winter months. I now know that I must spend as much time as possible out of doors during the winter daylight hours. I try not to worry about feeling a bit miserable and do my best to keep S.A.D. away. However, while this is a recovery of sorts, it is impossible to achieve a total recovery. S.A.D. stalks me like a tiger in winter time. If I do the right things and think the right thoughts, it can be quite a tame tiger. This is the idea behind the painting ‘The Constant Companion’. Even so, the tiger can turn fierce when you least expect it. I am wary of the tiger, and the tiger is wary of me too. This idea lurks within the painting ‘The Stalker’. And of course depression does creep up on me sometimes when I least expect it.
Amanda Christine Cox

Having an existential crisis brought all my depression and anxiety to the surface in 2003. I dealt with it by leaving the broadcast industry and seeking the authenticity of creativity, returned to university, and worked my way up to a Masters in Fine Art. During my studies I was diagnosed with ADHD and Autistic Spectrum disorder. My work now focuses on the fragility of the human condition and the wide range of neurodiversity of humankind.

Dermotillamania
Mixed Media
£450
Born 1978 in Teplice, Czech Republic. Lives and works in Hampshire, United Kingdom. Professional multidisciplinary artist, art facilitator and prenatal factors researcher Helena Eflerová promotes a fusion of underwater live performance and video installation. Demonstrating extensive skills in physical performance and embodiment.

Since 2002, she has created a large body of works based on trauma and recovery: ‘T-Land’, ‘Happy Days’ and ‘Trimester’ that have been exhibited at widely in the UK and abroad.

Since 2008, Helena has worked in collaboration with professional art practitioner Kye Wilson as artist collective WE (Wilson-Eflerová). Graduated in 2009 with a Masters Degree in Fine Art from the Winchester School of Art. Key achievements include curating the exhibition ‘Origin&Belonging’, parallel to The National Eisteddfod of Wales; receiving the ‘Best Graduate Prize’ at the Glyn Vivian Gallery, Swansea; commissions from Rules&Regs, Southampton and Para Haus Contemporary Art Exhibition, parallel to the São Paulo Art Biennial.
Liz Atkin

I am a visual artist based in London, and with a background in dance and theatre, physicality underpins my creative practice. My work centres on skin as a primary point for corporeal artwork.

Dermatillomania or Compulsive Skin Picking dominated my life for more than 26 years, the damage, shame and guilt of this compulsive illness was so significant that I had no choice but to confront it directly, but through my background in dance and movement, I found a way to face the illness head on and now live in recovery.

I harness compulsive movement patterns in my body creatively as I capture unique performed moments, micro textures and dances through photography, video and performance. My artistic practice works with texture in intimate dialogue with the skin, I consider my skin as a site, a soft canvas, a terrain for imaginative transformation.
Anthony Gariff

As an artist with a mental health condition, I know that painting is somehow ‘good for me.’ The process is not always clear but I feel it gives me a voice, a platform for self-expression.

Creating art arouses in me an energy and enthusiasm like nothing else. The fulfilment it generates has proved an important element in my recovery.
Clare Keast

I am a mixed media artist and currently work with screen printing, film & sound and painting. My work is informed by the boredom of my everyday life, living in a semi-isolated, rural hamlet. It represents what happens when boredom becomes more than just a fleeting moment and where it can lead.

The process of painting decorative motifs over and over again was, I thought, about evidencing a little of the endless passage of time. That of the pointlessness of the everyday, mediocrity, domestic tedium, the need to waste time, isolation and a fear of loneliness. However, what has happened is that all this boredom has lead to anger and depression and the painting has been a form of recovery through the process of carrying it out.

No Title
Acrylic on Canvas
£250
Alban Low

Artist and filmmaker Alban Low spent two days sketching on the Clinical Simulations and Mental Health Skills’ Development Programme earlier this year.

A unique experience for any outsider, Alban was granted access to this high octane environment where students from the School of Nursing at the Faculty of Health, Social Care and Education, apply their mental health skills in a simulated ‘live’ ward situation. He is no stranger to live performances but nothing could prepare him for this emotionally charged assignment. He followed this residency by making the film ‘Eternal Art of the Simulated Mind’ which was shortlisted for an award at The 4th Walthamstow International Film Festival and screened at the BFI SouthBank London in July 2013.
Alex Cooke

I have drawn this image to be with Orangutans which take experiment of Amilsulpride, which I take every day. I am a graduate of Fine Art at Nottingham Trent and regularly practice painting and drawing and enjoy going to art galleries. Art has helped me rehabilitate myself back to learning and creating.
Barrington Emurd Augustus

Barrington regularly attends an arts group each week. He finds the arts group an ideal outlet for conversation, his creativity and relaxation. The arts group also offers a place where he explores his inner self. Barrington likes working with acrylics but would like to develop further skills to use oil colours. He has exhibited his work before and is keen to look for future opportunities to exhibit his work.

Coming Out – Road to Recovery
Acrylic on Board
£150
Imogen Perkin

Imogen Perkin is a member of the United Society of Artists. Her most recent exhibitions include Cities-All Dimensions at the Tokarska Galley, The New English At Club Autumn Exhibition at the Mall Galleries, Re-open at the Bankside Gallery and London Lives sponsored by the Guardian newspaper and Network Rail at the Bankside Gallery.

Imogen paints landscapes of a man-made world. These images bring together the abstractions of the urban with the figurative romance of the people existing in the city. There is the feeling that in painting the humdrum or down at heel, transcends into something more significant. Some of the people in these paintings are waiting to move on; they share the act of contemplation with the viewer.
Jenny Meehan

I work with painting, drawing, digital photography and writing. I see my work quite simply as a passage in my journey through life. My degree in Literature encouraged an interest in the poetic, which I realize in both visual expression and the use of words. I see my practice as working with space and light (either real or perceived), and evoking a presence within it. It's a spiritual and emotion-led practice; “an articulation of fragmentary experience”. My work is primarily autobiographically rooted and expressionistic.

I'm based in South West London/Surrey and I exhibit regularly around the UK. My interest in recovery stems from my own life journey which currently involves twice weekly psychotherapy at the Guild of Psychotherapists in London. As I negotiate my way through traumatic past experiences and become more connected with myself and others, I find great inspiration and encouragement in the visual arts.
Lauren King

I work as an Art and Design and Fine Art A-Level Lecturer in Chesterfield and have previous experience as a Scenic Artist and freelance painter in London, Bristol and Sheffield theatres and film studios.

‘re•cov•ery’
Mixed Media
£280
Laurie Woodruff

Laurie Woodruff is a freelance illustrator, producing predominantly linear illustrations, which are drawn from life in pencil, before adding collage, watercolour or pattern for a handcrafted aesthetic.

She especially enjoys the challenge of illustrating non-visual subject matter, and aspires to create work that can ultimately help people by raising awareness or simply communicating a difficult subject more easily.

Recent commissions include illustration and design of stationery for Parragon Books and a wall mural of buildings for Cinco Digital.

Simultaneously, Laurie has worked in roles that complement health and social care supporting people to be socially included and independent despite impairing or isolating circumstances. This experience has led to her current study toward an MSC in occupational therapy, which will lead into an equally rewarding, parallel career, as a therapist who enables people to do the things they want or need to do, whilst supporting herself to keep illustrating.

Toolbox
Handfinsihed Print
£60
I have been under mental health services for many years. On top of my mental health, I have a hearing impairment and have also had to cope with my visual impairment. My art means so much to me and helps me to try and cope with my mental health. I only use one eye, which is hard work because I have lost the dark tones in colour and have to ask for help to make sure I am using the shade/colour I want to in my artwork. I will not give up what I do because it is what I love and I am learning and adapting to new ways and techniques. My art work expresses my recovery journey and the difficulties I’ve had to face, and where I am now.
Marie-Therese Ross

Marie-Therese Ross’s work has been described as “magical realism.” She responds to stories, by letting them develop, absorbing them, injecting her humour and turning them around, creating her own more personal narrative, and finally reinventing a new dimension to them.

Ross studied painting at Loughborough College of Art and Design 1981-1985 and was awarded a First Class honours degree. In 1986 she was awarded a residency in Karlsruhe, Germany at the Kunst Akademie with sculptor Michael Sandle RA. From 1988-91 she attended the University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia USA for an MA in sculpture. After graduating she moved to New York for 5 years, and was awarded a residency at the Henry Street Settlement on the Lower East Side. She returned to London in 1996 where she still lives and works. Ross teaches in art museums including the National Gallery and the Wallace Collection and has a studio in North London.

I Woke to Find the Wolves Gone, All Except One
Acrylic
£850
I have always been interested in art from when I was an infant. In 1977 I graduated with a BA (Hons) in Fine Art. The painting that I have submitted was completed during recent art therapy sessions using acrylic on canvas. Not only do the art therapy sessions provide an outlet for my creative skills but also they are helping me towards recovery. With no preconceived idea of what I wish to paint, I just begin by making marks, then let these marks suggest ideas which I build on and develop into abstract images.
Phil Robinson

I am a freelance artist and I work mainly with acrylics on wood and also pencil (drawings) on paper. I live with depression and anxiety (and I am a service user) and this has always driven my art practice (and studies) as both a personal therapeutic method and my own practice. Often without the intention my ‘expressions’ (especially with pencil drawings) have always felt like a subconscious way of depicting my ‘struggle’ with my own mind and body. I often work ‘automatically’ allowing forms and figures to present themselves to me as if to give my depression a ‘form’ as a method of recovery/therapy and self exploration.
I have had mental health problems since the age of 21. Over the last year I have used to photography to help my recovery.
Lucy Sparrow

Lucy Sparrow is more known for her light-hearted cynical tapestries and soft sculptures which humorously comment on the darker taboos of society. For this special exhibition, she has taken on one of the biggest killer of any psychological illness as her subject matter. Having suffered with anorexia for 13 years, she finally decided to tackle the subject that has plagued her for over half her life. ‘The art of falling apart’ is a series of ethereal and often mystical tapestries that convey the feeling of isolation and complete separation that the disease puts upon the sufferer, whilst freezing out all those who they love around them. Inside the anger, rage and fight inside still burns away, hotter and more ferocious than ever.
Sheridan Kavanagh

I have been a service user for over 3 years. I was admitted to hospital when I was diagnosed with emotionally unstable personality disorder. This means that my moods can fluctuate within minutes. With the help of staff, OT’s, my CPN and my Mum I am well on my way to recovery, so thank you. I would also like to thank the arts team who have brought me out of my shell.
Sean Williams

I am an artist based in Sheffield. My practice is primarily painting, in which I present imagery that could be interpreted as metaphorical – subtle rather than overt – my choice of imagery is underpinned by own experiences of mental illness and periods of depression. Earlier paintings are of isolated areas, echoing both my own isolation and the more universal, contemporary feeling/phenomena. I intend to present something that has layers of meaning, and I do this by making relatively photo-realistic paintings. For the viewer there is an initial engagement – one of recognition of something familiar, nothing too unusual, although the colouring is more vivid than expected. My task is to persuade the viewer to contemplate the presented image at length, and it have resonance for them. In 2013 I was shortlisted for the Neo Art Prize, and the Woolgather Art Prize in 2012.

No-one is quite Sure
Acrylic on board
£600
Paul Walker

I enjoy taking part in a regular, weekly art group. I particularly enjoy photography, visual arts and sculpture. I have exhibited work in the past and I am keen to look at developing future opportunities.
Wendy Allen is a self-taught artist and finds that the creation of artwork is both therapeutic and enjoyable. She has painted for a long time and has exhibited before, she now enjoys experimenting with a range of different arts media.
A continuing theme in my practice is the use of textile as sculpture and installation, challenging the traditional uses of the material.

Currently my practice focuses on the personal theme of my depression which comes and goes with varying degrees of intensity. My work allows me to explore my condition whilst also helping me keep episodes at bay; in particular my pieces focus on my symptoms and the mechanisms I employ to cope with them, such as the continuous engagement in art practice which keeps my mind focused. Despite my intention to convey the symptoms and coping mechanisms associated with my condition, I deliberately make the majority of my pieces from pale coloured textile materials as juxtaposition to the theme they explore, whilst my condition may affect my emotions negatively, it is not my intention to negatively impact upon the viewer’s emotions.

Rachel Olin

Untitled (Wall hanging)
Textile
£350
Willow Merryweather

My artworks are my responses to the human condition. Specifically how we communicate with our bodies and faces also using our hands and arms gesturally. I often start by using photographic images of people, whole, sections and shadows who are displaying shapes with their bodies, creating body language. These gestures resonate emotionally and visually something within me which I then move on to construct a composite where I can express a moment in time. This moment is where I hope to reflect humanity back to itself and thus create a conversation between me, my art and the viewer.

Community
Digital print
£175
My art communicates thoughts and feelings which words fail me at times. I enjoy all artforms and media and will use anything to express the subject. I have had commissions and had a piece of artwork published in the ‘Yellow Book’. This goes national in October this year for Mental Health Awareness Day.

I have for some years suffered with depression and I am proud to say that this year I have been discharged from services and I am now at college training to be a counsellor. I want to give back the help and empathy that I was given.
Claire Mcaleavey

I am 49, I’ve suffered from Bi-polar for 19 years and last year was diagnosed with P.T.S.D due to a very violent relationship. However as a Christian I’ve witnessed God’s transforming and restorative power to heal and bind, even through dense and distressing broken relationships. His awesome light still shines. Spirituality is an essential part of my recovery.
Leila Bibizadeh

Leila Bibizadeh is of dual heritage English, and Iranian. She is a versatile artist from London who graduated from The University of East London with a degree in Fine Art in 2008. These paintings are from a series of works called The Art of Our Emotions which explore raw human emotion as Leila grabs hold of feelings we all experience at some point in our lives and paints them on canvas.

Leila expresses these emotions through distorted figures that never have facial features so that the viewers can visualise themselves. She uses mirror pieces to symbolise reflection and the ability to look back at life, but also to entice the viewer because when he/she looks into the mirror they see an image of themselves on the canvas, suddenly they have become part of the painting and can instantly relate to it. Thus the viewer is encouraged to reflect upon their life and can think about being in that situation. Past exhibitions include the Saatchi Gallery, Mall Galleries, Bankside Gallery, O2 Arena and Oxford Streets John Lewis. She is also the founder of a new networking site for Artists called www.exhibithere.com, which she runs alongside creating her own artwork.
Sammie Lauren Roberts

TIME TO TALK: This growing project consists of up to a thousand collages, all adding up to raise awareness of the giant stigma surrounding mental health issues. Mental health should not be embarrassing, 1 in 4 people in the UK suffer from a mental health condition, and although all symptoms and diagnoses differ for everybody, one goal remains the same: recovery. This has different definitions for different people, some want to recover completely, symptom free. Others just wish for a stable life. Most, however, are ashamed to confide in people. The main problem with this is that they may not be fully aware of what is happening to them. Raising awareness and talking about such issues encourages people to step forward with their problems; talking to people and finding out they are not alone.
Susan Hammami

I have worked with the theme “environment” for over five years now. I find that wherever I go I continue to look for interesting opportunities within that environment to feed back into my projects. As I am mostly studio based my compositions tend to be quite angular and can sometimes become quite dark because of the absence of natural light. On holiday I like to take photographs of sea, sky and interesting open spaces. I incorporate these into my compositions so that they can become a view through a window, for example. I love to work in this way as these juxtapositions can transform an image.
Carrie Ravenscroft

I am an artist who primarily deals with topics on psychological emancipation, including escapism from the everyday mundane or one’s own mind, through recreation and altered states of consciousness. Although a lot of my work is created through subjective experience, I always portray and converse easily relatable topics in an effort challenge the viewer’s emotions.

What’s on your Mind
Oil and a mixture of fabrics
£800
Deb Rose & Sue Mulroy

A collaboration between Sue Mulroy, an art therapy trainee, and Deb Rose who has experienced the reality of madness.

... meeting on the blank canvas is a journey inside ourselves, an external reality of connecting and giving form, exploring what’s possible...

Together we made a series of art works using pastels, inks, paint and clay between January and October 2013.

... echoes and resonance, a symphony of strokes, a sharing of minds and experience, nurturing the seeds of inner confidence...

We found the experience transformational, nurturing and healing. These are the first and latest pieces of work in the series.

... light shining through the shadows, piecing together broken spirits, a new perspective revealed ...

Sue and Deb came together from different directions and found a commonality and shared meeting point through their conversations and collaborative art work.

Lyrical Conversation #1
Paper and Pastel
£180
**Bridget Dowling**

I have been coming to City Arts since 2006, firstly to the Thursday Art Group and then spent some time taking part in Arts on Prescription. I now spend all day at the Thursday group and enjoy the expressive side to my art and am improving on my technical abilities.
Izzie

“Light a candle don’t curse the darkness” is a saying I found and I try to think positive thoughts like that. I have used items in this image from my childhood, like my grandmother’s candle stick and a patchwork from when I was a baby because I feel that having good experiences as a child has helped me in recovery. I consider myself very lucky to have had that and doing art again after so many years of not being able to is a great feeling.
I like to take photographs of all subject matter, but have a specific interest in the macro-photography of insects. I use several different computer programs to manipulate an image, stage by stage, saving each image as I proceed, before ending up with a finished piece of work. I sometimes use images that I have saved on this rate and then re-use them and re-manipulate them to produce another, totally different piece of work.

I have recently started to sketch images, both on computer and also on a pad, then transfer, via scanning them onto the computer. This work helps me focus on something positive, keeping negative thoughts at bay.
Andy Wild

Andy Wild has a brain tumour and epilepsy. He lives in Cumbria with his wife and young daughter. He is a mostly self-taught artist and has held both solo and group exhibitions at Looking Well Studios, Pallant House Gallery, Tullie House, the National Hospital for Neurology and Neurosurgery and the Waterside Arts Centre. Andy will be holding a new solo exhibition at the Brewery Arts Centre in Kendal in February 2014. His poetry has been published in ‘Words for Wellbeing’, and he has written and directed a short film.

Peace in the MRI Scanner
Acrylic, pencil and pen
£200
Lester Shipley

Creativity is important to me whether it’s drawing or painting, writing or making music. The focus of my work at the moment is probably more towards music and writing at present but I do find arts rewarding. My work in painting is usually abstract and geometrical.

Surreal Tea Party
Pencil on paper
£40
Marie Helene Drouin

Marie Helene Drouin is a self-taught photographer that has been exhibiting her work in Derby, Nottingham and Loughborough since 2008.

As member of Blank Atlas Collective, she took part in the human creates/human destroys exhibition at the New Art Exchange in August 2013.

She has also won a second price at the TAO open in January 2010, and won the photography competition at The City Gallery in May 2012.

She had her first solo exhibition in Nottingham in April 2012 at the Crocus Cafe.

She has documented various events since 2009, Cabaret Sorbet, Mental Health Awareness Week, Breaking Borders and various bands.

She is also interested in nature macro work, abstract and sometimes humorous metaphorical or surrealist work.

She excels in night photography and has a special interest in reflections.
**Tim Essex**

I am a self taught artist starting with vigour following a serious episode of mental illness, starting in 2007.

Initially working in acrylics, painting certainly became my salvation, as a way of expressing my thoughts and feelings, which often are hard to explain.

Previously working as a Claims Manager for a large Insurer for 20 years, it was clear it was time for change, and I have to thank Fran Godwin of the Community Arts Workshop, who’s Wednesday group at the Old Gallery helped so much in helping me to accept my illness.

I now continue to work from my studio in Rugby and have exhibited over Warwickshire and the West Midlands, as well as The Pallant House Gallery in Chichester as part of the ‘Outside In’ Exhibition. I also work with Coventry University and Coventry and Warwickshire PCT lecturing students and NHS students and staff.

Like it or not 1 in 4 of us will suffer some type of mental illness during their lifetime. I hope my work reflects the pain and thoughts of this invisible illness that so many suffer, and that through general ignorance are stigmatised by the public.

I hope that my work helps you to understand, and if you are unfortunate enough to become ill my advice is seek help early, talk and most importantly too look after yourself.

My life still revolves around medication, G.P’s and mental health services, and more recently caring for my partner during her journey through cancer, but life is good and relatively stable.
Matt Gee

I am an artist based in London, graduating with a Masters from Wimbledon last year and with past exhibitions in London, Berlin, Stockholm, Amsterdam, Prague, Karlsruhe and Norwich.

I’m interested in the source of materials, while there are the modern materialistic demands of human sensory decadent desire, a society that expects, and an ‘I want it now’ culture which may impact on human’s mental health.

My main interests lie in the visual portrayal of psychological tools such as the Rorschach test, while questioning whether the materials are manmade or natural occurring. I then take this dichotomy of the synthetic versus the authentic and apply it to my art practice through methods of imitation, replication, and manipulation.

Rorschach (Copper Schwartz Bismuth) Test
Mixed Media
£750
Victoria Cank

Through my work I like to question relationships in society. Suffering from a personality disorder I find relationships both intense and unbearable at times. Now in recovery I am learning to express my thoughts and feelings though my art as a way to communicate with people. I find that though questioning their value in society I am able to better understand myself and the world around me. I question the pressure that society has put on us all that we have to ‘conform’ and ‘be’ a certain way to be acceptable. I often wonder if at the core we are really ‘happy’ with what is deemed an ‘ideal life style’ - if we have it, or if we could fully engage with ourselves, our deepest hopes and dreams, we would be different and potentially live a more fulfilling and satisfying life that also enriches the lives of those around us.
Ruth Collett

I started cutting my own hair as a way of exploring my gender and sexual identity.

I discovered Frida Kahlo’s “El Pelo Cortado” [The Haircut] whilst I was studying visual arts in 2005. She is wearing a man’s suit and has cropped her hair which lies in hanks around her on the floor – her gaze is defiant. I was intrigued at how powerful and challenging I found the rejection of her femininity in this painting, and at how directly her gaze engaged the viewer.

This started a developing body of work on women’s self-portraits and the lesbian gaze. As part of this work I videoed my haircutting and the painting submitted for the recovery exhibition is painted from a video still. I didn’t undertake this process as therapy but I can now recognize the work as part of my own recovery toolkit.
City Arts Nottingham develops arts opportunities that bring people together, stimulate change and create stronger, healthier communities. We believe participation in the arts can enrich and transform people’s lives and have been pioneering this approach for over 30 years.

A registered charity, we work creatively and collaboratively with communities and particularly target resources towards vulnerable groups. Our projects include music, performance, visual and digital arts and are all facilitated by artists particularly skilled in working creatively with people.

“We are delighted to be working in partnership once again with the Institute of Mental Health to present artwork responding to the theme of Recovery. Our call for submissions to this sixth exhibition has attracted entries from across the UK including Nottingham and the East Midlands, Birmingham, London and the South of England, Hertfordshire, Gloucestershire, Cumbria, Norfolk and Cardiff. The work selected is very varied, with some fascinating interpretations of the theme. We hope you will enjoy this stimulating and thought-provoking exhibition.”

Kate Duncan
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Some of the artists featured in this catalogue have other works for sale. The whole exhibition will be featured on our website:

www.city-arts.org.uk

If you are interested in buying their work, please contact Kate Duncan at City Arts:

kate@city-arts.org.uk

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