

**Art Panel members Hollis Dixon and Jessica Hall in conversation with artist Gavin Osborne**

**How do you feel seeing your art on the wall of a Trust building and what does this mean to you?**

Having it appreciated, or seen on social network. I like people to see the quirkiness, because it's personal to me and I want to communicate and share the story and emotions behind this.



**How did you hear about the art project?**

My support worker in the mental health team encouraged me to put some of my paintings forward, and things progressed from there.

**What appealed to you about the art project?**

My paintings are a learning curve, each painting is about learning a different style. My health worker saw the beauty in my paintings but I couldn't gauge whether they were worth sharing. She encouraged me and then this helped me see I could continue.

**How has making this displayed art, and having it accepted by the art panel, contributed to your wellbeing and recovery journey?**

There was a painting about suicide that I designed specifically for HPFT. I do one to ones (first draft of the painting) to learn techniques by copying images which are difficult to paint - like skies and waterfalls. Having my work seen and appreciated by others allowed me to see that others understood my mental health. My work is all about emotions. The biggest difficulty is holding emotions in and not having a release for them, that leads to struggle with life. I think that's a difficulty with a lot of people's mental health. Painting helps me off load on to the canvas, so I'm not carrying extra emotional baggage. That makes me feel better.

**How important to you was it that the Art Panel was made up of a mixture of people with different experiences of mental health: service users, carers, young people, mental health professionals, representatives University of Hertfordshire?**

It gives me a broader outlook for my artwork and understanding of my mental health problems - having others opinions with different perspectives and experience. So a variety of responses. If you have several people you get a broader outlook.

**Has your art-making continued/increased since having work accepted by the Art Panel? If so how?**

My works changed a lot and I've continued finding techniques that others don't find, through trial and error, I like to push the boundaries of what I'm doing and enjoy challenges. Like the difference between glaze and matt, and how to get something that has depth. I want to paint how it really looks, i.e. wood and leather, variation of tone, 3D effect. So building up depth with translucent glaze, making thin layers. The images look different depending on where you view them from. I build a grid or line drawing first and then work outwards from that rather than paint the canvas with a base colour. The pictures have a secret life, where the fluorescence can only be lit up under certain light. My art work has increased and this has been encouraged by submitting to the panel. Being accepted and appreciated.

**How helpful did you find the themes: Hope, Resilience, Empowerment, Choice, Memory, Unspoken, Stillness, Journey?**

To me it felt a bit restrictive, I picked a theme and tried to respond to it but it was hard making my art fit one particular category. But to get it seen I felt I had to put it in a box which I've spent most of my life trying to get out of.

**How do you feel seeing the other people's art displayed here?**

I like seeing it displayed here, seeing how others work, what it is driving the artist and then that helps me and encourages me.

**What do you think are the benefits and disadvantages in having one consistent person throughout the art project?**

Helps build trust, the person knows me and knows my art and way of working, a bit about my background and where I'm going or working towards.

**Would you like to take part in any future creative projects with us?**

Yes because my art work is changing and I'd like the opportunity to build on something else the Trust would like. I'm not restricted in what I can do, I have a huge repertoire, I'd love to do some wall paintings reflecting themes and reflecting personal meaning.

**Is there anything else, not already covered, about the art displays you want to talk about?**

I hope to incorporate more of my newer techniques into my art going forward. I'm currently working on the 7 Wonders of World. I want these paintings to go as a block. As I've put so much work into them and they relate to one another. I like to give something back to the Trust for the care I've had. The fee covers the cost of the canvas and paints but there's a lot more work that goes into my paintings.

Gavin shared with us some of his extensive and impressive portfolio, demonstrating how much his technique has progressed. The pictures contained historical, mythological and magical themes from his imagination and film, and some portraits.