

Northside House
Hospital Rooms

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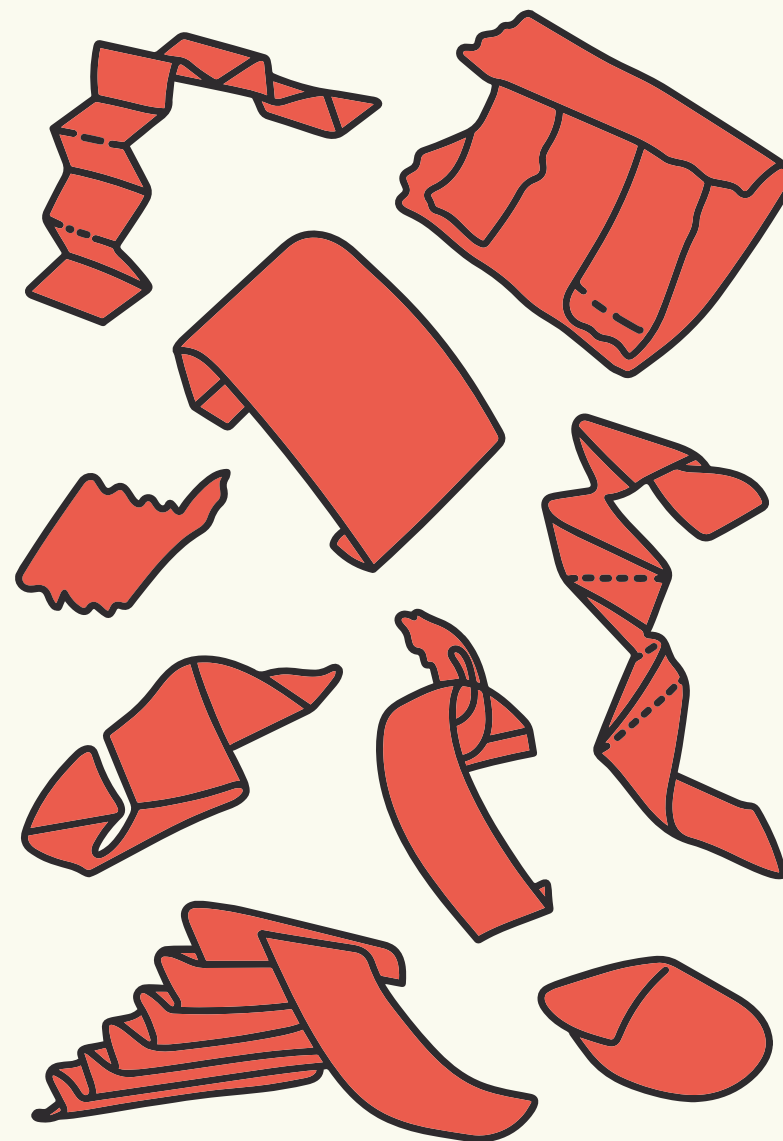


Northside House is a project between Hospital Rooms, Norwich University of the Arts (NUA), Norfolk and Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust (NSFT) and Arts Council England. Over the course of eleven months, a global pandemic and three national lockdowns, six artists led workshops with service users and staff which then informed the eight installations completed at Northside House, a medium secure forensic unit for men in Norfolk and Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust. This publication follows the journey of the project and aims to share the stories and perspectives of those that contributed.

Northside House

A Hospital Rooms project

Northside House







Northside House

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Artwork created by a service user during artist Jade Montserrat's workshop in March 2021.

A Hospital Rooms project in collaboration with Norfolk and Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust and Norwich University of the Arts

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Foreword

*Ged Pattison / Lead Nurse for Secure
and Forensic Services with NSFT*

Forensic Secure units face many challenges. The restrictions with such environments mean that routines, custom and practice can dominate the flow of daily living and indeed healthy professional relationships; so important for building trust and promoting recovery. This is why Hospital Rooms offer such an important opportunity for people to engage and have the opportunity to express their thoughts, feelings and creativity through the medium of art. The workshops bring a calm and reflective space for staff and service users to explore ideas, to tell their stories and move beyond the immediate barriers of the secure setting and on into the realms of imagination and possibilities.

The Hospital Rooms project at Northside House has had a dramatic impact on the whole inpatient community. From the early stages of planning and introduction through to the conclusion of the first phase, everyone involved has embraced the moment with enthusiasm, energy and commitment. The staff group see the project as a gift, a unique opportunity to be brave and bold and to step outside the normal scheme of things. Institutional life can sometimes feel sterile, soulless and fragile. Yet to watch the community work with amazing artists is to witness a monochrome image evolve into something with warmth, colour, hope and inspiration. The project has enhanced relationships, brought new fresh ideas and got everyone talking. Hospital Rooms are now part of the Northside House family and will be for a long time.

The philosophy of the Hospital Rooms brings a genuine sense of hope for the future. The brilliance of the team, their compassion and belief in what can be achieved reflects the strength and depth of the projects which dare to challenge the everyday aspects of Institutional life. Groups working with Hospital Rooms should take time to visit other units to enjoy the galleries of art, to listen to staff and patients and to be open to the possibilities of a cultural shift through collaboration, commitment and creativity. I believe the opportunity to form a network and forums to link with partner agencies will promote and sustain the longevity of this incredible, uplifting and inspirational programme.

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Artwork created by a service user on the wall of the nurses' station in Catton Ward at Northside House.

Introduction

*Phoebe Eustance / Head of
Research, Hospital Rooms*

After three lockdowns and multiple false starts due to the coronavirus pandemic, we're delighted to have completed our first project at Northside House, a medium secure unit for men in Norfolk and Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust (NSFT). The toll the pandemic has taken on NHS mental health services has been critical, especially in secure services where service users have experienced being locked in while the world was locked down. We are incredibly thankful to the team at Northside House for their sustained support throughout the project; ensuring all workshops and installations were carried out in a covid-safe manner.

Northside House provides care to people who have a severe and enduring mental health diagnosis and have been in touch with the criminal justice system. This dual element often means that service users experience disproportionate stigma and, as a consequence, face a series of barriers to meaningful engagement with arts and culture.

During the project, service users and staff participated in a series of workshops alongside acclaimed artists Cara Nahaul, Carl Rowe, Dexter Dalwood, Jade Montserrat, Naomi Harwin and Richard Wentworth. With a value on process over outcome, these experiences are crucial in encouraging autonomy and feelings of self-worth through artistic expression.

These workshops went on to inform six installations in spaces across Northside House. Inspiration came directly for some artists; Carl Rowe's 'BE' originated in an artwork made by a service user with the words 'be younique'. Whilst others were sparked by conversations or a moment; Richard Wentworth's visits to The Mount, an outside workshop space for service users at Northside, during the early summer months became integral to the artwork he installed on Blakeney Ward.

Our research partnership with Norwich University of the Arts has made this our most pioneering project to date. Together, we've spearheaded a new evaluation methodology, enabling us to critically reflect on, and elevate, our processes. This allows us to build a bigger picture of the impact our projects are having on mental health unit communities.



In March 2021 we had an opportunity to present this methodology at an online research symposium co-hosted by Norwich University of the Arts and Hospital Rooms. *Arts and Mental Health: Facing the Future* was in response to the pandemic and in place of our usual exhibition celebrating the project, which was postponed to November 2021 at East Gallery in Norwich. Alongside the artists and partner organisations, we invited two keynote speakers. David Cutler spoke about The Baring Foundation's role in supporting arts organisations who work with people living with mental illness and Dr. Clive Parkinson showed a visual essay depicting his ongoing research and artistic practice.

Throughout this book you will find anecdotes that have come out of the research and illustrate how the project has inspired people to find their own creativity. The most moving piece of feedback came from a service user taking the initiative to paint their own full scale artworks on Catton Ward. This is absolutely unprecedented in secure services. Seeing someone who is detained conceiving of an artwork and then not only the motivation and materials but also eluding the extreme restrictions of a secure ward to undertake two ambitious artworks epitomises the aspirations of Hospital Rooms.

“This project has helped to free individuals from the perceived shackles of detainment, diagnosis, risk and hopelessness.”

Staff member / Northside House

Thank you to Norwich University of the Arts, Arts Council England, The Baring Foundation, Norfolk and Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust and Hospital Rooms supporters for making this project possible.



FIRE EXIT

Service User artwork

Words by Phoebe Eustance / Head of Research, Hospital Rooms



The journey of one service user during the project is particularly poignant when thinking about self-worth. Even though English wasn't their first language and self-expression was fairly tough for them, they came to every workshop and became more and more confident in communicating. Now they are an active member of the Northside House advisory group where they regularly give feedback to the trust on behalf of other service users.

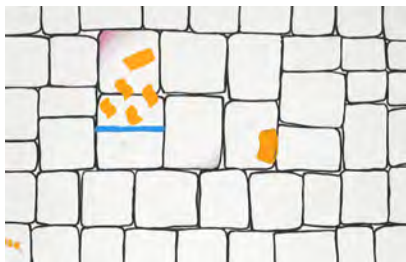
“Art is not necessarily about learning something, it is more an opportunity to learn about yourself.”
Staff member / Northside house

‘Unheard of in secure services’ [previous page]
An artwork by a service user in the communal area of Catton Ward at Northside House inspired by Carl Rowe's 'BE' installation.

The work we do at Hospital Rooms is organised around the idea of collaboration between artists and service users, and it is why artist-led workshops are such a vital part of the process before producing a permanent artwork. Installing the completed work within restrictive, locked mental health units can be challenging, requiring multiple stages of negotiation, safety requirements and approval that can last for months. At Northside House however, we were completely blown away when after finishing the three artwork installations on Catton Ward, we noticed that two new artworks had appeared on the ward, created independently by a service user. For such initiative to be taken, with full support and trust from ward staff was described by the NHS trust leadership as being ‘absolutely unprecedented in secure services’.

The service user was inspired to create these two paintings after seeing Carl Rowe and the Hospital Rooms team create the ‘BE’ artwork in the communal area. From the techniques he used, you can clearly see the painting skills taken from observing each installation in progress and from talking to the team - underpainting, masking and attention to detail with the application of paint. The choice of colours in the service user's ‘ambition’ work mirrored Rowe's lettering in ‘BE’ and the oscillating abstract shapes in the bedroom corridor borrowed Cara Nahaul's yellow and Naomi Harwin's dark blue from their respective installations.

These new and unanticipated additions to the project represent why we do what we do and the need for projects like this in locked and secure mental health services. Working alongside acclaimed artists in the workshops and conversing during the installations can challenge existing hierarchies and empower service users to engage with art and creativity on their own terms. Seeing someone so inspired by our project to commit their time and space to making their mark and showing creativity in this way takes this even further than we thought was possible in this environment. The visibility of service users' works builds on the idea of ownership and involvement in creativity that goes some way to dismantling notions of elitism in art and how art, in fact, can be created by all and for all. For Hospital Rooms, this is the ultimate outcome.



**DEXTER
DALWOOD**



Deliverance 2021

Wall painting

2021



Corners within secure settings are often perceived as quite scary spaces for people on the ward, especially if you can't see around them. According to staff members, Dexter's artwork has changed the way corners are thought about by softening the harsh, angular nature of them and breaking up the space. The central depiction of the sun is seen to give hope beyond the walls, almost as if you can see right through them.

“Corners of hope and thoughtfulness and not of fear”

Staff member / Northside House

Artwork by Dexter Dalwood [previous page] painted in the atrium between Blakeney, Catton and Drayton Ward at Northside House.

Dexter created outline templates based around Mexican pre Hispanic stone walls, these were given to each participant during the workshop and they were encouraged to collage images into individual stones or across the whole sheet. They had previously been asked to bring in images that related to a personal memory - This idea was inspired by a series of workshops Dexter had facilitated at Casa Wabi, Oaxaca in Mexico with young people in the local community, where they looked at their own connection to the country's history.

One participant at the Northside workshop was a service user who was due to leave the unit soon. He spoke to Dexter about his recovery journey using the metaphor of 'hanging up his gloves' in an uplifting sense to talk about moving on from negative events in his life. This became a central feature of Dexter's final installation in the atrium between Catton Ward and Blakeney Ward, where a pair of boxing gloves were hanging down painted in a trompe-l'œil style. The installation also included a direct reference from a participant's workshop piece of a hand pulling down on a piece of paper or fabric which represented turning a new leaf while a full moon hovers to the right of another doorway- the large central image that wraps around the wall is based on Edvard Munch's 1911 painting 'The Sun', Dexter chose this image to think about the hope that comes from thinking beyond the walls of Northside House to a new imagined beginning.

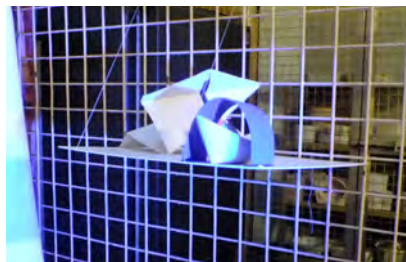
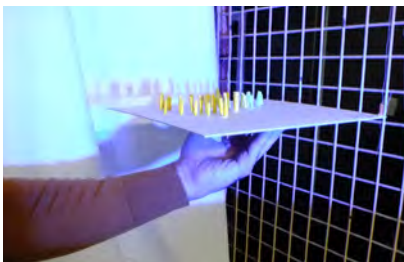
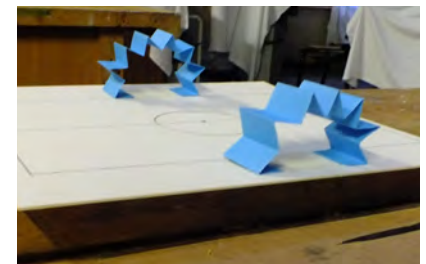
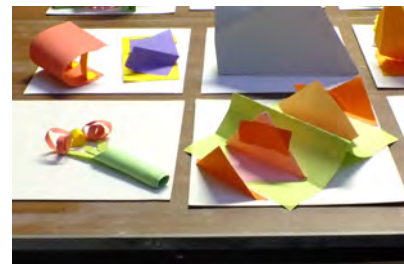
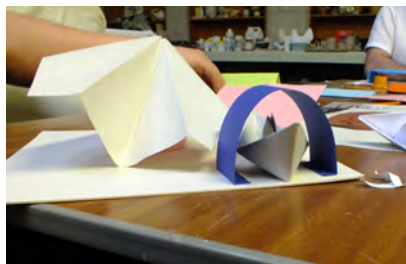
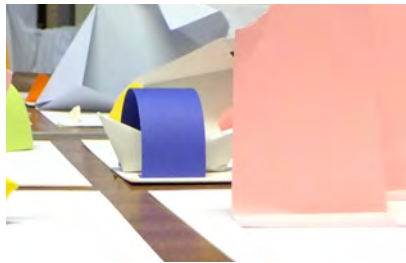
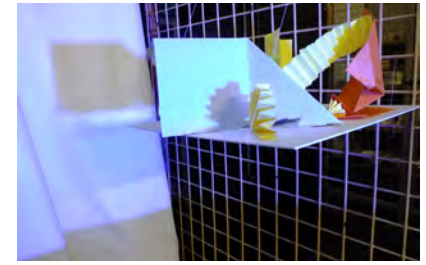
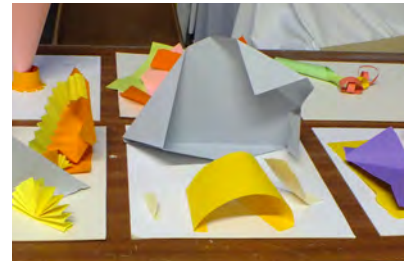
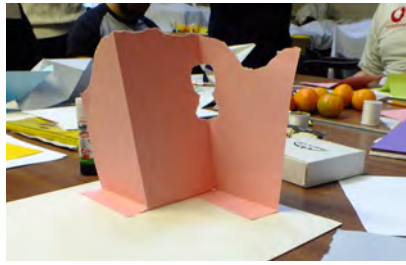
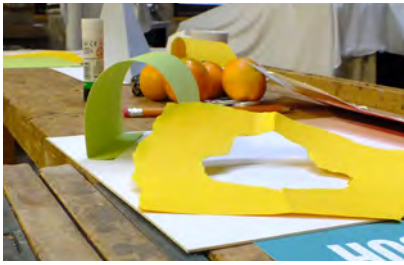
These artworks are dispersed across a stretch of three walls to create a dynamic installation and is positioned in the atrium between wards, which is passed through everyday by patients on the way to mealtimes or escorted leave.

“It’s a relaxed space where people get the opportunity to be themselves. A wonderful distraction from life on the ward.”

Service user on Dexter Dalwood’s workshop / Northside House



Detail of artwork by Dexter Dalwood
Each of the vignettes in the atrium were inspired by the workshop with service users and staff.



Detail of workshop led by Naomi Harwin where service users and staff created paper sculptures and experimented with using a projector to make shadow shapes and compositions.

**NAOMI
HARWIN**



Re-staging the familiar

Mixed media wall painting

with MDF relief

2021



“Naomi just absolutely completely shattered the austere nature, the coldness of the environment and the colours were...it was the antithesis of an institutional world, you know, the colour, the shapes, and you know you’ve got these contrasts of this great big TV encased in a box which I cannot stand. I’ve had a career of dismantling those boxes, and you know Naomi did that with the work she did in that quiet room.”

“Antithesis of an institutional world”

Ged Pattison / Lead Nurse, NSFT

Artwork by Naomi Harwin [previous page]

in the TV room on Catton Ward at Northside House. A lot of people on the ward described Naomi’s immersive installation as being like a ‘bubble’ or a ‘womb’; a sense of being contained in a nice and supportive way.

Grounded in process, Naomi Harwin’s artistic practice observes the relational qualities of objects and forms in correspondence with space. Considering how we organise and interpret visual information, Naomi reflects on how we might comprehend objects through the aid of models and images.

“When approaching this project I was particularly interested in the relationships we have with spaces and how their scenographic qualities can guide or influence our experiences of them. With this in mind, following my visit to Northside House my attention was drawn towards the way rooms and corridors were moved through and inhabited. I was keen to work with one of the quieter and enclosed spaces and create subtle interventions that altered the physicality of the space.

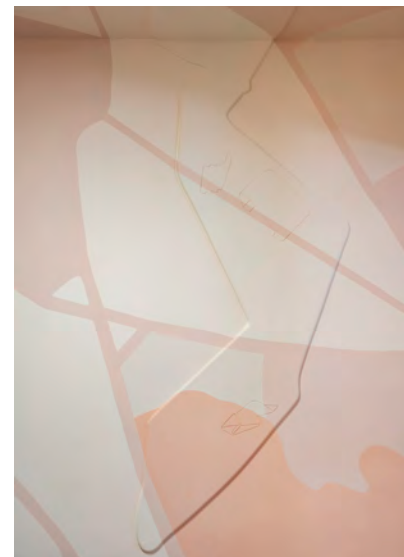
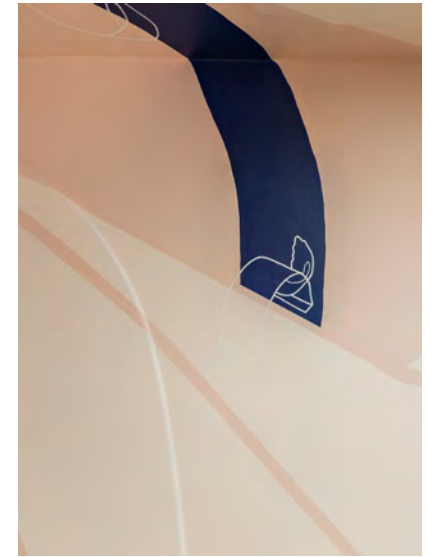
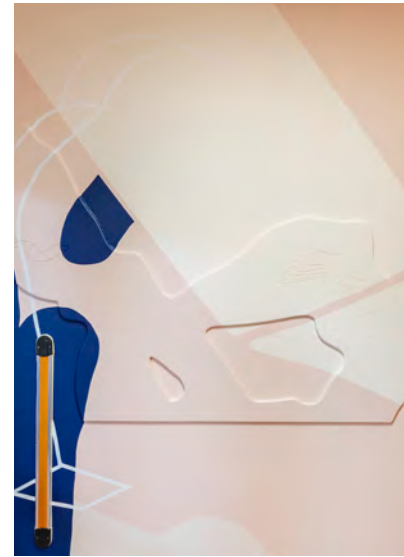
For my workshop with the service users and staff, we explored different folding and construction methods to create miniature 3D environments with colourful card and papers. This opportunity allowed us to discuss and think about their ideal spaces or places they had a connection to, which influenced what they made. We also tested the use of lighting to see how this altered interactions between elements and generated new shapes through casting shadows.

The environments made by the service users were vibrant and full of energy and I wanted to transfer this to my artwork. This led to a design that responded directly to the paper constructions, generating shapes and drawings to work with. Fabricating wooden shapes with drawn elements etched into their surface and a wrap around mural, the installation in the TV room covers its walls and ceiling. The installation looks to enrich a sense of curiosity through the playfulness of the shapes and composition while providing a tranquil space through its grounding colours.”

Naomi Harwin / artist

“It’s nice to have some thought put into the art, because we’re here 24/7 and no-one wants to be in a hospital waiting room 24/7.”

Service user / Northside House



Detail of artwork by Naomi Harwin showing the raised relief and detailed etchings based on the forms that came out of her paper sculpture workshop.

On How to Live: Where the Work Begins and Ends

An essay by Hugh Nicholson

It's unlikely you have visited this exhibition – if 'exhibition' is the best word for it. Exhibitions make public, yet access to the six commissioned artworks in the medium-security forensic unit at Northside House is tightly restricted to the staff who work there, and to the 25 male residents for whom Northside is their home. Instead, the only way for most people to experience these artworks is by leafing through the glossy pages of this catalogue.

Encountering artworks as documentation alone is a relatively recent phenomenon. Brian O'Doherty describes the installation shot as a form of picture-making that goes hand in hand with the logic of the modernist white cube: of framing and delimiting, of determining both what is and what isn't shown. Through this process, it is possible to isolate the artwork as an object of critical enquiry, to permit the work to be examined on its own terms, to allow the artwork, so-to-speak, to live. Such installation shots, he argues, are typically evacuated of movement in an attempt to suspend time and space, to create an ideal condition of critical detachment – to the point that even we, as viewers, vanish altogether.

And yet, this is different. Whilst the images in this catalogue share the same slick qualities characteristic of contemporary art documentation, it is clear Northside embodies a very different logic to that of the white modernist gallery. Instead, the surroundings that are part of Northside's life are everywhere: a green table tennis table stands poised for a game; burgundy chairs cluster around a dark-laminate table; coats hang limply in an office; laminated schedules and motivational posters address empty rooms. Images suggest every sign of activity here, but nothing is actually happening: staff and residents are nowhere to be seen. Instead, the wards appear like stage-sets, suspended in time; sunlight streams endlessly through the security glass, flooding out across the unit.

My visit to Northside took place on a flat grey day in mid June. Upon arriving at security, I was told it had already been a busy morning and that two wards might be inaccessible due to disturbances. A nurse escorted me through the security doors, and into a space of life and activity. There was a lot of noise; wards

were thick with conversations between staff and residents, and every now and then, there came the piercing sound of an alarm, followed by the loud rush of feet along the wooden corridors. It felt odd and disconcerting. I was keenly aware of my physical presence as an outsider here; it felt hard to be alone, hard to achieve any illusion of critical detachment.



Forensic mental health units like Northside House are highly monitored and administered – designed to function not only for residents to live in, but also to contain and care for those residents. The official NHS Design Guide lays out detailed standards and recommendations for the construction and fabrication of medium secure units. All is calculated. All is determined: from window measurements to corridor widths, from wall colours to floor finishes. A small note in Section 2.7 of the guide states: ‘landscaping and interior design (including use of works of art) are very significant.’ In practice, works of art are purchased - sometimes in job lots, sometimes directly from artists - before they are subsequently used to clad the walls of a unit. At best, these selections are underpinned and determined by academic studies that analyse the therapeutic properties of art in hospitals and care units. Some such studies classify artworks by artistic subject, suggesting specific content or certain colours hold more capacity to heal or soothe than others.

While such a standardized approach is in one sense expedient - both cheap and pragmatic - it risks limiting works to perform mere decoration or therapy, affirming artistic tropes and clichés. Such an approach not only risks eliminating the possibility for challenging critical reflection, but also makes assumptions about the wants and critical capacities of any audiences who might experience these works. In such a heavily administered and monitored environment, where designs of wards and living spaces are already so heavily determined, residents are reinforced as passive bodies, excluded from conversations, with little autonomy or choice in how their home appears.



Hospital Rooms’ commissioning model pursues a very different strategy. The artists involved with Northside have developed these works over time, after undertaking visits to the unit and leading workshops with the residents. Artworks are devised to live within the particularities of Northside House, both through the process of production that underpins each individual work’s development, and also through the ways in which works are dispersed throughout the unit: one work occupies a vestibule, another a corridor; two more are spread across the ‘Quiet Room’ and ‘TV Room’, before a final two works inhabit the wards themselves.

The relation of these artworks to their conditions of display is, however, a complex one, and analyzing the works themselves, thinking their respective forms and confines, is a difficult process. Four of the six commissions take the form of murals, lacking the putative self-containment of the photograph or easel painting, instead gaining formal definition from the architecture of the space itself. As a result, some artworks reinforce the physicality of the architecture. In Cara Nahaul’s expansive mural, a stylized jungle of grey and yellow trees sensitively complements the chrome electrical fittings, the fixtures surfacing through the paintwork, disrupting the foliage and the free-play of glowing colours and forms. Meanwhile, scattered across the atrium, Dexter Dalwood’s wall paintings draw upon different styles and genres, each enclosed by a wobbly frame. The images appear faintly like panels from a graphic novel, their relationships indeterminate and opaque.

Certain works appear more clearly defined than others. Looking into the ‘TV Room’ through a large soundproof window, globular forms overlap and intersect – some blue, some white, some baby pink – while beneath, smooth relief panels carefully curve to accommodate existing architectural features. Peering closer, a series of small line drawings appear, routed into their surface, each a miniature diagram of an origami model. Here, in Naomi Harwin’s work, there is a sense of being enfolded within the space, caught between these bodily layers of colour, as if the room is in the process of being formed. Inside, a young man reclining on a puffy chair plays a video game on a black flat-screen: a lone figure in a stetson runs silently through the pixelated ruins of a derelict city.

Some artworks quietly acknowledge and integrate the conditions of display into the form of the work itself. Richard Wentworth's modular photographs run high around the top of the ward, paralleling the glass windows of the staff office, and echoing the corners of the room, the ventilation grills, the windows to the world outside. The photographs capture moments of sunlight filtering through the perforated screen designed to protect and enclose the koi carp pond in Northside's small garden. The pictures are difficult to make out - patterns of light and dark, flatness and depth, ripple between the panels, disturbing and breaching the limits of the system, contesting any sense of order and confinement.

Other works are more direct, more propositional. Each of Jade Montserrat's three large digital prints, installed flat to the corridor wall, is rendered delicately in crayon and trembling watercolour. Snippets of unseen conversations from preparatory workshops with Northside's residents are remade, enlarged to the scale of posters. Nearby, Carl Rowe's wall-work combines image and text. Seven screen-printed images overlay the letters - 'BE' - painted crisply in large pink capitals. The screenprints float above the text, depicting individual forms, detached from function or context: a hunched anglepoise lamp is surrounded by brush-marks; an unknown body freefalls through a milky sky; a lone candlestick sits unused. Behind, the bold text is equivocal - perhaps an existential demand writ-large, perhaps quiet call for autonomy or reflection.

Under these conditions, critical categories shift and merge; commissions veer between the functional and the functionless, the art-like and the decorative. It feels difficult to know how to interpret these works, how to understand them. Moreover, as a passing visitor, I'm conscious my experience here is partial and fleeting, very different to that of those who live alongside these artworks. Sitting in detachment, gazing at these carefully crafted installation shots of the vacant unit, I find myself wondering what residents of Northside House really make of these changes? What work do these six artworks perform? How do these works live?

There is already one answer, perhaps. In the month since the artworks were installed, a seventh and eighth artwork have appeared. On the low wall beneath the glass windows of the office, one resident has painted the word 'ambition' in bright pink

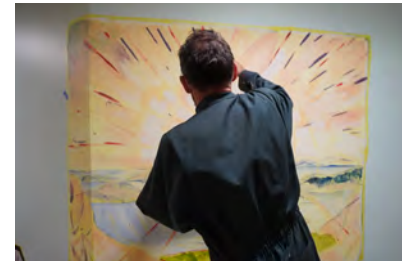
paint, signed off with a flourish of black marker-pen. Nearby, in a neighbouring corridor, the same resident has created a mural of swirling triangles in cobalt and yellow, the edges crisply taped off, mimicking the precision of Rowe's crisp paintwork. The yellow paint is a remnant from Nahaul's mural, the pink paint from Rowe's, the blue from Harwin's. I am told he wants to make more - that he hopes to extend the paintings out into other corridors, flowing out across the other wards.



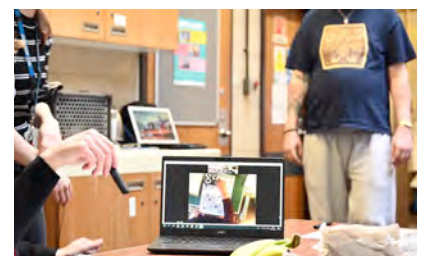
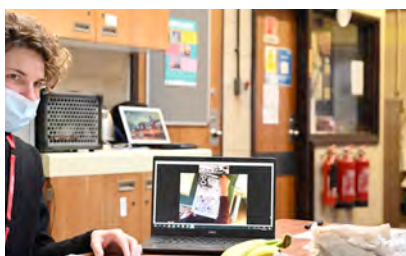
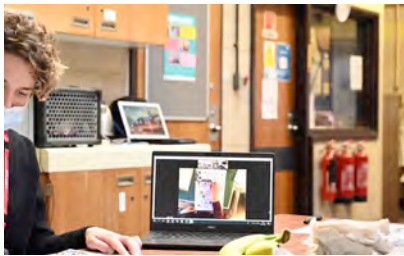
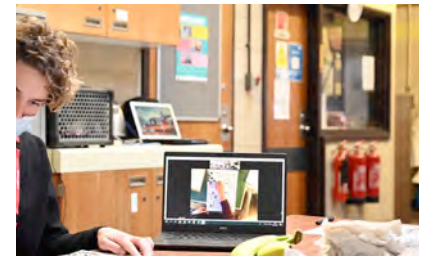
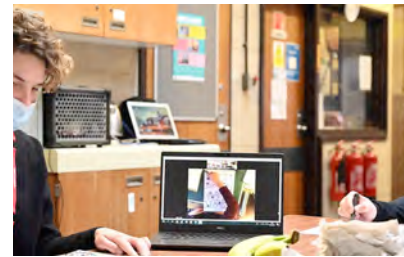
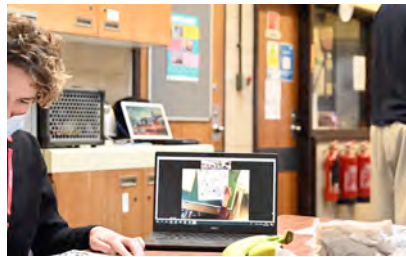
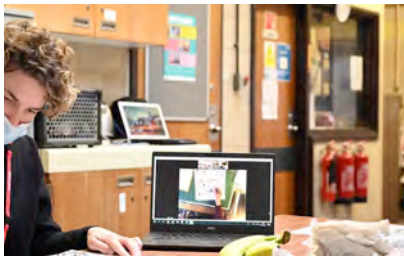
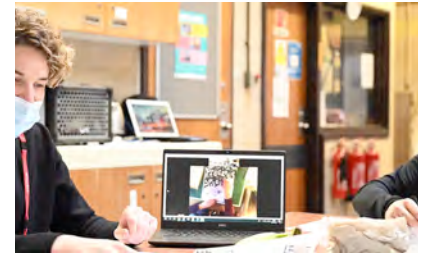
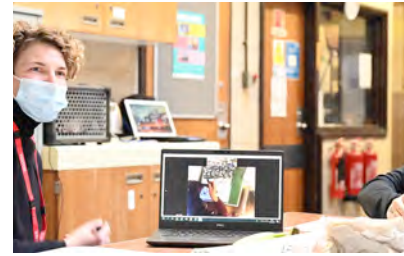
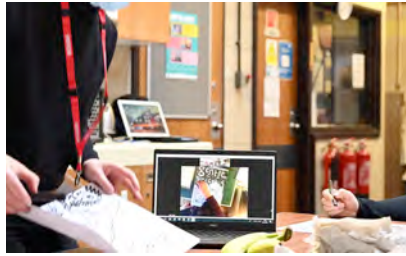
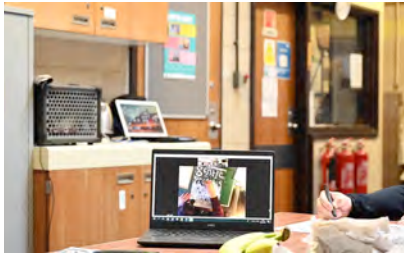
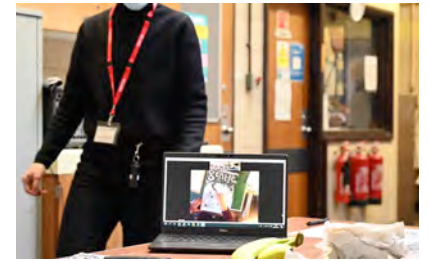
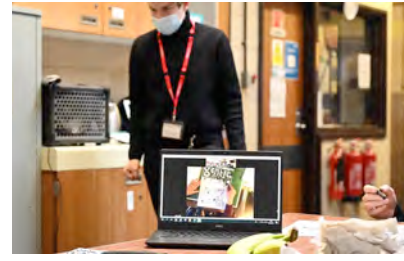
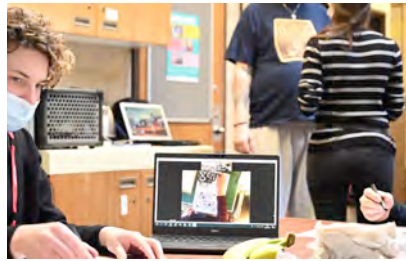
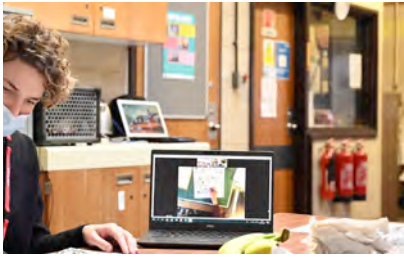
It was getting late, and we were about to leave for the London train, when another resident approached. He spoke quickly and urgently, in long fluent sentences that ebbed and flowed. He had been thinking about the hand-written fragments in Montserrat's triptych, in particular about one phrase: 'transcending the borders of movement' - pale letters that shimmer above a dark backdrop of hatching. For a week, he'd felt puzzled, frustrated, angry - even, but then, he says, he had a breakthrough: 'I imagine standing on a mountain, on a pinnacle, a frontier. It's about enlightenment and being spiritual, thinking about the mind and the body and their relationship. It's about challenging yourself to find your inner Zen. It's about art. Creativity flows like water...' ♦

“This project has allowed me to challenge my painting practice by working site-specifically and on a much larger scale. It allowed me to engage with space in a new way as I previously did not have much experience creating artwork for a public / communal place. I also enjoyed the collaborative aspect of the project, and working with the service users to help inform my ideas and approach.”

Cara Nahaul / artist

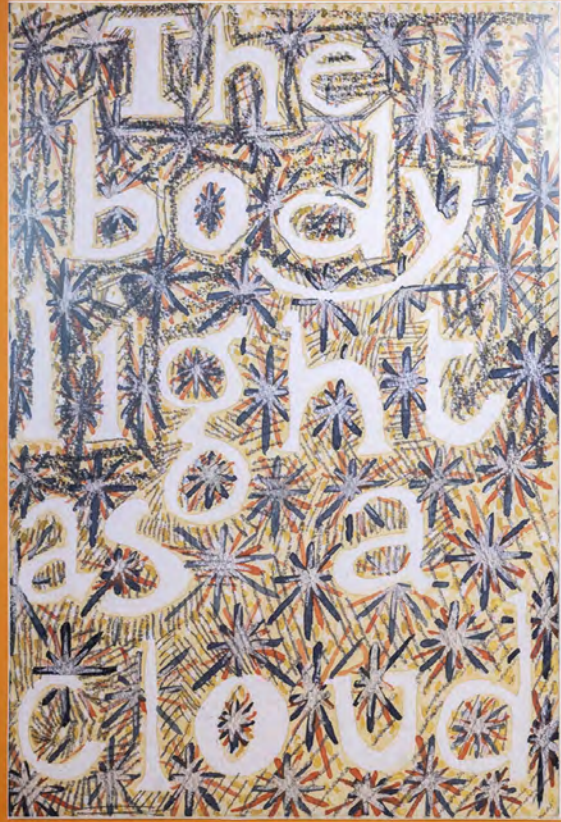


Artworks during installation at Northside House
From March July 2021, artists, the Hospital Rooms team and the Northside House team worked together to ensure that all installations were completed successfully.

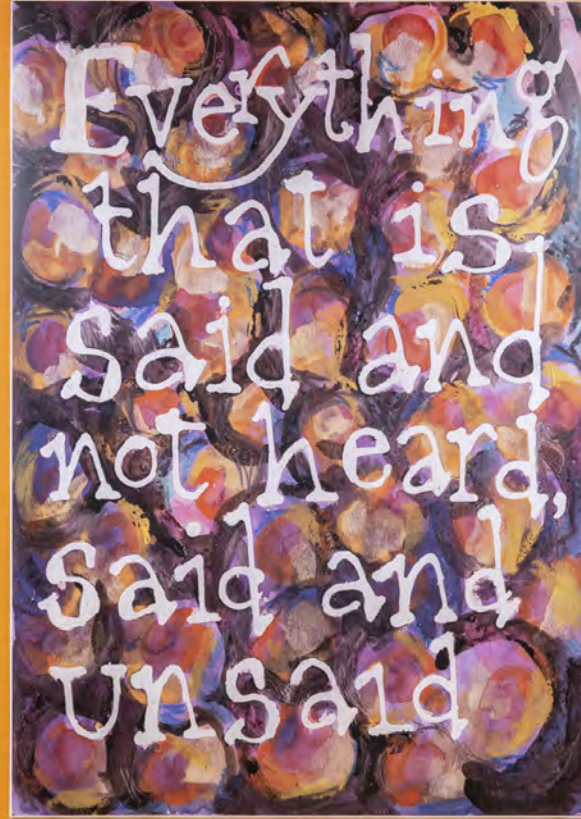


Detail of workshop led by Jade Montserrat
Due to the COVID-19 Jade led a virtual workshop by video connection. Whilst Jade read a text aloud, service users and staff responded through drawing and other ways of non-verbal communication.

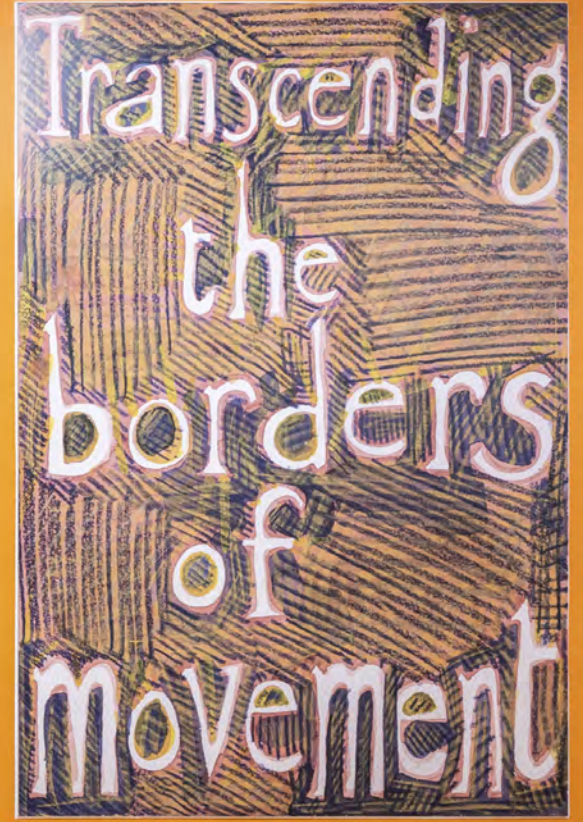
JADE MONTSERRAT

The background of this artwork is a dense, textured field of small, multi-pointed starburst or floral motifs. These motifs are rendered in shades of blue, black, and brown, set against a lighter, yellowish-tan background. The overall effect is a complex, woven pattern.

The
body
light
as a
cloud

The background consists of a dense, overlapping field of colorful circles and ovals. The colors are primarily warm, including shades of red, orange, yellow, and purple, with some cooler tones of blue and green. The circles vary in size and are layered, creating a sense of depth and movement.

Everything
that is
said and
not heard,
said and
unsaid

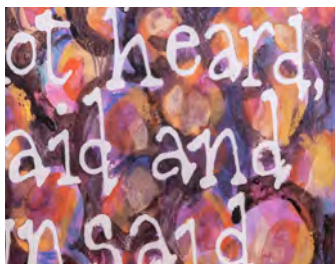
The background is composed of numerous concentric, roughly rectangular shapes that resemble a woven or knitted texture. The lines are dark, possibly black or dark brown, and are set against a lighter, brownish-tan background. The overall effect is a complex, geometric pattern that suggests movement and depth.

Transcending
the
borders
of
movement

The body as light as a cloud

Watercolour and charcoal works
reproduced on foamex panels

2021



Jade's triptych of text based works generated a lot of discussion amongst service users and staff at Northside. First impressions of the work commented on its boldness; a refreshing change from magnolia walls so often found in clinical settings. It showed that self-expression isn't just accepted at Northside House, it's encouraged.

"Magnolia is not what we do here"

Staff member / Northside House

Artwork by Jade Montserrat [previous page]

Following her workshop exploring the tactile and sensory qualities of language, Jade Montserrat created these drawings that were reproduced on large scale and installed in the corridor of Northside House.

"Drawing is something that we're taught to do in school, it's something that we do as a child, it's accessible, so it allows me to be thinking about democracy and speak on layman's terms – it doesn't need to be art. Through drawing you're mapping, you're editing, or tracing something. I'm also making an appeal that no drawing is wrong. Because I think that sense of doing things wrong is what limits everyone's access, not just to the spaces for creativity, but also to our own potential for creativity. It's like we've unlearnt creativity.

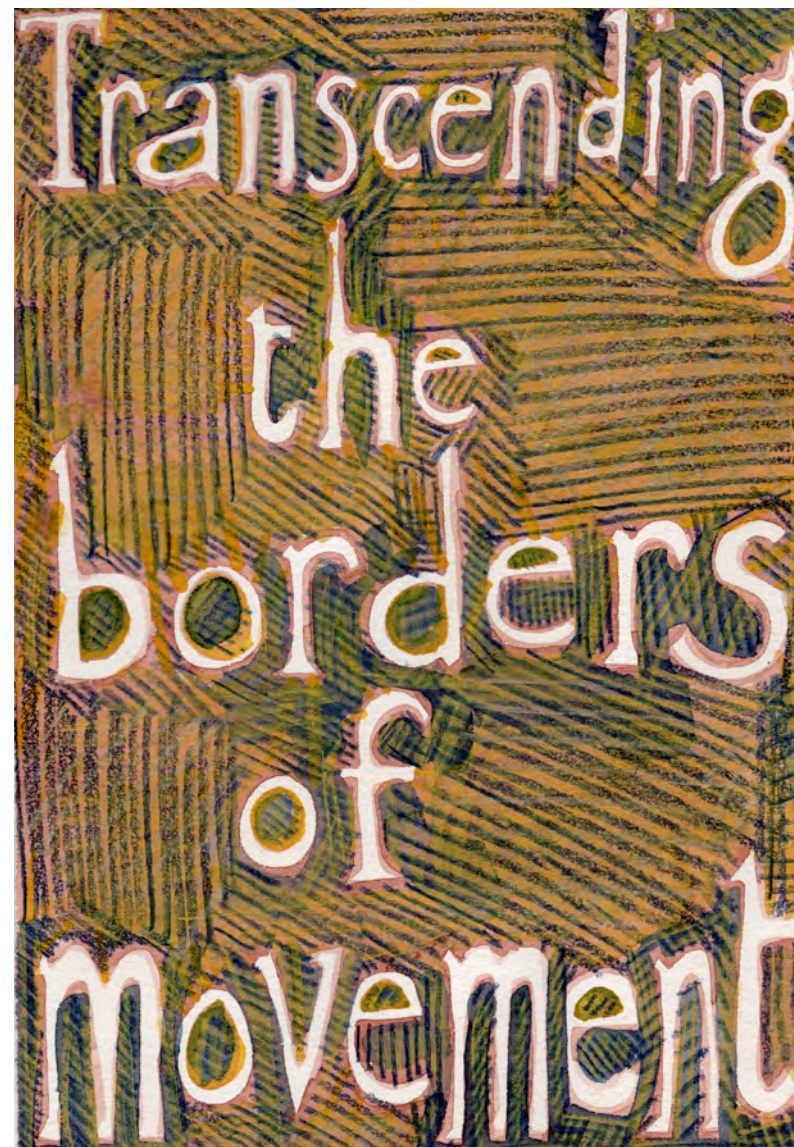
When I perform the spoken element of "No Need for Clothing," there are pauses, I breathe in and out for three seconds, it isn't showy, but I just pause and breathe. I sometimes think about how we unlearn how to breathe fully; it wasn't until I went to yoga, that I was taught again how to breathe into my tummy so that it expands and then to breathe out again. I think we put limits on our imagination similarly, because we're breathing in this constant state of suspense or anxiety, that this world creates around us.

The reason I have been able to arrive at an idea of drawing as an expanded process is because I've gone through a certain type of education. Although I'm saying drawing is democratic and generative and has these possibilities, in practice it doesn't work unless we're all up to speed with the idea that creativity can happen at any point. I think that the potentials of drawing are opened up through language and the way most people think about "drawing out," as a way of thinking through something, an actioning or a movement. I'm arriving at this formulation that drawing is more like performance, we're leaving a trace and that trace can be a conversation. I'm seeing that there's a connection between us all, through dialoguing there is a line, there's a thread. If your thinking is informed by an ethics focused on human rights or sustainability it allows a certain freedom – all the things that maybe could be embarrassing or risky can be overcome, because I see drawing almost as a formal way of approaching my art practice. Thinking of drawing in that way allows me to feel creative and take every experience as a valuable experience and be quite present in each situation."

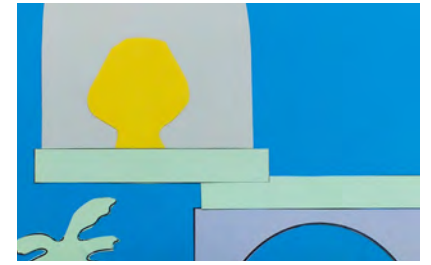
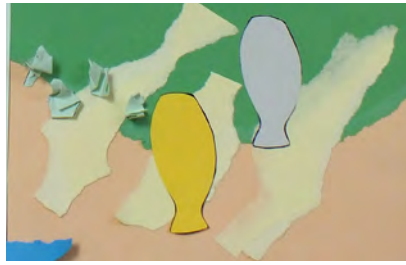
Excerpt from Jade Montserrat's performance at 'Arts and Mental Health: Facing the Future' symposium

“Transcending the borders of movement... I now know what it’s about! It’s about challenging yourself to find your inner zen; I imagine standing on a mountain, a frontier, a pinnacle. It’s about enlightenment and being spiritual, thinking about the mind and the body and their relationship. It’s like what Einstein says about the theory of relativity, making the abstract sound like science.”

Service user / Northside House



Detail of artwork by Jade Montserrat
She describes her practice as ‘drawing her way through history and her story’, often reflecting on her black diasporic perspective in the North of England.



Detail of artworks created at Cara Nahaul's workshop where service users and staff created colourful scenes using collage based on recollections of places they have visited or wish to travel to.

CARA NAHAUL



Between islands

Wall painting with
vinyl window detail

2021



Framing nature

The blue window archway of Cara Nahaul's artwork can be seen from all the communal areas of Catton Ward. At a closer glance, service users and staff have noticed how it frames the wooded area beyond the unit grounds and commented on the impact of it building a closer relationship with nature. One service user spoke about paying more attention to what's outside, seeing "bunny rabbits coming out of the trees" and saying that "it is more stimulating, it gives you something to gaze upon - it is exciting."

During Cara's workshop, service users and staff created colourful scenes using collage based on recollections of places they have visited or wish to travel to. Through this, they considered how colour can be a personal and direct way of communicating, and the ways it can suggest travel or distant places.

"When I first saw the recreation room at Northside House, I knew I wanted to move away from the blank white walls and bring colour and warmth into the space. I was particularly drawn to the window, one of the only openings within the unit which looks out into the hospital grounds. I thought about the distance between inside the hospital and outside, and how a wall painting could be used to create a bridge between both worlds.

There was potential to bring a softness to the room and create something uplifting for the occupants. My wall painting depicts an imaginary tropical landscape, intended to make you feel as though you are situated in a dense canopy or rainforest. I wanted the bright colours and scenery to transport those who use the room out of their immediate surroundings and evoke a sense of having travelled somewhere distant. Between the two wall paintings sits the window, now framed by a blue arch, providing a portal to the greenery outside and the world beyond the hospital grounds."

Cara Nahaul / artist

Artwork by Cara Nahaul [previous page]
in the Quiet Room on Catton Ward at Northside House.
The work was achieved by painting directly on the
walls and installing a blue vinyl arch on the window.

“To me this is about climate change, the colours [yellow hues] suggest warm weather and the leaves are dropping off so it makes me think about the world around us and how it’s changing.”

Service user / Northside House



Detail of artwork by Cara Nahaul
painted directly onto the wall in the Quiet Room.

Su Pashley in conversation with Phoebe Eustance

At Northside House

Su Pashley in conversation with Phoebe Eustance, Head of Research, at Northside House.

Phoebe Eustance First of all, thank you Su for speaking with me today about the Hospital Rooms x Northside House project. It's really great to get your feedback as People Participation Lead for Secure and Forensic Services at Norfolk and Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust (NSFT) and as someone who has been so influential to the project from the outset.

When we began initial conversations about the project, together with yourself and Ged at NSFT and Norwich University of the Arts (NUA), we identified Catton Ward as a place where the project could have the most impact because of the nature of it being the admissions ward. The majority of the artworks have been installed there as well as some in the communal corridor areas. Could you tell us from your perspective, what has the wider impact of the project been at Northside House and in particular on Catton Ward?

Su Pashley So 18 months ago, maybe a bit less, it was hostile on Catton Ward, it was very clinical, it was pretty stark, and it was cold in nature. Catton Ward is the admissions ward so it's often where some of the poorest people stay. With the levels of aggression back then, the use of safety restraint and seclusion were pretty high and it was actually quite a scary place to be. Staff spent a lot of time in the office. Patients spent most of their time in their room. Very rarely would you see people in the communal area. There was no sense of pride in the ward or for the ward, which was reflected in the walls being very bare. Community meetings weren't even happening and there was a sense that it was just a place to contain people and where people worked.

Since the first Hospital Rooms workshop, led by artist Carl Rowe, the project has generated an increasing enthusiasm for art amongst staff and service users. These artists, who have incredible reputations, have come to our service, to Catton Ward, given their time and have been inspired by our service users and their ideas

to create something that's for the community on the ward. It has completely transformed the culture of Catton Ward. We've now got community meetings happening on that ward, there are activities happening like table tennis and generally people are sitting down together and chatting, having coffee mornings. These are things that have never happened on Catton before.

P.E. It's really incredible to hear about that transformation in terms of the sense of community and culture on the ward and how this has reflected the visual identity of the ward with the artworks. What has this meant for staff on Catton Ward?

S.P. We have seen a reduction in restrictive interventions. We have seen a massive reduction in the use of seclusion. We have seen a calmer client group. We have seen service users interacting with each other, which they just did not do before. Now that community is probably more together than any other of our services. There is a real sense of pride. I have spoken to staff here who have actively said to me "I'm proud to work on this ward" and they wouldn't want to be anywhere else. We were struggling to get people to work on that ward before, so this has been a real shift.

The artwork on the ward is generating interactions with people and curiosity. That's what I love about it. I'm sitting in those rooms, where the installations are, with patients and even when we're not talking about the artwork at first, we end up talking about it.

P.E. One of the most amazing things for me personally was coming back to Northside House a couple of weeks after the three installations by Carl Rowe, Naomi Harwin and Cara Nahaul had been completed on Catton Ward. Suddenly, two more really impressive large scale artworks had appeared on the ward, created by a service user. It felt like such a pivotal moment in the project. Could you tell us a bit more about how that happened and what this means in a medium secure unit like Northside House?

S.P. What happened on Catton Ward is absolutely

unheard of in secure services. To allow a service user to take up space and do something with it freely is usually something that would only happen in a highly structured Occupational Therapy session, and that still has a lot of hoops to jump through. The gentleman that you're talking about is really passionate about art and is very, very capable. He's been curious, he's watched you go about your work, your creations, your abilities, the techniques that you've used and he's obviously very subtly been watching the processes taking place. To get paint on a secure mental health ward is quite a challenge but the ward manager has been so inspired by the Hospital Rooms project that she was very behind this service user contribution and just went for it.

What this has said is: why can't we just let people be creative? Why do we have to jump through hoops to be able to do something creative and trust in people? If somebody is saying "I'll do a good job, I want to leave my mark, I've been inspired by this" then we should absolutely support them. I think it's really interesting that you can tell by the techniques that he's used, he's tried to keep in line with the other Hospital Rooms artworks, so that it wasn't completely off the wall.

P.E. Yeah, I really noticed that. Central to this service user painting in the communal area is the word 'ambition'. Where did the spark of inspiration to create this artwork come from?

S.P. After Carl Rowe's artwork which features a large 'BE', there was a lot of discussion about what it meant and this service user went round the ward asking 'BE what?' And everyone was sort of firing back ideas and Catton Ward came up with their own mantra: be different, be inspiring, be well, be yourself, be outside. They sat down and they talked about which was the most precious to them and that particular service user spoke about being ambitious. Why should we allow these walls to detain us and not be ambitious? We can still have ambition and hope beyond detainment right now and I think he was just trying to shine a light on that really.

I think once he'd done the 'ambition' artwork, people thought, whoa, OK, this guy's serious. He's not going to splash abusive stuff on a wall. He genuinely wants to create an art piece that he can leave behind and that's been inspired by the work of Hospital Rooms. What happened next was him saying, "well, there are all these really stark magnolia walls down these horrible bedroom corridors. Why can't I do something about that too?" and we had a ward manager who said, "why not? Let's do it!" For that one individual plus the two guys that supported him to do it, those artworks will be there for years and years and years and they can be really proud when they leave Northside; they've left their mark in a way that is really creative. People will come out of their bedrooms and it's not just a magnolia hospital wall, it's something a bit more dynamic down the corridor. It's amazing to see.

P.E. The legacy that it has left is fantastic and, for us, it's a first in terms of service users pioneering their own large scale artworks in the ward. That's what we love to see! Earlier you mentioned the impact of the project on staff, could you tell us a bit more about how the process has encouraged more of an interaction between service users and staff? Especially with regard to what we have spoken about before; how often, in a lot of mental health services, there's a kind of 'them and us' feeling that is generated through the institutional hierarchy.

S.P. If you think back to what I described earlier: that hostile, volatile environment where people would come to work and wonder what state they'd go home in; would I be punched? Would I be kicked? Would I be worrying about my colleague who is on a one to one? All of those things that you would hope no one would come to work and have to deal with.

I think what this project has done is invested in people, both service users and staff. It's invested in their environment. It's invested in their living space, in their working space, both in resource and change, in an environment change. It has communicated a message to staff that we, the Trust, think you are absolutely worth

it. Your workspace should feel better. This isn't just about service user environments, it is about working environments as well.

The artwork has also been such a conversation starter, it's created a topic of discussion that is able to traverse the boundaries of what staff and service users can talk about together. The quality of interactions before this project were absolutely 'them and us'. Now, we've got a ward where people are sitting reading a paper together, playing connect four or doing a crossword together. It is just a totally different place. It's just amazing and I think you already know this but Catton Ward now have their own football team made up of service users and staff with a pink football kit on a male medium secure ward!

P.E. Yes, it was really great to hear about the new football team on Catton Ward and that they have named themselves 'Catton Kittens'! Where did the pink football kit come from?

S.P. It was this whole drive that came from the pink elements of Carl Rowe's artwork in the communal space and Naomi Harwin's artwork in the quiet room. And it was like "pink is our colour now guys," this is our football kit and the service users chose it. To match the pink theme of Catton Ward, we've now even got staff with lanyards in pink as well. It's just gone pink mad!

P.E. I love that pink is now Catton Ward's trademark colour! We've spoken previously about how the Hospital Rooms process has been quite different to perhaps an art therapy or psychology session because people have been allowed the space to think and express themselves without any repercussions or analysis. Do you feel like there are barriers to accessing visual arts for those in secure units and has this changed at all after participation in the workshops and seeing the installations go up?

S.P. In a male medium secure unit where many have come from prison, the greatest barrier is stigma. Our service users don't really want to be seen to be interested in art because you might be judged on it.

When we do have service users that are enthused by art they tend to do it quietly by themselves in their bedrooms and it's not very public. They wouldn't usually be seen going to an art session. Whereas, what this project has done is create an atmosphere where art is actually accepted and it's something people actively want to participate in. I think that that is probably the greatest barrier that we have overcome.

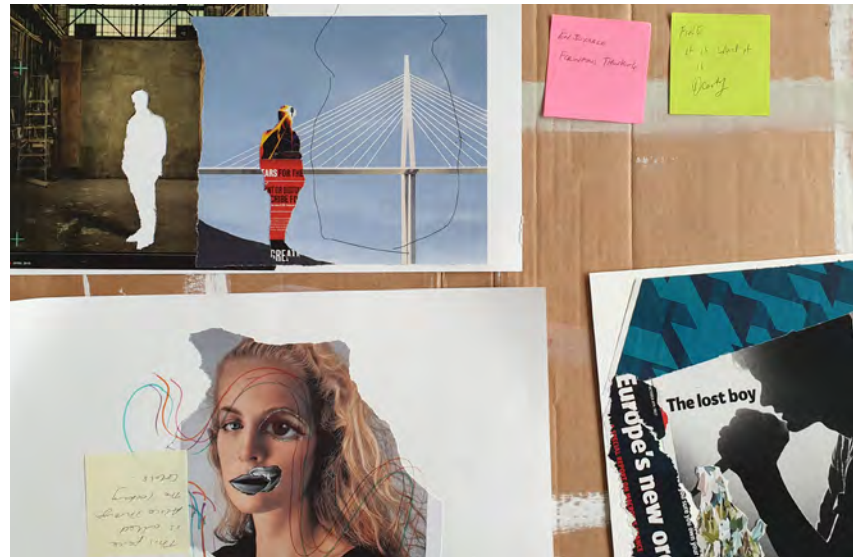
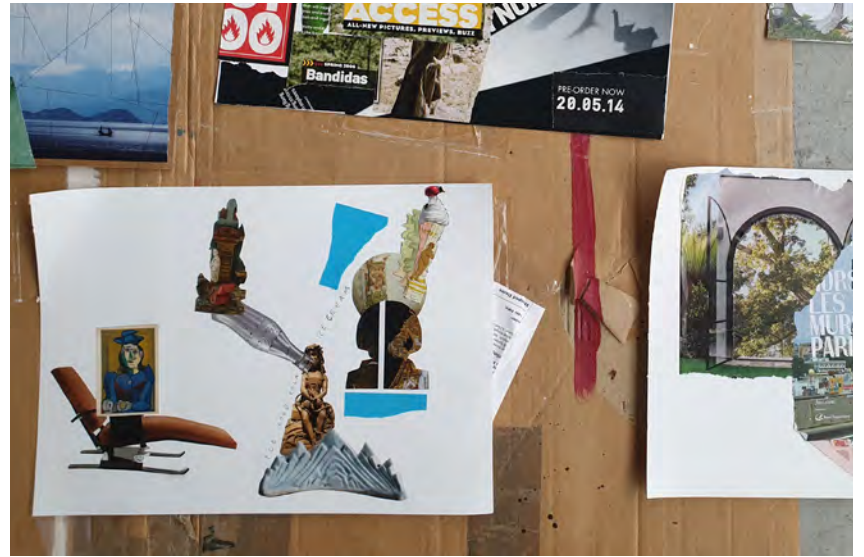
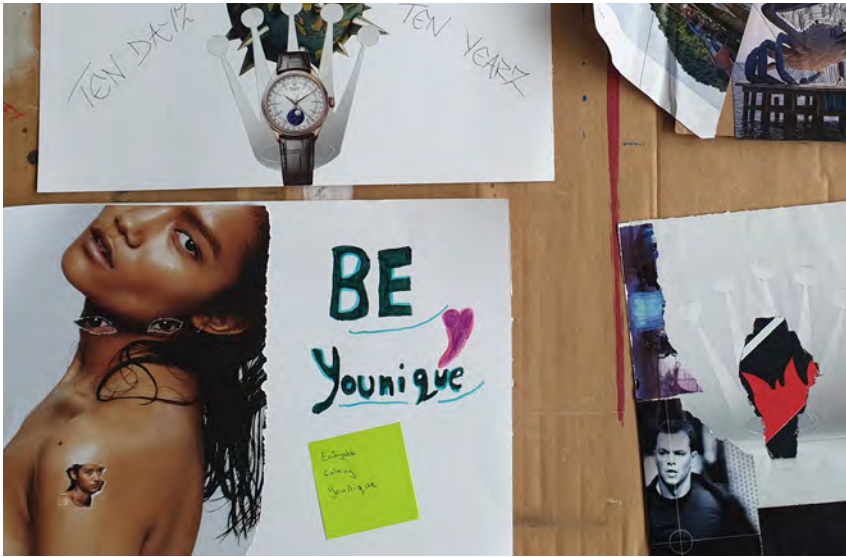
P.E. The last question is about if there has been any other feedback from staff and service users at Northside House? I know you've said before that the greatest piece of feedback has been the service user's artwork on Catton Ward and I agree, I think that in itself says a thousand words.

S.P. Yes, I think that single-handedly says so much. And it's not just him. He's enthused others to join him in that corridor piece. He had a little crew, which is great. As I've shared with you at the start of this conversation, you can't put a price on changing what was not a community into a community. It's done wonders for our service. We're so incredibly proud that you came and chose to work with us. You know, I equally hope that as your staff have finished the project, you feel really proud because you've really left a legacy behind. As we've spoken about, we have one service user who created his own artwork on Catton and I don't know what will happen for him next but I genuinely believe the art will play a big part in his life. And, you know, that's wonderful. If we can change one person's opinion of themselves and of their environment, it is so worth it.

P.E. That is such a good sentiment to end on. ♦

**“What this has said is:
why can't we just let
people be creative?”**

Su Pashley / People Participation Lead



Detail of artworks created at workshop led by Carl Rowe where service users and staff explored the spontaneous and unexpected nature of Surrealist collage.

**CARL
ROWE**



BE

Screen-printed and painted plywood panels on wall-painted text

2021



Priscilla, the ward manager of Catton, told Hospital Rooms that when she came back onto the ward after Carl's installation there was a lot of excitement around the choice of the fuschia pink for the 'BE' and it has since become the ward's trademark colour. The service users even selected it as the colour of their new football team 'Catton Kittens'.

"It's brought a deep sense of pride and belief that we can all BE the best versions of ourselves both individually and collectively as a service."

Staff member / Northside House

As well as being a practicing artist, Carl Rowe is the Fine Art course leader at Norwich University of the Arts who we have partnered with for this project. Northside House is Carl's second project with Hospital Rooms and Norfolk and Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust. In 2019, he created an artwork for the Tribunal Room at Woodlands Unit in Suffolk, which provides acute inpatient mental health services.

"The collage workshop that I delivered at Northside House served as a reminder to me that spontaneity, chance and the unexpected are not just creative processes, they are also indicative of a free spirit. Collage is a liberating method of generating new associations. Through tracing, extracting, shuffling, and reassembling what we recognise, we arrive at gaps, missing entities, irrational couplings, and overlaps. In an optimistic sense, the absence of something defines what is present and random new associations resolve losses, like neural networks reconnecting. One of the service users who took part in the workshop spelt out the words "Be Younique" in their collage, a play on words and the trigger for the work that I have made in response to this commission.

BE is a collection of random (apparently) images dissected from the pages of old books which have been photo-screen printed onto irregular plywood panels. Each panel has a lightly painted background which enhances the image. The panels float over the word BE, painted directly onto the wall. The invitation is to imagine what it is to be, to fill missing parts with new parts, to be yourself and be unique."

Carl Rowe / artist

“Catton Ward came up with their own mantra: be different, be inspiring, be well, be yourself, be outside”

Staff member / Northside House

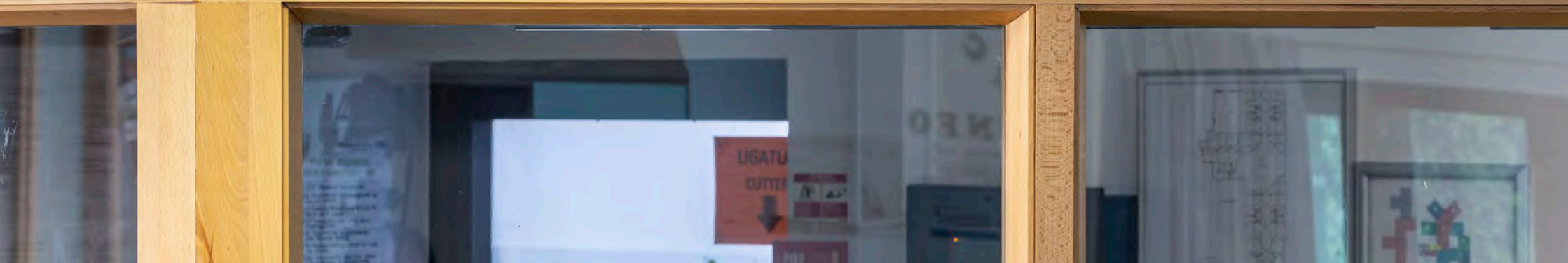
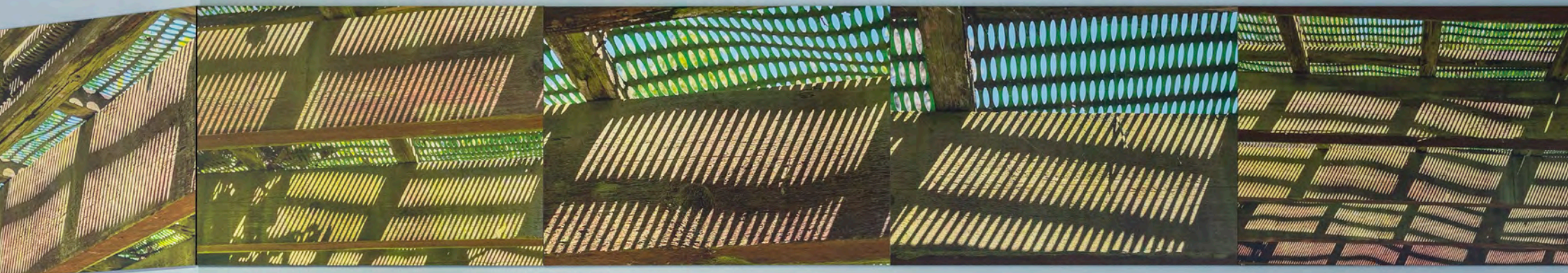


Original artwork by Carl Rowe

The four artworks depicted are screen printed and painted plywood panels that were installed over the wall painting.



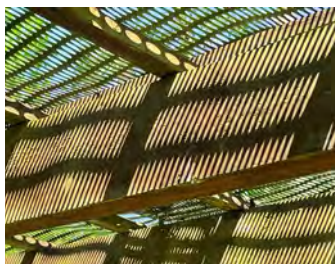
RICHARD WENTWORTH



All over the place, June 2021

Direct to media prints on dibond

2021



From the Mount

Staff member / Northside house

“Some of the service users on Blakeney Ward actually talked about it reflecting the fences in the place, but the sunshine coming through them, as opposed to them being stark and cold. There was sunshine coming through and warmth coming through them. A lot of the service users felt that.”

Artwork by Richard Wentworth [previous page] that has been installed along the perimeter of Blakeney Ward where the wall meets the ceiling.

Richard Wentworth visited The Mount, an outside garden and workshop space for service users at Northside House, on a couple of occasions during the early summer months of 2021. The work that was installed on Blakeney Ward is inspired by these visits and conversations he had there. Richard wrote a letter about his experience of The Mount and of Northside House:

“Being invited is one of life’s oddest social experiences. Strangely, we seldom speak of being ‘ex-vised’. Coming up to Norwich for the first time on a train is a good way to shake off the dust of the metropolis, the way the landscape and the small settlements chatter at the train windows.

One of my tricks for going anywhere is to be sure not to prepare. It is very risky and certainly old-fashioned, now that there are so many ways to ‘research’. I prefer ‘finding out’, which I think is probably more Anglo-Saxon. Being looked after can be quite a luxury, so in this instance it means not thinking too much about any ‘arrangements’, and knowing one can delight in eventuality.

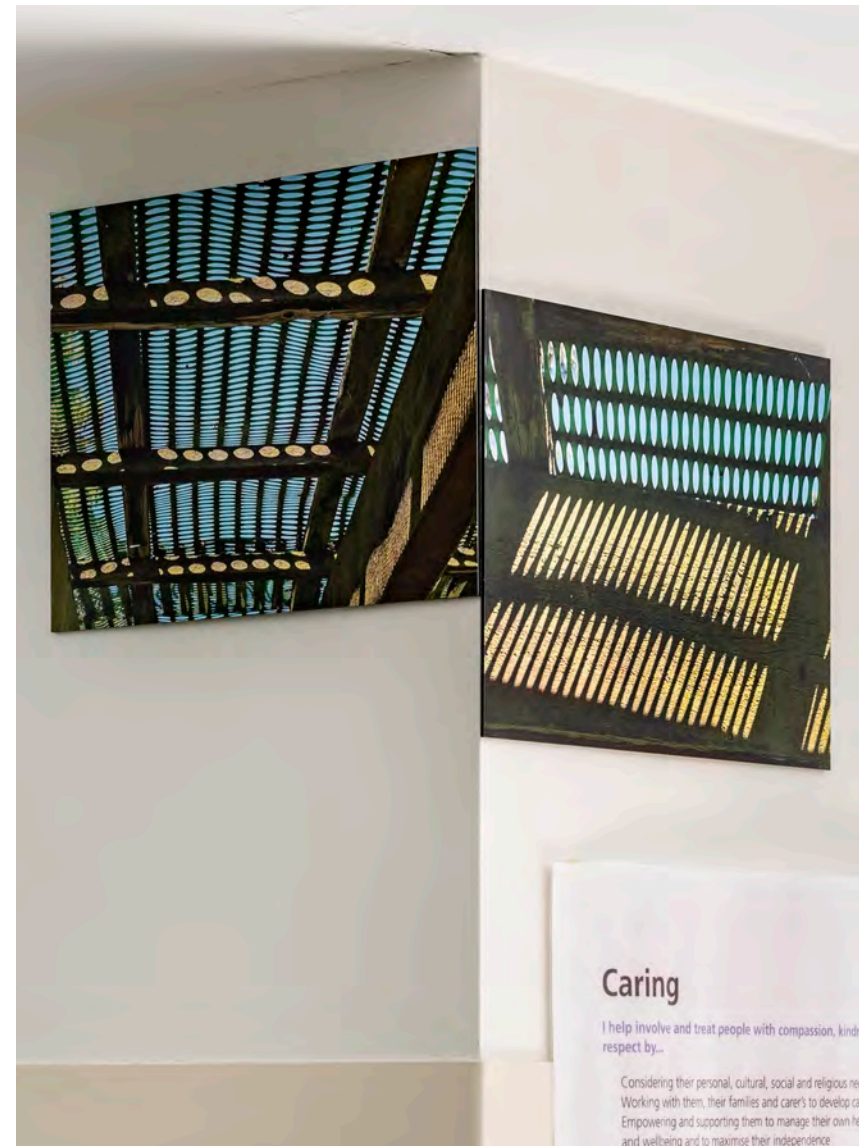
I could never have rehearsed the possibility of taking the little desire path through the trees and into the Mount, and that immediate sense of provisional energy, and all sorts of extemporised intelligences, very much the world of my childhood, where the activities that we associate with farming were still very visible in cities. I remember the chickens which my Kings Cross Turkish neighbours kept.

A few minutes with Carl, The Mount supervisor, was like a warm bath of fellow feeling, pretty humbling for me, but also that joy of the simple creative energy which flows from making things happen, especially when that energy can be shared and witnessed. One of the strangest words to learn if English is not your first language is ‘fun’ and discovering that ‘funny’ has so many different meanings and complexions. The Mount - what fun...”

Richard Wentworth / artist

“A brilliant place to share,
work, rest and play”

Service user on Richard’s workshop, Northside House



Detail of artwork by Richard Wentworth
The installation and positioning of the images is a fundamental part of Richard’s work and processes.

Afterword

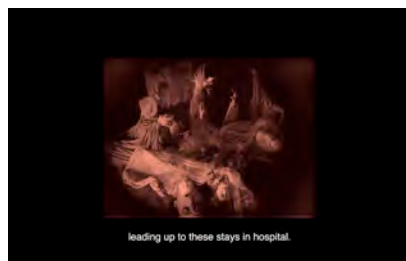
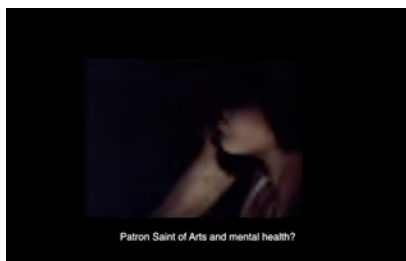
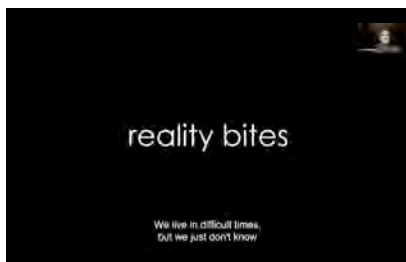
Professor Simon Willmoth /
Norwich University of the Arts

“Everyone who is born holds dual citizenship, in the kingdom of the well and in the kingdom of the sick. Although we all prefer to use only the good passport, sooner or later each of us is obliged, at least for a spell, to identify ourselves as citizens of that other place.” *Susan Sontag, Illness as Metaphor, 1978*

Susan Sontag’s essay, *Illness as Metaphor*, considers the unreal and often punitive uses of illness in Western culture. Her point is that illness is not a metaphor but a lived experience.

It is the lived experience of people living and working at Northside House that this project aimed to enhance, by engaging with art workshops and artworks that are inspired and informed by experience of the place and its community. The focus has been to improve the quality of the environment of the unit through partnership, co-production and research. ‘Quality of environment’ in this context doesn’t only refer to the works the artists produced for the project; it is also about understanding the value of interaction through creative activity.

I first heard about Hospital Rooms from a colleague, Carl Rowe, who had worked with the team in 2018. I approached Tim Shaw and Niamh White to discuss Norwich University of the Arts’ research agenda for arts, health and wellbeing and suggest that we might work together on a project in Norfolk. Hospital Rooms had previously collaborated with Ged Pattinson at Norfolk and Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust at the Woodlands Unit in Ipswich. So, a partnership was formed to combine our skills and knowledges to improve the working and living environment for staff and residents of Northside House, developing the model that Hospital Rooms has built over the past six years. We reviewed our experience of the project and its wider context in an online research symposium hosted by Norwich University of the Arts (NUA) in March 2020, Arts and Mental Health: Facing the Future. A key element of NUA’s contribution has been research to expand the evaluation framework to analyse the impact of the project and inform future arts and health initiatives. This framework will be further developed as part of the next stage of the Hospital Rooms, NUA and NHS Trust partnership, which will create a new creative workshop and social hub for Northside House in 2022.



Selected screenshots from *Untethered* by Dr Clive Parkinson
From drug induced sleeplessness to heightened perceptions of the here and now, this presentation navigates a topography populated by the dispossessed of the past and future, envisioning the alchemy needed to achieve collective cultural change in all our mental health.

'Arts and Mental Health: Facing the Future'

was a research symposium organised by Norwich University of the Arts and Hospital Rooms to share ideas and research from those involved in the project. Two keynote speakers were also invited to share ideas at the intersection of arts and mental health practice.

11:00 – 11:10 Introduction and Welcome

Professor Simon Willmoth / *Norwich University of the Arts*

11:10 – 11:40 Starting from where we are: Mapping Creative Opportunities for Mental Health

David Cutler / *Baring Foundation Director*

11:40 – 11:50 Arts and Health: Research and Practice

Professor Simon Willmoth / *Norwich University of the Arts*

11:50 – 12:00 Northside House

Ged Pattison / *Lead Nurse for Secure and Forensic Services, NSFT*

Susannah Pashley / *Secure and Forensic Services People Participation Lead, NSFT*

12:00 – 12:10 Hospital Rooms

Niamh White / *Hospital Rooms*

Tim A Shaw / *Hospital Rooms*

12:10 – 12:20 Northside Evaluation Methodology

Dr Nicola Simpson / *Research Associate*

Phoebe Eustance / *Hospital Rooms*

12:20 – 12:50 Panel Discussion

David Cutler / Ged Pattison / Susannah Pashley / Niamh White / Tim A Shaw / Dr Nicola Simpson / Phoebe Eustance / Professor Simon Willmoth

13:00–13:00 Untethered

Dr Clive Parkinson / *Director of Arts for Health, Manchester School of Art*

13:30–13:40 Artist Presentations

Cara Nahaul / Jade Montserrat / Richard Wentworth / Carl Rowe / Naomi Harwin

14:20–14:50 Panel Discussion

Dr Clive Parkinson / Cara Nahaul / Jade Montserrat / Richard Wentworth / Carl Rowe / Naomi Harwin / Professor Simon Willmoth

14:50–15:00 Final Remarks

[Overleaf]
Hospital Rooms' Art Technician Louis
installs Richard Wentworth's work on
Blakeney Ward at Northside House.

Hospital Rooms

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www.hospital-rooms.com

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Northside House

Norfolk and Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust

www.nsft.nhs.uk

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