

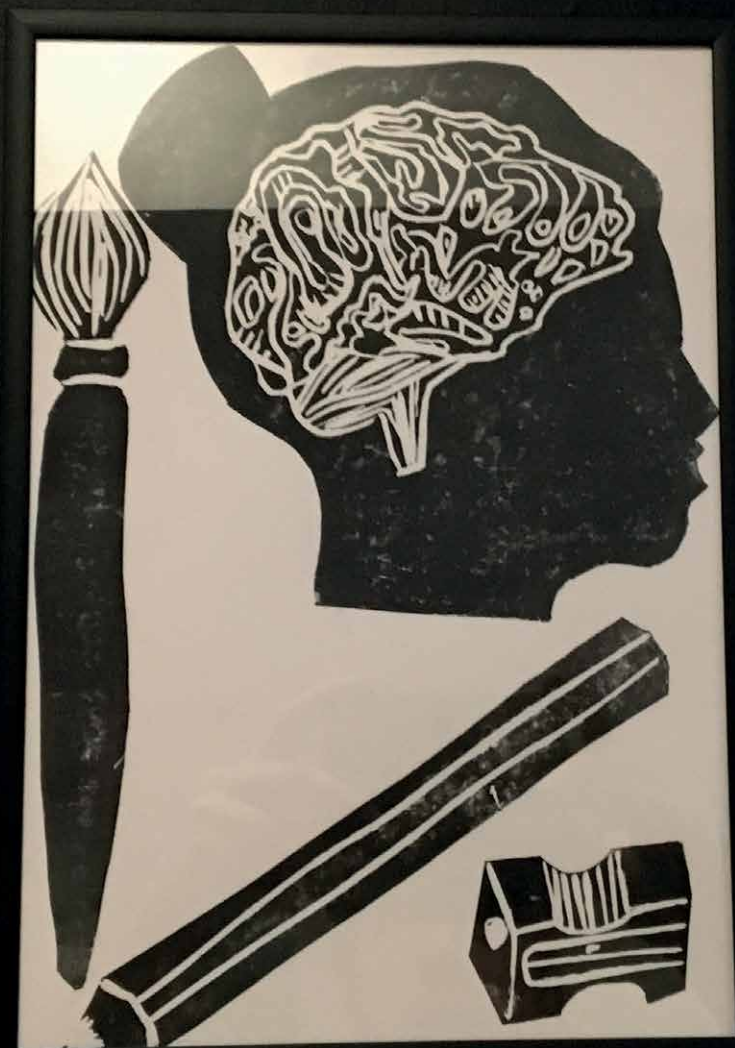


Arts & Minds Newsletter

Winter 2023

www.artsandmindsnetwork.org.uk

2023 Arts & Minds Exhibition (Page 22...)



Cover: 'Mr Soul Man' by Julie Linley

Above: 'Arts & Minds' by Lauren Whyte

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A WORD FROM THE EDITOR

Welcome to the Winter 2023 edition of the Arts & Minds newsletter. Since the last edition we have had the 2023 Arts & Minds Member's Exhibition at Northlight (see page 22) as well as a great event at Northlight with other members responding to the exhibition with a Mini-Masterpieces Workshop run by artist Monair Hyman. It was great to be back in the real world for the exhibition and to have so many members exhibiting their work

Please see the What's On section at the back of the newsletter for details about the next Arts & Minds event which will be a Zine Making Workshop at Leeds Art Gallery and which will also include a drawing tour of the gallery!

I would like to say a big thank you once again to the fabulous newsletter team for all their work writing the articles and gathering all the information for each edition, your hard work is very much appreciated and without you these newsletters would not happen.

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. Please also keep checking the Arts & Minds eBulletin and website for more information.

WHAT COULD HAVE BEEN TO WHAT IS

Had I not suffered from mental health issues since childhood, how different would my life have been and where and who would I be now? This is a question everyone who has suffered from mental health issues such as Bipolar (called manic depression when I was a child), anxiety, low self-esteem and confidence sapping phobias has asked themselves repeatedly over the years.

Schooldays were not "the happiest days of my life" bullied by child psychiatrists, misunderstood by teachers and peers alike, it was no surprise that I left the education system without any qualifications, not even a ten-metre swimming certificate! While others of my generation were starting along the journeys of career or finding potential life-partners, I would be laid on my bed with increasingly negative thoughts about myself and my future, if I did have a future at all.

Photography was a beacon (if you can have a beacon in a darkroom!) in my life and with the help of my dad we built a darkroom within my bedroom, complete with hot and cold running water and power sockets. I purchased a Paterson Complete Darkroom in a box to start on my new and potentially lifesaving hobby. The darkroom became

my “Safe Place” where I could close the door and be safe from the outside world and its feeding of my demons. I developed my own negatives, prints, and then slides, as a company called Barfen had developed a much simpler and easier way to develop slide films. Living a rapidly increasing reclusive lifestyle I spent more and more time in the darkroom with a passion for reading photography and art books especially any by David Bailey, Patrick Litchfield or about Claude Monet.

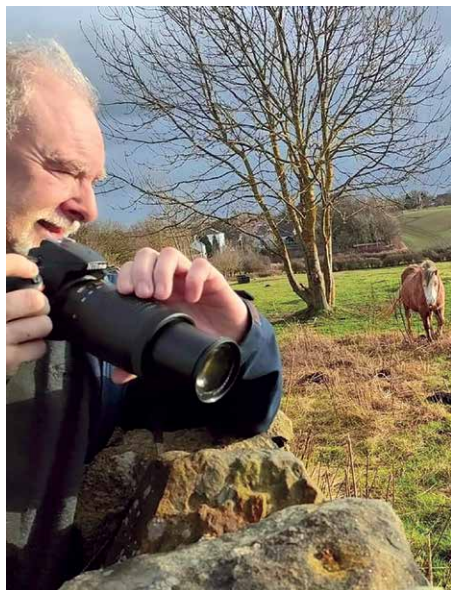
My camera at the time was a Praktica MTL5 complete with 35mm wide angle, 50mm, 135mm and 200mm lenses. It was a basic single lens reflex 35mm camera which enabled me to become competent with depth of field, shutter speeds and aperture setting knowledge whilst on a shoe-string budget but how I wished I could afford a Nikon, Cannon or Olympus to further my photographic range and creativity. People who saw the results from my camera and darkroom praised my efforts and complimented me on my “eye” for creating impressive images, some even said I could possibly make it as a full-time photographer!



However, with my mental health issues, my lack of confidence and formal qualifications and the inability to drive, the path to being a full-time photographer was never a realistic option. Even if the option had been possible, would the pressures of being a full-time photographer have aggravated and multiplied my mental health issues, to make what was once an enjoyable hobby into another demon enhanced stressful nightmare?

Moving forward a couple of decades and despite not having a darkroom anymore, I still had a love of photography and still took many photographs, although this time using a Cannon Sureshot or Powershot compact digital camera. Still struggling at times with my mental health, things reached a traumatic point at 19-50 on New Years Eve 2013 when I was five minutes from suicide, somehow and for some reason I got through the darkness and with the help of an amazing therapist / counsellor became interested in Mindfulness after I told her of my hobbies of photography and walking, to the point where I thought of launching a website titled “The Tactile Walker” due to my increasing obsession of having to touch things whilst I walked past drystone walls, the bark of trees or letting my hand flow through long grass and the occasional nettle! I then studied hard and completed Diplomas in both Mindfulness and Stress management.

My life, like a lot of other people in the world changed when the Covid pandemic brought lockdown and a completely different way of working, living and trying to manage our mental health. However, with now working from home instead of travelling into the city centre every day, and by also not buying sandwiches or Greggs sausage rolls for



lunch I realised I was saving £120 per month. So, to take a positive from a negative situation, I decided to treat myself to a digital SLR camera and start to take my photography to another level. This I did and when I purchased a Nikon D3500 Digital camera with an 18 to 55mm zoom lens and a 70 to 300mm zoom lens. When I showed people my results, they suggested selling them at arts and crafts fayres



after the lockdown restrictions had been lifted which I did, and I also created a new blog / website titled the Artful Rambler to showcase my latest images.

I then started to think of how I could combine my passions of photography, mindfulness, and nature into a workshop to help people improve their mental health through mindful photography. From the initial thought to facilitating the first workshop took just short of a year and over £200 in materials and printed handouts. With the help of some funding, I have now been able to run several workshops and received very favourable and positive feedback with plenty more workshops planned for 2024.

So, it's been a long and at times tough journey, but my love of photography has helped me get through the dark times, helped me find peace through mindfulness and help other people reduce stress, anxiety, and depression by teaching them mindful photography without them requiring any technical photography knowledge or expensive equipment as the modern mobile phone can bring photography to everybody.

When I now lay on my bed thinking, it's in a positive way and enjoying what I'm now doing with my photography with my paid "shoots", workshops, and frequenting markets where there are always people wanting to chat about photography and which I am more than happy to indulge in.

I've now learnt that you never know where your hobby may take you or how it may help you and potentially change your life.

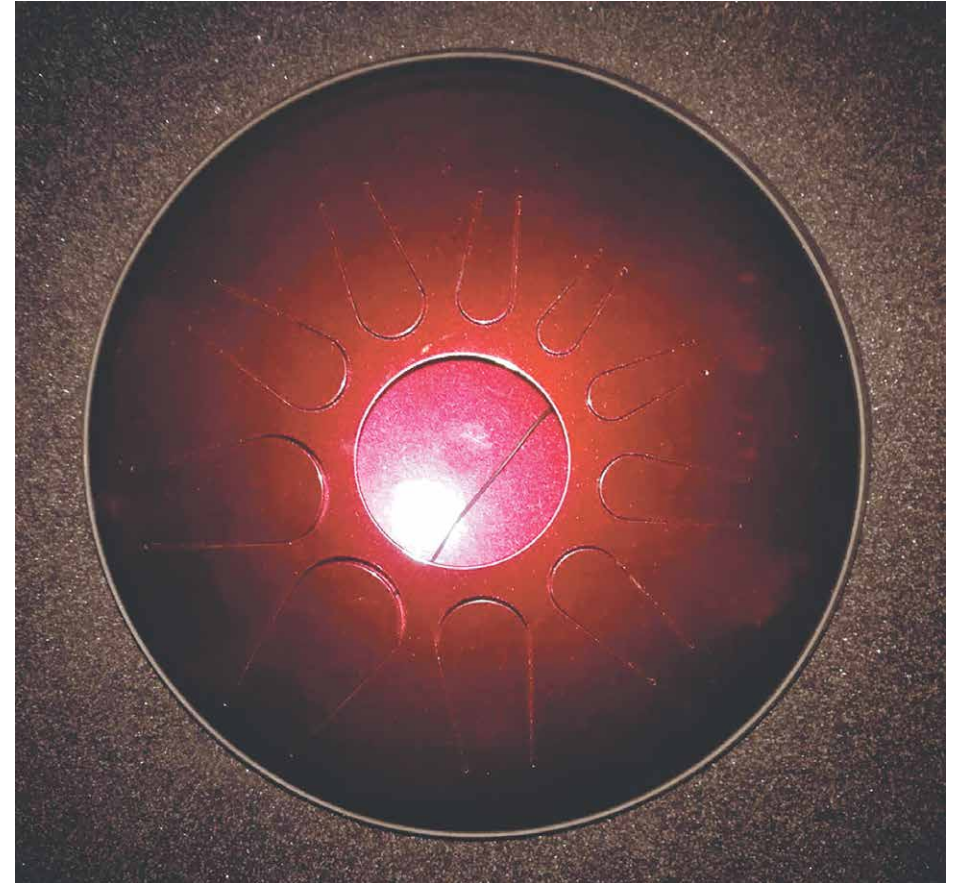
Article by **Paul Abraham** (www.theartfulrambler.com)

HOLDING ON TO HOPE

Something that really helped me during the pandemic and the lockdowns was the Idiopan Dominus tongue drum. A tunable melodic percussion instrument, the tongue drum creates beautiful, mellow bell like sounds. It consistently helps me with anxiety whenever it flares up, and is generally very soothing and unique to play. During both Covid lockdowns, I wrote and recorded albums at home, then an EP as part of an Arts & Minds project towards the end of 2021. It was quite therapeutic to write and record chilled out new age music in such a tumultuous time, and the learning curve it provided in terms of writing and recording on my own with a new instrument was really valuable.

2022 was personally a very testing year. My dad died and there were all sorts of things connected to that to sort out. My relationship with him hadn't been smooth at all over the past decade or so, and his death brought up a lot of past trauma. During this time the tongue drum came to my rescue again, and I started writing new music with it, coming up with a theme of hope, healing and renewal which led to the album's title, 'Holding On To Hope'. Artwork for the album was created before anything was recorded, helping build a theme to draw inspiration from.

Initially, the plan had been to work on both a tongue drum album and an acoustic rock/metal album back to back, but I eventually dropped the latter to focus on the tongue drum. There were instantly some challenges to overcome, from writing and recording with two tongue drums instead



of just one, to keeping the music reminiscent of the album's theme as much as possible. One tune, the first track on the album called 'Safe Space', was even written unexpectedly during an Arts & Minds workshop. It's funny where the inspiration comes from!

The tunes themselves have been getting much more intricate and challenging to play which isn't a bad thing. I like to push myself as a musician. At the time of writing this, I'm coming to the end of the tongue drum recording

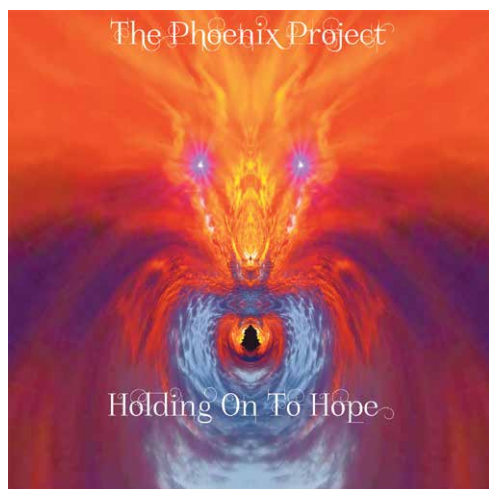
process and then the fun of adding programmed instrumentation begins. Some synths here, a bit of extra percussion there. Making music like this with current technology is really fun and interesting.

Naming tunes has been interesting too. The pieces tend to be entirely instrumental, so I don't have any lyrics to derive titles from. This tends to require sitting with a tune once it's recorded and meditating with it, which I've found surprisingly good for my mental health. It certainly offsets some of the stress of recording.

Once the album is finally completed (towards the end of 2023 hopefully), I know it'll be something I can be really proud of. New videos will follow, and I'd like to venture out in public with the tongue drum in future. Then maybe another album next year? Let's see what happens!

Article by **Dave Lynch**

(www.phoenixtonguedrum.bandcamp.com)



MY INSPIRATIONS FROM THE MEDIA

The inspirations for my poetry and writing are both significant and diverse. Often, they come from the people and places around me and various forms of media; my numerous stimuli are a real driving force behind everything I create. On many occasions, they have shaped and sculptured both the structure and the temperament of my poetry. In this article, I will focus on how music, film, and literature inspire me and discuss the specific arts that have profoundly impacted my writing and my life.

My relationship with pop culture and the art that inspires me is always strong, and often bluntly obvious. In my most recent poetry collection, direct references range from 'The Wizard of Oz' to band 'Sisters of Mercy' via writers such as WH Auden. These are just a few among many references found in my published work. There are countless more in my upcoming collection. I am intensely proud and forcefully passionate about the texts, music and films that I have found comfort, identification and joy within, and which have ultimately inspired my poetry.

MUSIC

Music is perhaps the most significant inspiration for my work, coming from various sources. Primarily, the work of songwriter, singer and frontman Morrissey, is the beating heartbeat behind my creativity. Poet Laureate Simon Armitage once said, "I might not have become a poet, had



it not been for Morrissey” – a sentiment I wholeheartedly identify with. As the outsider’s outsider, Morrissey uses his lyrics to infuse hope into places of utter despair, provide commentary on the socially unspoken and inject witty, sardonic humour into the everyday mundane. His lyrics are poetry. If I could write half as well as the man from Manchester, I would be a very proud writer indeed. He is my greatest inspiration.

Aside from the former Smiths frontman, my inspirations from music are diverse and equally fervent. Belle &

Sebastian, for example, are another group whose lyricism greatly inspires my writing. Songwriter Stuart Murdoch’s use of characterisation and his adept conveyance of the human experience through bouncy, luxuriously rich spoken words continue to awe me. “If you talk to me, then soon, I’ll be your accomplice in words, and we will talk only in verse.” Glorious.

Additionally, the labyrinthine internal rhyme of Mark Morriss, the guttural cultural significance of Damien Dempsey and Gerry Cinnamon, the heart-wrenching melodies of Amy Winehouse and Duffy are just a few things I admire. Patti Smith and X-ray Spex provide my fix of angsty post-punk and 60s punk, whilst the unsteady, violent yet delicate and warm guitar riffs of the Stone Roses and the Arctic Monkeys inspire my work and enlighten my soul. They are treasures in my overflowing chest of inspiration. There are many, many more. I could go on all day.

TV & FILM

Whether it’s the earthy realness or the quintessentially human qualities of the location and characters of Coronation Street from the 1990s and early 2000s, or the clutching cathartic and utterly traumatic celebration of what could and what should have been that is ‘Somewhere in Time’ (1980), I also find a lot of my writing inspiration through television and film.

However, unlike albums of music and poetry collections, my most cherished film stands far above the rest. Charlie Kaufman’s 2020 physiological whirlwind ‘I’m Thinking of Ending Things’, is as good as it gets, in any form of media. It is an artistic, poetic, sombre-fuelled showcase of time, life, death and relationships platonic, romantic and undesired. It’s



crystal-glass exhibition of the jaunty, non-linear kaleidoscope of existence is just genius. Admittedly, the film has been less an inspiration to my work, but more an affirmation of my being. There isn't a minute of the one hundred and thirty-four that I do not fully adore. I could write a standalone article just on this film. Probably two, maybe three.

LITERATURE

Of course, I can't write an article about my inspirations for writing without mentioning literature and poetry itself. Poetry and the written word have become the reason I wake up in the morning. This encompasses my desire and determination to write and create, as well as my eagerness to read and discover the work of others.

Anne Sexton, WH Auden and Lord Byron are just some of the names who have inspired my poetry in different ways. Particularly, the Romantic and Confessionalism movements of poetry are the places I have felt most at home as a reader. While I don't consciously write in a specific style, I believe these subsets of writing have significantly affected my work. I also take great inspiration from the gothic genre, including the wit and wisdom of Oscar Wilde and the descriptive work and character building of the Bronte sisters. I feel the benign sky and desolate, grieving moors as a part of me – this certainly bleeds into my writing. My favourite poem at the time of writing is 'Remember', by Christina Rossetti. It matches the theme of this winter's newsletter perfectly, with its focus on what could have been. Those fourteen lines say more than I ever could.

Article by **Jacob Davies**

IS USING AI OK?

With the rapid advancement in AI (Artificial Intelligence) how will it affect the arts now and in the future?

My preferred art-form is photography and the increased amount of AI generated images, especially of wildlife and macro wildlife, including family group shots of squirrels and foxes, plus extreme close-ups of bees and insects flooding social media sites, is at times overwhelming. As images in themselves, they are very striking and worth a view, however nature is beautiful in its natural form, and so do we need to have generated images of living beauty, or do we accept the images like we accept and praise paintings of natural beauty and wildlife?

The images I post on my website, on social media and sell at arts and crafts fayres are as I took them, they are never digitally enhanced in any way. Many people use Photoshop to add 'extra' to their images. I never use it but if it brings pleasure to the creator and their audiences then why is it a bad thing? Two hundred years ago people marvelled at paintings by Constable, Gainsborough, Turner or Monet, in the twentieth century, Salvador Dali, Picasso and Andy Warhol created completely different styles of art while now we have a new breed of art being generated by AI exciting a new audience. In another fifty years there will be another art form created by something more advanced than the limits of the current AI can produce.



The best-selling author Frederick Forsyth recently said in an interview that in his opinion books should have included on the book cover a statement that a book has been written by AI and does not come from the experiences or imagination of a human mind. The strike of scriptwriters in the US recently, highlights the point that AI could write screenplay for film, TV and theatre after being given a few specific words and a scenario and move living scriptwriters to the creative scrapyard.

Another worrying aspect is people using AI to write and publish, books about Mental Health awareness, promote opinions / advice on other serious illnesses when they

have very little or no experience or knowledge. I facilitate “Improving Mental Health through Mindful Photography” workshops and as I have been interested in photography since childhood and fully qualified in Mental Health awareness and mindfulness, I’m confident that any questions I may be asked in the workshop I have the knowledge and experiences to be able to reply effectively. How can you answer questions regarding your published book if you have not actually written it? Unless you have a photographic memory and memorise each sentence then you’ll soon be exposed as not being the writer and your reputation will be forever tarnished.

Two of the most popular forms of AI used in the arts are:

COMPUTER-AIDED DRAWING TOOLS

Computer-aided drawing tools have also been widely used in creating AI-driven art. These tools allow artists to draw and paint digitally, with the computer giving suggestions for colours, textures, and styles. There are several such tools on the market, from complex software like Adobe Photoshop and Corel Painter to simpler and more accessible apps like Procreate. In these cases, AI is used to analyse the work of artists and give suggestions that can help achieve the desired result.

IMAGE CLASSIFICATION SYSTEMS

This is another popular technique in creating AI-generated art.

These systems are trained to recognize patterns in large datasets of images and can be used by artists to generate new images based on specific categories. For example, an artist may use a system trained on bird images to generate new bird images, or an image classification system for landscapes to generate new landscapes. These systems can be extremely useful in the creation of conceptual and abstract art.

So, should we be worried about the increasing influence of AI or just embrace it as another form of creativity?

We have been in this type of situation before, especially when photography was introduced to the world. From the outset, the art world was resistant to the very idea photography could be art. Painters argued that photography removed the human touch from the image making process and thus could never be art. It also threatened to do what they had spent their lives training for in a matter of seconds.

Some painters, such as Courbet, welcomed photography as an ally in his reaction against the classical academic style. Many others, however, who had spent years learning their craft, felt disdainful of a commonly available mechanical device that lacked the painter’s trained discriminating and expressive eye.

Whatever the future holds it’s going to be interesting!

Article by **Paul Abraham**
www.theartfulrambler.com

2023 ARTS & MINDS EXHIBITION

Arts & Minds would like to say a huge thank you to all 44 members who exhibited their work in the 2023 Annual Exhibition. It was great to be back in the real world again after three years of exhibiting online and the standard of the work was fantastic! A big thank you as well to Northlight for hosting the exhibition and for helping make it such a great show and for everyone that came down on the launch night and who came to visit the exhibition during October. We look forward to next year!



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.

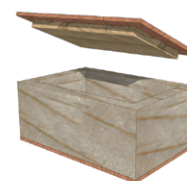
The Connect & Create group meets at Leeds Discovery Centre, Carlisle Road, Leeds LS10 1LB. There is free parking if you are coming by car and the centre is a short walk from town if you are coming by public transport.

For more information, or to sign up for the workshops, email info@artsandmindsnetwork.org.uk. 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.

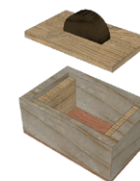


WELLBEING BOXES

An Arts & Minds workshop at Leeds Wood Recycling



Leeds Wood Recycling run classes and offer volunteer training opportunities helping people from a range of backgrounds learn new skills, get back into work and make new social networks. All while helping the environment!



Join Arts & Minds at the fabulous Leeds Wood Recycling for a day of woodworking, making and decorating your own Wellbeing Box! You will be guided through a step by step process for making a simple wooden box before adding your own personal style by decorating the lid.

Once you have made your box, you will be given some suggestions for self care items that you might want to keep inside it when you take it home. The workshop is suitable for complete beginners to woodworking and a light lunch will be provided.

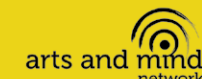
Places for the workshop are limited and are by RSVP only. To book a place please email Jane at: info@artsandmindsnetwork.org.uk

This event is for Arts & Minds members. If you are not an Arts & Minds member you can join for free: www.artsandmindsnetwork.org.uk/join-us

Monday 27th November 2023 • 10am to 2pm

Venue: Leeds Wood Recycling
Unit 6, Croydon Street, Leeds LS11 9RT

www.artsandmindsnetwork.org.uk
www.leedswoodrecycling.co.uk





An **Arts & Minds** event at **Leeds Art Gallery**

Join **Arts & Minds** for an afternoon of Zine making at **Leeds Art Gallery** with a workshop led by artist **Kristyna Baczynski**. All materials and equipment will be provided and the workshop is suitable for complete beginners. As part of the event you will also be taken on a drawing tour of the gallery. Refreshments will be served before and in-between the workshop and tour.

Venue: Leeds Art Gallery, The Headrow, Leeds LS1 3AA

Tuesday 12th December • 12.30pm to 4.30pm

About **Leeds Art Gallery**

A free attraction in the heart of the city, the Leeds Art Gallery collection comprises a wide range of modern and contemporary art along with an extensive programme of events.



Leeds Art Gallery is a 15 minute walk from the city centre bus station and a 10 minute walk from Leeds Railway Station.

On street parking is located nearby on Cookridge Street and at several car parks.

Places for the **Zine Making Workshop** are limited and are by RSVP only. To book a place please email Jane at: 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

www.artsandmindsnetwork.org.uk
www.museumsandgalleries.leeds.gov.uk/leeds-art-gallery

This event is a partnership project between **Arts & Minds** and **Leeds Art Gallery**



**LEEDS
ART
GALLERY**

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**

email: **info@artsandmindsnetwork.org.uk**

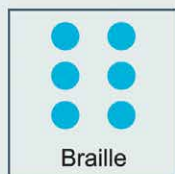
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