



IMAGE: I Was Happy by Nadege Druzkowski

## 100 ARTISTS AND FOUR GALLERIES TEAM UP TO GET PEOPLE TALKING ABOUT MENTAL HEALTH

An ambitious collaboration between mental health organisations has resulted in a unique and powerful exhibition across four Edinburgh galleries this October.

Out of Sight/Out of Mind will feature exciting and diverse multi media work by around 100 artists - both professional and amateur – with experience of mental health issues. The exhibition aims to challenge perceptions and to get people thinking and talking about mental health. It is part of the Scottish Mental Health Arts and Film Festival, an annual programme led by the Mental Health Foundation, which had over 300 events across the country last year.

Now in its third year, Out of Sight/Out of Mind has grown significantly in size and breadth of work since it was launched, to great acclaim, in 2013. This year it is spread over the library and basement galleries in Summerhall, one of the city's largest and most significant independent gallery spaces, plus Leith Library, Edinburgh University Chaplaincy Centre and Space Artworks.

The project grew out of the 'Oor Mad History' project at CAPS Advocacy, which plans and runs events during the Scottish Mental Health Arts and Film Festival. The project teamed up with other organisations involved in the festival, including MECOPP Gypsy/Traveller Carers Project and the Alma Project, to develop a truly collaborative approach to organising and curating.

Kirsten Maclean, development worker with the project said, "Oor Mad History is a community history and arts project. We first had a small visual arts exhibition in 2010 and since then have become more and more involved with the festival. It's become clear that the arts are a powerful way for people to communicate their views, to provoke debate and to press for social change. We enjoy collaborating with a range of partners to put on this ambitious multi venue exhibition."

The exhibition is funded via the NHS Lothian Mental Health and Wellbeing Team, who facilitate a Lothian wide planning group.

Linda Irvine, NHS Lothian's strategic programme manager for mental health and wellbeing, said: "Every year this exhibition is real highlight of the festival. It's always quite breathtaking to see the power and impact art has on people's mental health and wellbeing either as creator, participator or observer."

This year the partner organisations include CAPS Independent Advocacy, MECOPP Gypsy/Traveller Carers Project (whose work includes photography from a young Gypsy/Traveller woman as well as their evocative Moving Minds exhibition featuring documentary photography and personal testimonies about the lives of Travellers in Scotland today).

There is also artwork from Penumbra's Edinburgh Self Harm Project, over 20 artists exhibiting from The Alma Project, and a wide range of artwork from a group at Barony Contact Point. Positive Steps for Young People are working with an illustrator to produce a series of fascinating pieces. There has also been an open call for submissions from artists with experience of mental health issues, which has had a very positive and diverse response.

Lauren Stonebanks, one of the participating artists, said: "A lot of the time for people in our situation there is nowhere to go or very little space for us to express how we feel or give our opinions. This existing is absolutely amazing."

Photographer Mark Gould, who is also exhibiting work, said: "I believe it's essential that we try to build some understanding in the world of what mental health is and does."

The Scottish Mental Health Arts and Film Festival is now in its ninth year. It was recently granted funding by Creative Scotland to develop a new programme of creative work, as the festival moves toward its landmark tenth year in 2016. This year's festival will, once again, feature hundreds of events across the country, including a film and performance programme curated by the central festival team, plus hundreds of community-led events put together by the festival's team of regional co-ordinators, from a poetry trail in Paisley to a family event in Motherwell town centre.

The full programme for the Scottish Mental Health Arts and Film Festival will be announced at Edinburgh Festival Theatre on Wednesday 9 September.

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