



# Arts & Minds Newsletter

## Winter 2022

[www.artsandmindsnetwork.org.uk](http://www.artsandmindsnetwork.org.uk)

# 2022 Exhibition

See all the entries for this years online exhibition  
(page 14)

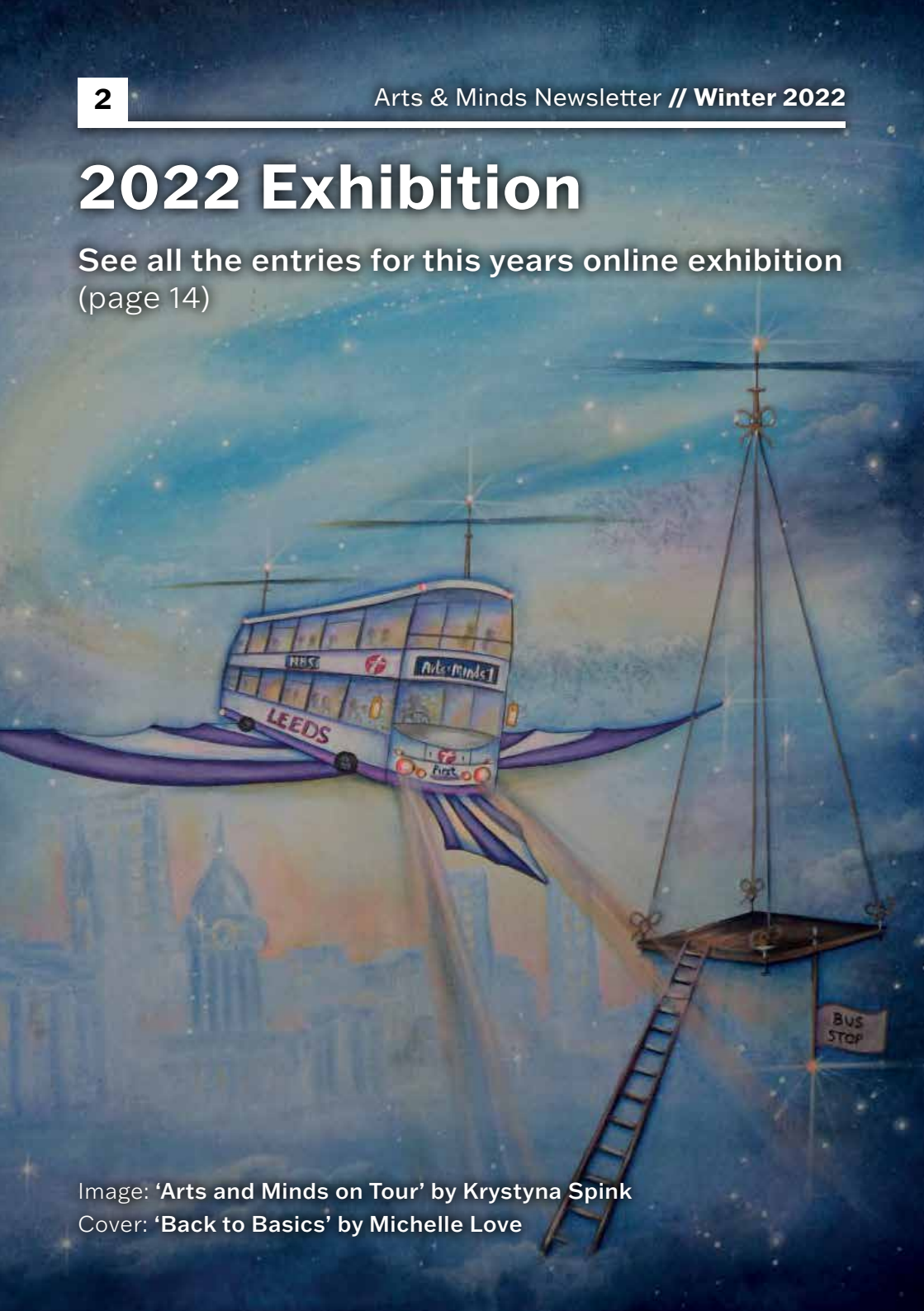


Image: 'Arts and Minds on Tour' by Krystyna Spink  
Cover: 'Back to Basics' by Michelle Love

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# A WORD FROM THE EDITOR

Welcome to the Winter 2022 edition of the Arts & Minds newsletter. There has been lots going on since the last newsletter including a brilliant event at Leeds Industrial Museum, where artist Leon Varga (who's own work is also featured on page 24) came down from Seagulls Reuse to run lino cutting workshops for Arts & Minds members in response to the fabulous displays at Armley Mills.

This edition is on the theme of dealing with change through poetry and creative writing. If you are finding it hard to cope with changes impacting mental ill health, depression or any other anxieties, there is a list of services that can help at the bottom of page 23.

Please see the What's On section at the back of the newsletter for details about the next Arts & Minds event which will be at Leeds City Museum on Tuesday 13th December. The event will be a fun packed afternoon including a creative writing session run by Matthew Bellwood plus a tour of the Living with Machines exhibition as well as a chance to try some weaving!

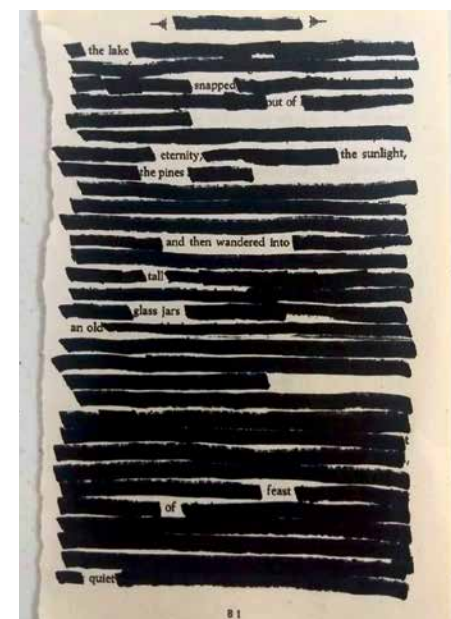
As always I am looking for ways for us all to stay connected and for creative outlets that members can engage with. If you have an idea of how to do this, or you want to connect up, please email me at: [toby@artsandmindsnetwork.org.uk](mailto:toby@artsandmindsnetwork.org.uk). Please also keep checking the Arts & Minds eBulletin and website for more information.

# BLACKOUT POETRY AND RECOVERY

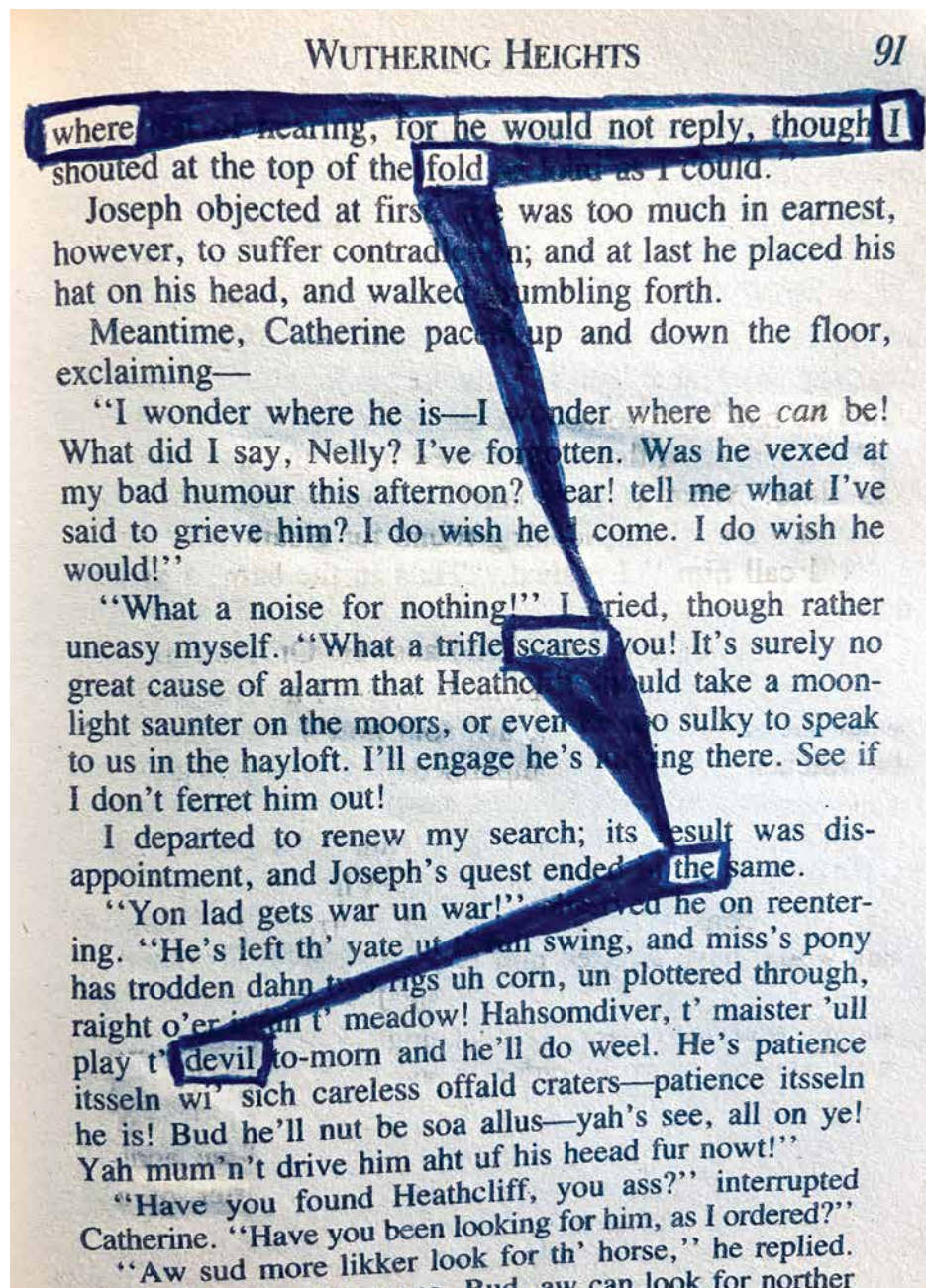
I discovered blackout poetry in a writing class in San Antonio, Texas, where I had moved for a job almost a year earlier. The theme of the class was place, and I had spent a month detailing observations of my new city and listening to the stories of classmates whose families had been in San Antonio since it was Mexico. On the last day, the instructor took a knife and sliced pages out of a thick novel. He emptied a box of markers onto the table and told us to black out words from our page until only a poem remained.

My poem: **the lake /  
snapped / out of /  
eternity, the sunlight, / the  
pines / and then wandered  
into / tall / glass jars / an  
old / feast  
/ of / quiet.**

I was hooked. Months later, when the life I had been building began to unravel, I found a copy of Wuthering Heights in a quiet room overlooking the communal pool and immersed myself in Emily Bronte, inking over

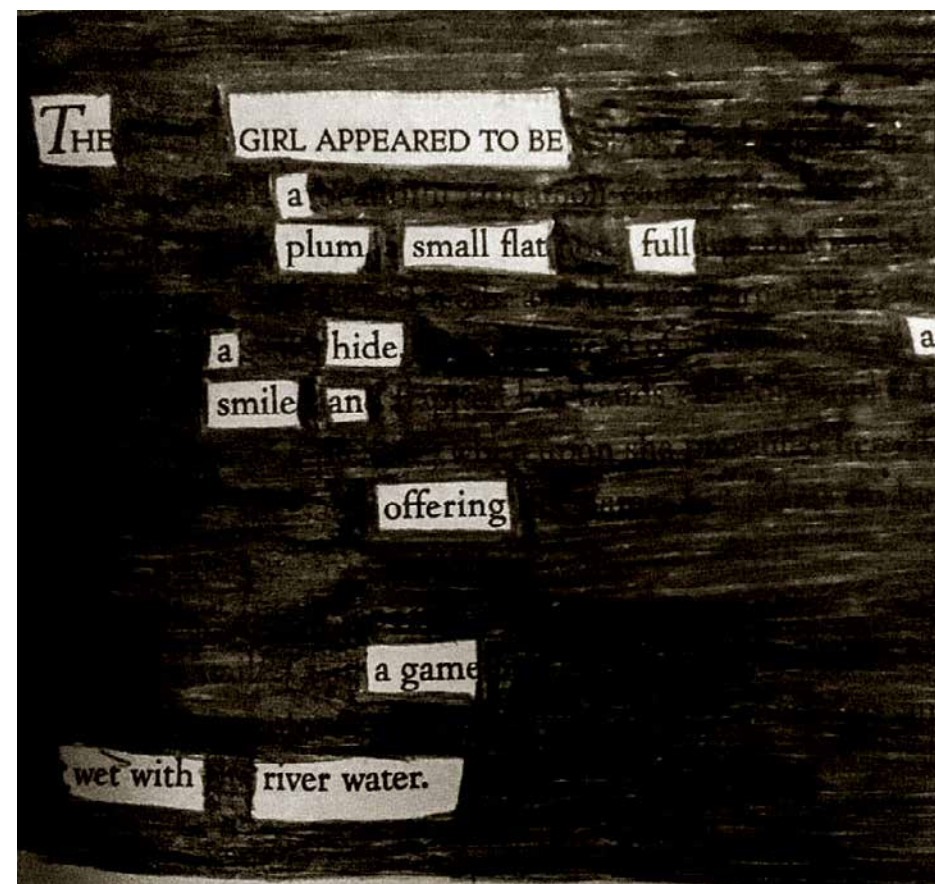




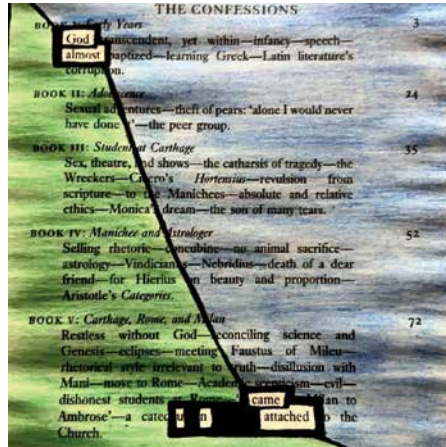
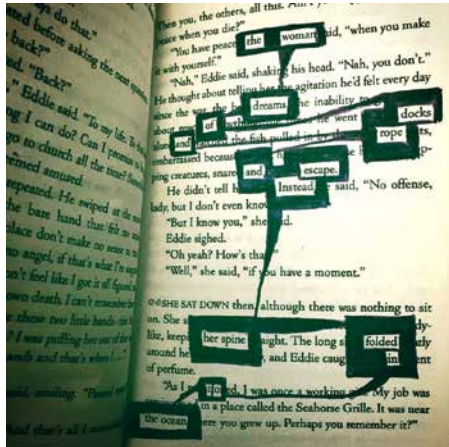


her words with purple biro to leave only: **where I / fold / scares / the / devil.**

My relationship was ending, and long-buried mental health issues had come clambering out of the basement of my psyche. My partner had fallen in love with our best friend and had pushed to open our marriage – albeit privately, as they did not want others to judge – and while they went out dancing, I locked myself in the bathroom and began to self-harm.







Once *Wuthering Heights* was finished, I turned to *The Five People You Meet in Heaven*, a sentimental novel riddled with racism and misogyny. I discovered here that blackout poetry could become a tool for anger. A passage that objectifies a Vietnamese child became: **The girl appears to be a plum / small flat full / a hide / a smile / an offering / a game / wet with river water.**

Gradually, I was writing through the feelings of loss, anger, shame. I was still hurting myself, but I had begun to put the grief into words, surrounded sometimes by colour, and connected by lines, arrows, spirals, and loops: **the woman / dreams / of docks / and rope / and escape / instead / her spine folded / into / the ocean.**

Scrolling through my Instagram feed, where I posted these poems from the beginning, I see three journeys. There is the spiralling end of my marriage, the shift from loss into anger, acceptance, shame, loss again, then back to anger. There is the unfolding of different vocabularies, which depend on the book I was working



from but which appear as temporary obsessions: clusters of poems about light, thunder, body parts, voice, home. Finally, there is the passage from self-destruction to self-preservation. Colours lighten. The poems become softer, more reflective. I start to use words like nearly: **god / almost / came / unattached** (from *The Confessions*). Eventually, when I jettisoned the marriage, the house,

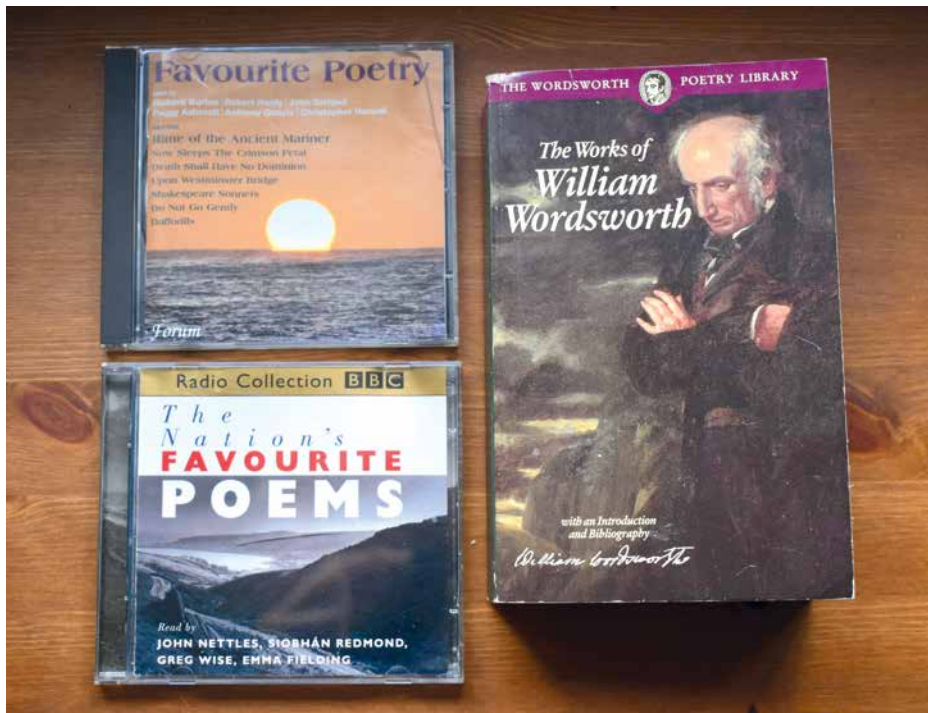
and the job, and returned, deep in the pandemic, to Yorkshire, the poems even took on notes of dark comedy, borrowing from *The Catcher in the Rye*: **hell / was madly in love with / the Western Hemisphere / "Who's this boy?" / he said.**

We think about catharsis as enabling a release of something from the body: pent-up emotion, perhaps, or tears. In blackout poetry I found catharsis of a different kind: the repeated performance of what I knew I needed to do in my own life in order to survive, that is, to break the existing text into pieces and to put them back together in a new way in order to reclaim my voice and speak my own truths.

Article by **Jessica Wright**

# POETRY – A GUILTY SECRET NO MORE

Attending a state school in 1970s West Leeds was at times a battle for survival especially if you had any Mental Health issues or “Nerves” as it was called in those ultra-taboo days. We never had any formal art classes as such, just the odd drop-in session from someone with a spare hour to fill and with no hope of any follow up sessions. A tough environment where if you proclaimed to have any like or interest of poetry, then you would have faced a

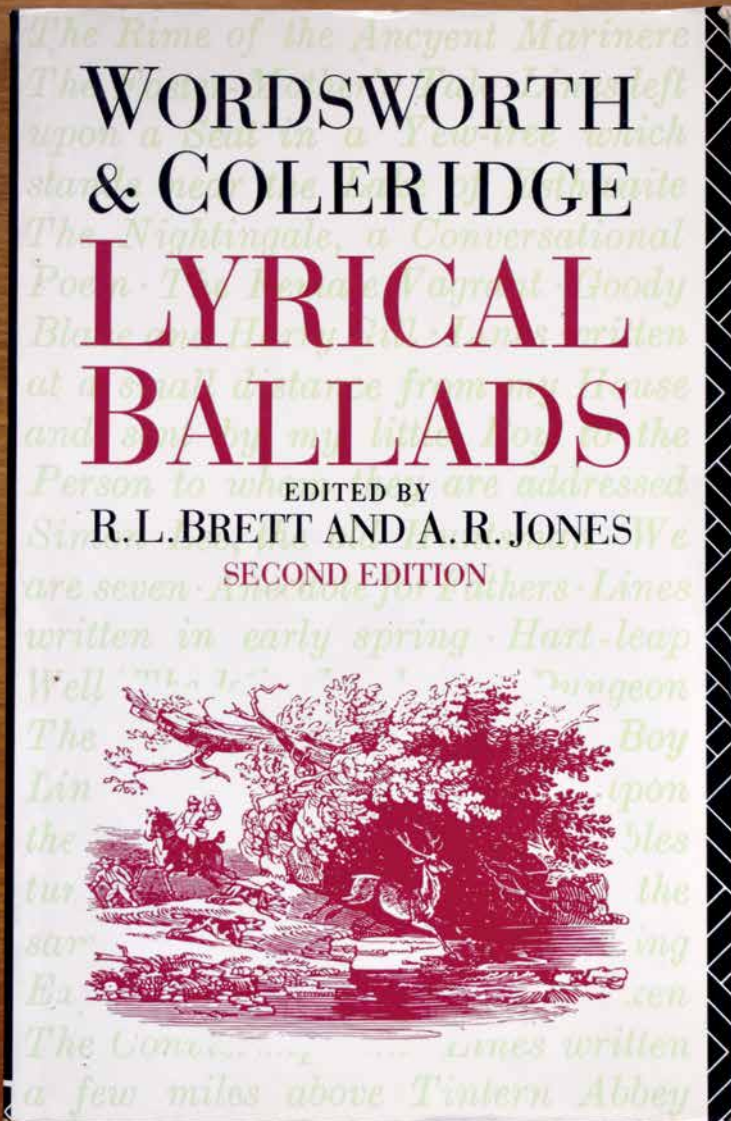


term of ridicule and name calling. Had I also mentioned the enjoyment a game of chess would give me then I would no doubt have been burnt at the stake!

So, any thoughts of taking an active interest in poetry was crushed instead of nurtured and remained a guilty unexplored secret for decades. It really is strange how changes happen, many by mistake or by accident and this is how my trapped passion and interest in poetry was finally released. On an uneventful Tuesday afternoon, I was channel hopping trying to avoid classic old episodes of Corrie and Emmerdale when I came across a three-part travel documentary titled “Wordsworth and Coleridge Road Trip” presented by Frank Skinner and Denise Mina. I decided to give it a go and if nothing else I could enjoy the scenery of the Lake District, what I didn’t expect was the impact the programme would have on me.

As Frank emotionally read one of Wordsworth’s poems, it really resonated with me and seeing how affected the usual upbeat and always up-for-a-laugh presenter was by these few lines was mind blowing and stimulating at the same time. Naturally I was hooked and watched the following two programmes. On to Ebay I went and bought a couple of poetry books and CDs and I enjoy listening to them especially as it relaxes me and takes my mind off day-to-day challenges, it involves listening in a mindfulness way as you concentrate on each word or pause. For me there are words of days past that I don’t fully understand and some words which would now be classed as offensive but it is the whole experience which is rewarding and enjoyable and has brought a whole new world to me.





I'm not an intellectual and will never be able to dissect the hidden meanings or underlying themes posed by these wonderful poets, but wow, how I enjoy them in my own simple way and surely that is what the arts and poetry in particular are all about. So, an unexpected channel hop resulted in me finally smashing the chains of my guilty pleasure and brought a change in my life that I will now enjoy so a big thanks to Frank and Denise for rescuing me from a life without poetry.

"The world is too much with us". These are the opening words of a sonnet Wordsworth wrote in around 1802, and published in 1807:

### THE WORLD IS TOO MUCH WITH US

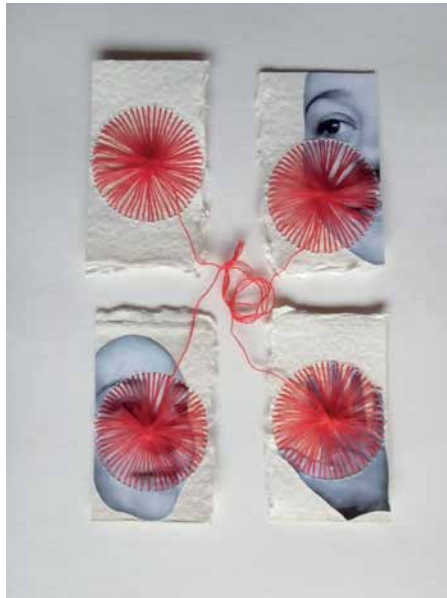
The world is too much with us; late and soon,  
 Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers;  
 Little we see in Nature that is ours;  
 We have given our hearts away, a sordid boon!

It is one of Wordsworth's most powerful critiques of the Industrial Revolution and the materialist world of 'getting and spending'.

Article by **Paul Abraham** of [www.theartfulrambler.com](http://www.theartfulrambler.com)

# 2022 EXHIBITION

Thank you to all the Arts & Minds members who submitted work for the online exhibition this year. Arts & Minds partnered with CuratorSpace to organise the exhibition. We hope you enjoy the amazing display of artwork!



Artwork by (clockwise from top right):  
**Dawn Smallwood; Jane Gibson; Kat Arnold.**



Artwork by (clockwise from top right):  
**Mindy Goose; Krystyna Spink; Paul Abraham.**



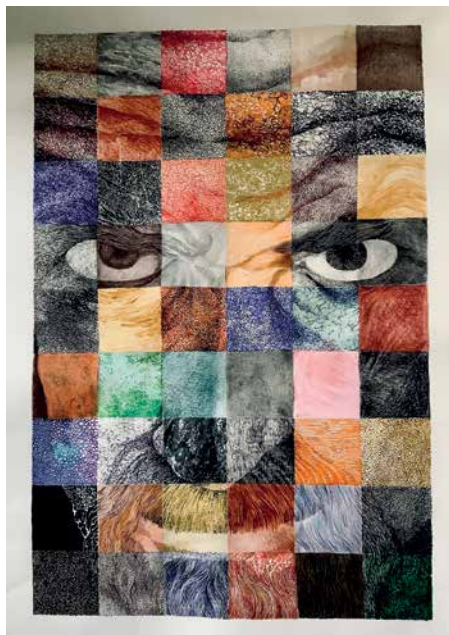


Artwork by (clockwise from top left):  
**Sarah Francis; Cassy Burton; Fe; Elaine Mills; Lydia Rain; Michelle Love.**



Artwork by (clockwise from top left):  
**Maureen Rich; Natalie Breeze; Morticia; Retrespekt.**





Artwork by (clockwise from top left):  
**Roy Best; Peter McDonagh; Laurence Pusey; Annette Plummer.**



Artwork by (clockwise from top left):  
**Dave Lynch; Emma Christie Art; Sand Croft.**



# WHEN CHANGE BECOMES FEAR

Changes happen all around us daily and big topical changes in the news are happening right now and are personally affecting us too. These changes can turn to fear in some people leaving them unable to cope.

There are changes in the climate causing world disasters such as devastating floods and fires, there are changes caused by the pandemic and its aftermath, and the recent outbreak of war which has affected our economy impacting on food, fuel and industry prices, forcing us to rethink on how we prioritise and budget our consumption of all the things essential to our daily lives.

A largely discussed subject in the media has been about people fearing how they are going to cope to keep warm and fed this winter. The pandemic has affected people mentally, medically and financially causing the loss of loved ones too. There were large scale changes where no one could really figure out what was going on. It was happening all over the world, it was a very scary time indeed, forcing us all to change.

We have also had to deal with big changes in the government and monarchy which have been stressful for some people, maybe triggering bouts of grief and distain. Losing the Queen brought back emotive memories for some, like losing their grandmothers or family members.

Our environment is changing, housing estates have risen on the horizon where once were beautiful green fields, marshlands and rural peaceful pastures. The world is changing around us, most people can accept and grow with change but others can find it highly stressful.

We are born with an inbuilt mechanism for coping with change which we develop through our life experiences. Learning to walk, going to our first school, leaving our parents, growing into a teenager and all the challenges which come with preparing us for adulthood are all evolutions of change.

When we are confronted with a life changing situation, we should try and draw on our strengths and build on how we dealt with changes in the past, but sometimes we are subjected to traumas which can block our inner instincts to combat change.

I have suffered with PTSD and have had to deal with issues from my past which triggered unwanted symptoms activated by big changes in my life such as losing my job through redundancy and leaving my work colleagues and friends. I was a teacher and leaving my students was really upsetting as well as having to change and cope with a small income. I was suddenly at home on my own feeling very lonely and emotional, trying to cope with my feelings alone.

I talked to my GP and had to take medication to help me through that hard time but I felt I needed a lot more help so I sought counselling which has helped me tremendously. Talking to a family member, friend, counsellor or therapist can help deal with some aspects of your new challenges, but it can be hard work and it might not happen overnight.

I have a short poem to share with you written by someone who couldn't bear changes planned for his village. He was unfortunately suffering with depression and, at the time of writing this poem ten years ago, depression in men wasn't openly discussed or acknowledged because of the age-old stigma about men seeking therapy. Thankfully that has changed over the last few years with organisations like Andy's Man Club and other groups out there for both men, women and children too, please see the bottom of this article for more information.

Here is a little background information passed onto to me about the poet JDH by his family:

*He loved being outdoors and found walking the footpaths and tracks in the outside environment to be an escape from the pain of his anxiety and depression.*

*This poem was written at the time when planners were considering building industrial units and housing on the green belt and marshland land, which flanked the village he lived in. He spent quite a bit of time sketching and writing within an old ancient woodland near the designated building site.*

*It is ten years on since he wrote the poem and his fears have now become a reality. The most shocking thing which happened alongside the mass destruction of the green belt and marshland, which is now home to five large monstrous warehouses and 100 residential homes, was the uprooting and removal of an old hawthorn hedge planted 50 years ago by volunteers. It was the shelter for flocks of visiting Lapwings, Swallows and Martins who would visit the area every year but unfortunately haven't been seen over the last two winters or summers since the construction started.*



## YELLOW, AND HARTSHEAD

Yellow, my favourite colour,  
makes my hands, stomach and  
feet feel heavy with peace.

Oak trees pull you into the green world  
where everything has always, always  
been reassuringly the same.

Don't build houses or roads here please,  
I can't bear it.

Poem written by **JDH** (08.02.1966 to 25.06.2012)

Photographs taken by **JDH and his family**

Article by **Cassy Burton**

*If you are finding it hard to cope with changes impacting mental ill health, depression or any other anxieties, or if you are just worried about keeping warm and fed this winter, please contact the services below.*

**Samaritans:** [www.samaritans.org](http://www.samaritans.org)

**Andy's Man Club:** [www.andysmanclub.co.uk](http://www.andysmanclub.co.uk)

**Leeds Survivor Led Crisis Service:** [www.lslcs.org.uk](http://www.lslcs.org.uk)

**Money Buddies:** [www.leedsmoneybuddies.weebly.com](http://www.leedsmoneybuddies.weebly.com)



# HUNGARY FOR ART IN ARMLEY

A unique and thought-provoking exhibition by an artist, originally from Hungary was held at the welcoming and wonderful Christ Church in Upper Armley in September / October and the opening night was well attended and enjoyed by people of all ages and of all faiths

Leon Varga is a multi-disciplinary artist, born in Hungary in 1976. Leon is a graduate of Academy of Fine Arts in Budapest and has lived and worked in the UK for almost two decades now, predominantly in Leeds.



The exhibition titled “The Way Up Is Down” consists of three full-size working seesaws. Each one is fitted with seats repurposed from old ecclesiastical furniture and placed in relationship with three pairs of reclaimed long case clocks.

Leon explained that the artwork is made for interaction and immersion, and in engaging with it we are invited to think about the social hierarchies of space and to reflect upon the ways that the past two years have re-shaped our understanding of time. Also present in the work are themes of absence and loss and the ways in which family can both connect us to the past and launch us into our futures while also allowing us to remember those who are no longer here with us. The Way Up Is Down asks us to sit with these contradictions, and to think about where we find balance.



The work is constructed using both fabricated and reclaimed materials. The wooden seats were recovered from a disused church in Dewsbury, and the six long case timepieces – grandfather, grandmother, and grand-daughter clocks – all come from the homes of people who died during the pandemic. Meanwhile the rigid steel of the seesaw beams, enforce a strict fixed distance between their users.

The exhibition supported by the dynamic and forward-thinking LCI (Leeds Church Institute) who provided a small bursary to help Leon with his project was the first to be held at the venue who are hoping to host more exhibitions in the future.

Article by **Paul Abraham** of [www.theartfulrambler.com](http://www.theartfulrambler.com)



# WHAT'S ON...

## CONNECT & CREATE

Connect & Create is a monthly group where Arts & Minds members can connect, share skills, and take part in creative workshops led by other members. Each month's offer will be led by a different member and is free to attend. The workshops are on the **first Monday of every month** from **1pm to 3pm** with the exception of bank holidays, in which case they are on the following Monday.

The Connect & Create group meets at Leeds Discovery Centre, Carlisle Road, Leeds LS10 1LB. There is free parking if you are coming by car and the centre is a short walk from town if you are coming by public transport.

For more information, or to sign up for the workshops, email [info@artsandmindsnetwork.org.uk](mailto:info@artsandmindsnetwork.org.uk). Sessions are by RSVP only and there is a limit on numbers so please get in touch if you want to come along so we can book you a place.



## MAKE SPACE

We would love you to join us at the weekly Make Space Zoom session, where the focus is on connecting with other members, and taking time for yourself to continue with your creative project, poetry or artwork. Bring along a cuppa, and tune in for your time out session between **1.00pm and 2.00pm every Tuesday**.

Arts & Minds started the Make Space during lockdown as a way to stay connected with members while we were not able to meet up in person. Due to the success of the group, and the continued demand for online sessions, we are continuing to run the Make Space group online as other Arts & Minds groups and sessions have returned to meeting face-to-face.

For more information, or to sign up for the sessions, email [info@artsandmindsnetwork.org.uk](mailto:info@artsandmindsnetwork.org.uk). You will be sent a Zoom link to join in with the sessions.





# LIVING WITH MACHINES

An **Arts & Minds** event at  
**Leeds City Museum**

Join writer and storyteller **Matthew Bellwood** for a fun creative workshop looking at the ways in which we interact with technology today. What innovations, tools and gadgets have improved the way we live? What are the dream machines that will help us in the future? Could we ever go back to a world before industrialisation? This is a chance to explore the ideas presented in the **Living with Machines** exhibition through creative writing and storytelling.

The workshop is suitable for both complete beginners and experienced creative writers who want to try something new. As part of the event you will also be taken on a tour of the **Living with Machines** exhibition where you will revisit the industrial revolution, discover the surprising parallels between the Industrial Revolution and today's world of 'big tech' and have a go at doing some mini weaving.

Light refreshments will be served both before and in-between the workshop and tour.

**Tuesday 13th Dec 2022 • 12.30pm to 4.30pm**

Venue: **Leeds City Museum**  
**Millennium Square, Leeds LS2 8BH**




# LIVING WITH MACHINES

An **Arts & Minds** event at **Leeds City Museum**



**Matthew Bellwood** is a writer and storyteller based in Leeds, with a strong interest in local history. Since 2014, he has been a lead artist on **365LeedsStories** ([www.365leedsstories.org](http://www.365leedsstories.org)), an ongoing project mapping people's opinions, thoughts and experiences of living in the city of Leeds. Outcomes have included illustrated maps, colouring books, audio walks and exhibitions gathering responses to the ever-changing city.



Places for the **Leeds City Museum** event are limited and are by RSVP only. To book a place on the workshops please email Jane at: [info@artsandmindsnetwork.org.uk](mailto:info@artsandmindsnetwork.org.uk)

You will be sent a confirmation email with all the details for the day. This event is for Arts & Minds members only. If you are not an Arts & Minds member you can join for free at: [www.artsandmindsnetwork.org.uk/join-us](http://www.artsandmindsnetwork.org.uk/join-us)

[www.artsandmindsnetwork.org.uk](http://www.artsandmindsnetwork.org.uk)  
[www.museumsandgalleries.leeds.gov.uk/leeds-city-museum](http://www.museumsandgalleries.leeds.gov.uk/leeds-city-museum)

This event is a partnership project between **Arts & Minds** and **Leeds City Museum**



**LEEDS city MUSEUM**



Supported using public funding by  
**ARTS COUNCIL ENGLAND**



# About Arts & Minds

Arts & Minds is a network of people in Leeds who are interested in creativity and mental health. We include carers, health workers, artists, performers, students, people who have used mental health services and OTs. We want to get people talking about how the arts can help mental wellbeing.

If you want to know more please contact us using the details below. You are welcome at any of our events or workshops, if you are a member or not. You can join Arts & Minds for free at: **[www.artsandmindsnetwork.org.uk/join-us](http://www.artsandmindsnetwork.org.uk/join-us)**

email: **[info@artsandmindsnetwork.org.uk](mailto:info@artsandmindsnetwork.org.uk)**

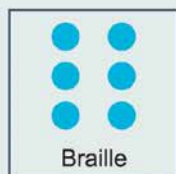
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facebook: **[facebook.com/artsminds](https://facebook.com/artsminds)**

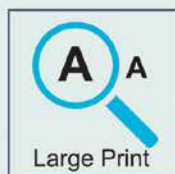
twitter: **[@ArtsMindsLeeds](https://twitter.com/ArtsMindsLeeds)**

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