



gamh

Glasgow Association
for Mental Health



Creating well

Exploring creativity and
mental health

CREATING WELLBEING

The Art of Recovery

This exhibition is the result of
between GoMA and the Glasgo
(GAMH), aimed at exp
y and wellbeing.

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An Abstract Wildfire

*Creativity is in the abstract side of our mind -
desperate to burst into the world outside.
To change our surroundings into design,
we each wish to explode a burst of our 'child side'.*

*Youth is vivid colour which only grows dull with age;
the way you view the world around you, simply lives to change.
Evolution of a lifetime can only come with a grand escape
of the confines of our own mind, where creativity's erased.*

*Overwhelm a blank canvas with bold reminders, brimming with life.
This ability to escape the ordinary and express an abstract eye -
carefree swirls of freedom are a rebellion - to every right denied.
Creativity is progress. Liberty. Innovation in endless supply.*

*Without compliance or reliance we decide the borders,
and paint outside the lines. Think beyond the cardboard colours of box,
to build a fort or tallest tower; stack each brick a level higher.
See, to survive this world takes the inquisitive nature to enquire.*

*We take ordinary and build from it our own home to reside.
Exceptional is never simply seen in 'normal'. It's in the versatility of life.
In ambition to exist further than the horizon line -
to see beyond your mind's eye. It is found in exploration.*

*Navigating the maze, which we call life,
without compass, map or an apple device.
See, this side of the mind is discovery,
it is all the ways in which we find our way,
pave our own path, carved through concrete caves.
In every step of creative flare we trailblaze, like flames.*

Nabi Tida

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Introduction

Evidence-based research on the relationship between art and wellbeing highlights the significant contribution that participating in creative activities can have on mental health recovery:

- The self-expression of thoughts and feelings through creativity helps to process these thoughts and experiences and lends perspective.
- Provides focus and distracts from negative thoughts.
- Positive engagement in creative activity promotes wellbeing.
- Learning new skills and creating something helps build confidence and self-esteem.
- Mindfulness art activities can slow down thoughts and allow us to be in the moment.
- Connecting with others who are also taking part in the creative process.

We have included ideas, exercises and projects that we hope you will find useful in your journey of creativity and recovery. We hope you try them and share your experiences and artwork. To help facilitate your creative expressions, we have included art materials, so that you can experiment with exciting new techniques. Give these a try and you might find yourself pleasantly surprised by the skills and knowledge you already have!

"I found I could say things with color and shapes that I couldn't say any other way - things I had no words for."

*Georgia O'Keefe, painter
(1887-1986)*



Reflection – Georgia O'Keefe

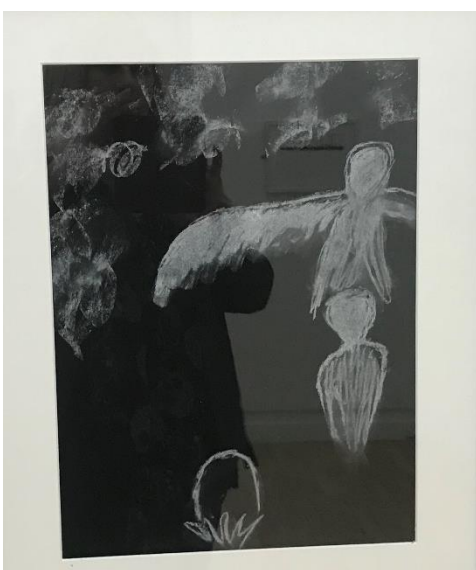
New Perspectives

GAMH have a long established partnership with Glasgow Museums. Recent collaborations with the Open Museum focussed on bringing art to the communities with art engagement sessions within community settings featuring art pieces transported from the museum. These sessions - which include discussions and creative activities around the art work - have gradually transformed the relationship between the participants and their Glasgow art heritage. Participants have noted that this increased knowledge and understanding brings about a growth in confidence and are keen to further develop this new found passion. People who had previously struggled to leave their homes as a result of the barriers caused by distressing mental health difficulties are increasingly motivated to access Glasgow Galleries and get involved in creative opportunities which promote mental health recovery.

The creation of a 'Museum Tour Group' encouraged participation in art appreciation and mindfulness workshops throughout the city. The overall aim of this work is to encourage people to engage with the exhibitions and projects available to the people of Glasgow and promote independent travel throughout the city. The work which was produced during the art and mindfulness workshops were celebrated at a wonderful exhibition within Glasgow Gallery of Modern Art – 'Creating Wellbeing'.

The following are images of some of the artwork from the Creating Wellbeing Exhibition. (First experience of creating art for many participants)

"A visit to a museum is a search for beauty, truth, and meaning in our lives. Go to museums as often as you can."
– Maira Kalman



Curating at home

Elaine Addington, Open Museum Curator at Glasgow Museums Resource Centre, has been working with a group of GAMH participants on a project curating art pieces in preparation for an exhibition within Kelvingrove Art Gallery. Elaine shares some ideas on curating items that you could try yourself at home:

If you are like me, you are probably sitting at home surrounded by 'stuff' - objects that have been part of your life for so long that you don't notice them anymore. During lockdown, I have started to look at some of my 'stuff' again, to try and find out a bit more about it.

Take for example these three:

Wooden carving

This belonged to my husband's granny. When we packed up her house before she went into care she said I could have it. I have never really thought much about it, but during lockdown I did some research. It was probably made in Bali, and they usually come in pairs, one male, one female. How granny got it, I have no idea!

Coffee pot from a set

This belonged to my mum. She was given the set as a wedding present in 1966. She can't remember who it was from, but it was made by Holkham Pottery in Norfolk. As you can see it is lid-less. Misplaced somewhere! It is a really striking blue and I have loved it ever since I was little.

Grey jug

This also belonged to my husband's granny, and I got it at the same time as the wooden lady. I recently discovered that it was bought by my mother-in-law when she visited a German friend in the 1960s and gifted by her.

I have always liked objects from the 1960's, and have grouped these three together as they all date from then.



Creative Mindfulness

With Glasgow artist Andrew Hay

Andrew Hay – one of Scotland’s leading contemporary artists – has been a great supporter of the work of GAMH for several years. Andy, who was born in Glasgow’s East End, began his painting career at the age of 39 and his work is now shown in several of Glasgow museums and galleries. Andy is passionate about breaking down barriers for people with lived experience of mental health difficulties to participate in art and creativity. He also encourages people to look at art – both in art galleries and online. Andy hopes that, by using available technology to find inspiration, people will be encouraged to start drawing and painting their own ideas.

Andy has facilitated many workshops within our group programme and has inspired and encouraged participants to try very simple but effective drawing and painting techniques that have introduced people to the many benefits of the creative process. Andy talks to participants about the mindfulness aspect of painting or creating art on a regular basis and how these activities can promote positive mental wellbeing and distract the artist from feelings of anxiety and negativity. He also encourages participants to follow the journey of the art they are creating which can connect to places and people in their lives and communities.



Andy also encourages people to listen to music that inspires their artistic expression and he enjoys listening to music that connects him to paintings. Reading also inspires Andy to paint particular subject matter – he is currently working on a sizeable painting of a scene from the 1984 Miner’s Strike which conveys the brutality of horseback police towards the striking miners. Andy is also working on a painting of the South Wales mining village of Aberfan, which suffered a devastating loss of lives in 1966 when the collapse of a colliery spoil pit covered the village school and other buildings. These works were inspired by two books in particular; *The Shock Doctrine* by Naomi Klein and a book about the political economist Professor James Buchanan and his influence on Thatcher and her political policies.

During the current period of restrictions on our life and choices, it is not always easy to find the inspiration to get started on an art project. To encourage your participation, Andy invites you to take part in a Creative Mindfulness project and hopefully you will share your finished works with us (contacts at the end of this journal). Andy invites you to get started by looking (while you are out walking) at the buildings around you and - if you have a camera phone or a camera - to take some photographs of different buildings that catch your attention. Take several photos from different angles. There may be a building close to your home that you feel a special connection with – find inspiration here to draw or paint! For this project, it may be easier to use some pastels and black or white sugar paper (included with your art materials). If you are unable to get out or don't have a camera phone, you may have some books in your home containing photographs of Glasgow buildings - this will work just as well!

After you have studied the photos and selected a building you would like to draw, set up your materials at a table and try to study the lines of the building (tenement buildings, in particular, have many regular lines within their form). Keep it simple and don't try to include every detail of the photo – just try and capture the main structure. Don't worry about accuracy – experiment with bold colours (as seen below)! You may even feel inspired to create a series of drawings from your photo image collection.

While you work on your drawings, let your mind drift. What thoughts and memories of the city and its buildings emerge when looking at these images? Let your personal and lived experience connect you to the drawing on the page – this is what makes your artwork so special. It is your own unique interpretation of the image, as it relates to your life and your experiences. We can't wait to see the results and Andy will be delighted to give us feedback on your artwork!



Finding Your Rhythm

Breath tracing for mindfulness

Tracking your breathing in a visual form requires no artistic experience and the benefits are many. Anyone can enjoy the positive impacts of this easy and quick exercise, which helps you to focus on your body and aids you in finding a comfortable, relaxed state.

First, find a calm space where you would practice mindfulness. Have a piece of paper and a pen/pencil ready (you could also use paint or pastels if you wish) and sit down comfortably. Try to slow down, be present in your body and observe the feelings in your body as you sit there. As you start noticing your breath, put your pencil on the paper.

Now, visualize your breath as a line and trace it onto the paper. Initially you can follow the rhythm of your breathing as it comes naturally. Later, you could start experimenting with slowing down your breathing and observing what lines, forms and rhythms are being drawn this way on the paper.



You can do a continuous line, you can stop at the inhales and only trace the exhales - or you can draw a new line for each breath. Try to find a pace of breathing that is calming and soothing. Stay with this for a while to fully appreciate the positive impacts that deep breathing and relaxation have on your mind and body.

SOURCE: MANAGING TRAUMATIC STRESS THROUGH ART: DRAWING FROM CENTRE BY BY BARRY M. COHEN, MARY-MICHOLA BARNES AND ANITA B. RANKIN (1995).

Treasures Of Nature

Found Object Mandalas

If you feel yourself becoming bored by going on the same regular walks, why not try going out with the mission of collecting some natural that you could use for your next art project?

You could try creating interesting arrangements out of the objects you find. Stones, feathers, plants, shells or any other natural materials are perfect for this. Mandalas are symbolic geometric images found in many Asian cultures and are thought of as aiding meditation and representing the universe. There is no right or wrong way of making them, so feel free to experiment until you find an arrangement that feels soothing. You could also have a bit of fun trying out different coloured or textured backgrounds so see which effect you prefer. Do not forget to take a photo of it - and you could send it to us! Your work may help to inspire other people, too.



Contemplations On Mindfulness

A Zen Garden On Your Tabletop

Zen or Rock Gardens are Japanese style miniature landscapes, using rocks, water, moss, pruned trees and sand or gravel. Traditionally, they are found in Buddhist temples and their main function is to assist the monks and visitors in their meditation and to capture the essence of nature.

We may think of them as outside spaces, but it is widely recognized that Zen gardens can be created anywhere - even in your own home! These islands of calm can aid you in clearing your mind and strengthening your focus. They are also great if you want to practice meditation.

As rock gardens are very minimalistic in style, you do not need much to build one. Find a suitable box, small bowl or even a glass container. Fill it with sand, gravel or any similar material and then compose a simple arrangement of rocks, pebbles, small plant clippings or even gemstones. You can also "rake" patterns into the sand with the end of a chopstick or a pencil to represent the ripples in water. The best thing about a small garden like this is that you can easily rearrange it any time you like.



Here, I used small corals in place of sand and rocks and moss collected on a holiday in the Isle of Skye. My Zen garden reminds me of the peaceful walks I had while there.

Inner landscapes

Emotional Wanderings With Paper Collage

Collages can be a particularly powerful method of self-expression and require only some paper and scissors. The outcome is a unique visual effect, which many people find exciting and refreshing.

Using its potential for creating dreamlike scenarios, why not try and design an 'inner landscape'? It could be an interesting experiment in conveying your current emotions and mental state by searching for images and words that would best represent how you are feeling in the moment.

To start, look around your home for newspapers, magazines, postcards and any pictures that may be useful. At this stage, do not yet decide on whether you want to use them - just gather everything together. You will also need a piece of cardboard or paper, scissors and some glue (or any other adhesive you have available, e.g. blu-tack).

Now, find a calm and soothing place where you can create freely. Once you have gathered everything around you, spend a couple of minutes silencing down any racing thoughts and just observing in a curious and non-judgemental way how you are feeling.

Once you feel ready, look through the images you have to hand and select those that you feel most drawn to. There may not be any rational explanation why they seem important to you - just let the pictures speak to you. Once you have selected these, cut them out carefully and set them aside. Take your piece of paper and arrange the cut-outs in a way that is

visually pleasing to you. It may be a good idea to take a photo of it, as you may want to try out some different arrangements. Finally, when you are happy with how it looks, glue each piece on to your cardboard. You can leave it as is, or you can finish your creation with some drawing or painting of your own.



I Can Do That, Too!

Inspiration From Famous Artists

How many times have you thought to yourself upon seeing an artwork: "Well, I could make that myself"? Although it often turns out that these pieces convey more meaning and innovation than their deceptively simple appearance may suggest, why not give it a go! You could draw inspiration from the visual style and the creative processes behind the given works and make your own work of art at home. We have chosen four artists with very distinct styles to inspire you!

Sol LeWitt (1928-2007) was an American artist and leading figure within the conceptual art movement of the 60s and 70s. LeWitt argued that the art we create is only as valuable as the idea, or 'concept', behind it. The technique with which a painting or sculpture is created becomes secondary, which means that anyone - regardless of skill level or experience - can create important and meaningful art. Intention is everything!

LeWitt became famous in the 1960s with his refreshingly vibrant wall paintings:



Inspired by his approach, I have attempted to decorate a tin pencil holder with his twisting and turning lines. If you are patient enough, you could even paint something resembling his colourful rainbow wall.



Yayoi Kusama (born 1929) is probably the most famous Japanese artist of our time. She works primarily with sculpture and installations. Her iconic dots are very well known all around the world:



Kusama was an influential figure of the hippie and countercultural scenes in 1960s America. She has experienced mental health difficulties for most of her life, which she talks openly about. The signature polka dots - called "infinity nets" by Kusama - are inspired by the hallucinations she experiences. The resulting objects represent her self portraits.

Feeling inspired by the immersive effect of Kusama's work, I made a papier-maché object decorated in polka dots:



To create a papier-maché object, you will need some newspaper torn to ribbons, a 'glue' made by mixing equal parts flour and water and something that you would cover with the paper mixture, to serve as a mold for your object. For this project, I used a balloon and lightly oiled the surface so that it would not stick.

Take your torn newspaper pieces and dip them one by one into the flour-water mixture, making sure it is wet but not dripping. Next, place them across your object, making sure they interlace so that the resulting structure would be sturdy. Once the object is covered, repeat this at least one more time. Now, leave it to dry - it can take up to two days, so a little patience is required.

After the papier-maché has dried, you can decorate it in any way you like. I first painted it a yellowish orange colour, then painted on the polka dots. If you use a balloon like I did, the last step is to pop the balloon before displaying your beautiful art object.

Henri Matisse (1869-1954) was a world-renowned painter, printmaker and draughtsman. Matisse and Picasso are popularly thought of as the most revolutionary artists of the beginning of the twentieth century. In his early years, Matisse was associated with the group of artists known as les Fauves ("wild beasts"). Fauvism was known for its bold use of colour and form. His later years were characterized by the simplification of his visual style and his engaging, colourful paper cut outs. These would gradually grow in size: the last works of Matisse were mural sized collages based on the memories of his visits to Tahiti years before. I thought these vivid, arresting compositions lend themselves really well to simple prints, so I used potato printing to make a t-shirt applying the forms and visuals of Matisse's style.



For a similar creation you will need a t-shirt or tote bag, some textile paint in different colours, brushes, a couple of potatoes and a small knife (always take extra cautions when working with sharp tools!). First, you have to cut the potatoes in half and carve the pattern you want to stamp on their cut surface, about 5 mm deep. I would suggest you start with bigger, simpler forms that you could still detail later. Next, cut away the bits from the surface of the potato that are not part of the design, so that the pattern to be printed would now be a bit above of the level of the potato. Next, brush textile paint on the pattern with your brush and press the potato, cut side down on your fabric. You can choose to have one specific colour for one stamp or you can play around. When you are happy with the results, make sure you iron your t-shirt according to the textile painter's instructions so as to seal in your design. You should also be mindful of washing these items according to the guidelines!



Safe Spaces

A Treasure Box To Keep Close

Do you have a safe space where you feel you can relax, recharge and find peace when you feel distressed? Many people express that there are certain environments or specific spots that help them to slow down and reconnect with themselves. However, sometimes it is not possible to visit these places when it is very much needed.

What you can do instead is create a physical reminder of the safe space that you look at and use for grounding yourself. Why not have a box, which you can decorate so that it would represent your place of calm? Just find a box of suitable size and paint, collage, glitter, sticker, stamp it to your heart's content until you are happy with the results. You can then fill the inside with trinkets and treasures of sentimental value, which would further aid you in reconnecting with this inner strength.



As I find nature very important to mental wellbeing and the seaside a place of calm, I painted the outside of my box to represent the waves of the sea. The inside symbolizes the night sky under the stars. The objects I put inside my treasure box of safe space are related to friends and family.

Inspirational Movies

8 Films About Overcoming Difficulties

Who does not like going to the cinema? Films have the potential to entertain and transport us to times and places we would never have experienced. They can also shed light on new ways of living and thus can support us in coping with our own challenges in everyday life.

Here are eight films with uplifting messages:

Often described as a love poem to Scotland and the Scottish people, the 1983 film **Local Hero** is a subtle contemplation on conserving nature and appreciating local culture. In the beginning of the story, we see an American businessman on a trip to rural Scotland, with the mission of buying out a village to make way for oil production. His story is told with gentle humour and can be an uplifting reminder of the joy of small things in life.

42 (2013) is a biopic about American baseball player Jackie Robinson, who was the first black professional player in the history of the sport. 42 represents his jersey number in the Major League. Having faced many difficulties in the face of racial discrimination, the film is a reminder to never to give up on ourselves and our fight.

The Pursuit of Happiness (2006) starring Will Smith is based on the true story of a homeless salesman and his son. It is based on a book by Chris Gardner, who wrote about his one year of struggle until he finally found his feet. Their story has an important takeaway message about resilience and the role of supportive relationships.

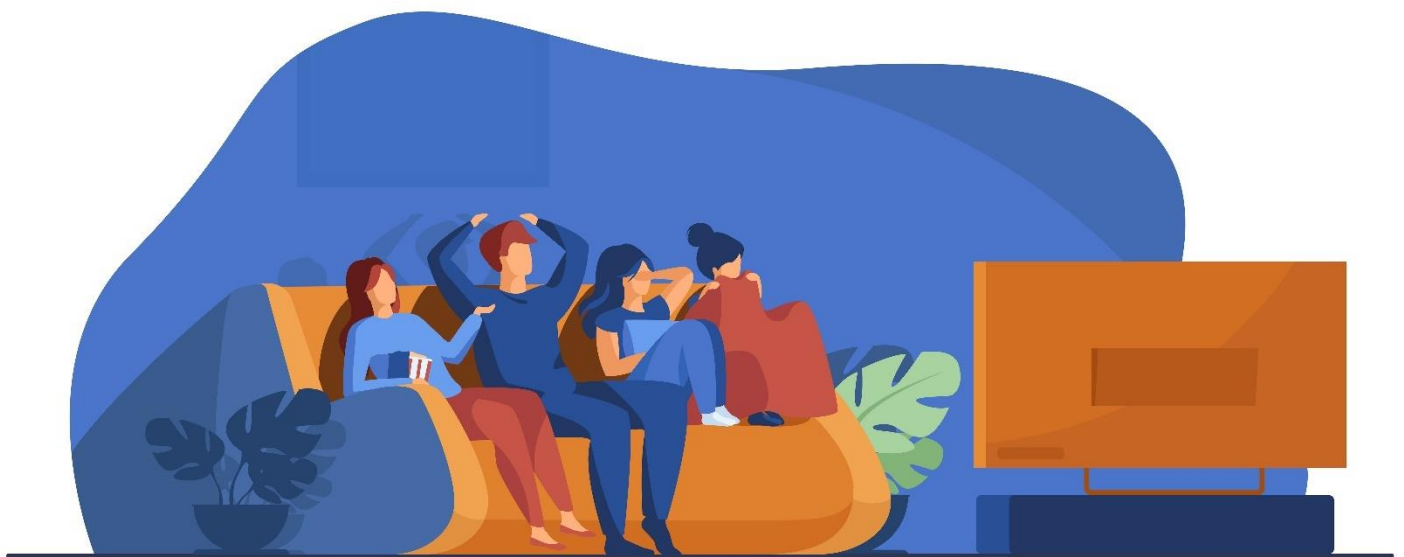
Academy Award-winning **The Theory of Everything** (2014) depicts the love and relationship between theoretical physicist Stephen Hawking and his wife, Jane Hawking. Recounting the story of the scientist's success and his diagnosis of motor neurone disease, the film is a deeply affecting depiction of a family learning to cope with a distressing degenerative condition.

Yet another film based on true events, road film **Green Book** (2018) has recently been a big success. Its main message about fighting inequality and injustice is central to the friendship that forms between African American pianist Don Shirley and his driver Frank Vallelonga during the artist's 1962 tour of the American Deep South. The film is a powerful reminder of how important it is to keep learning and educating ourselves on the racial injustices that have happened throughout history and continue today.

French film **The Intouchables** (2011) is also inspired by a real-life friendship. The relationship between a quadriplegic millionaire and his live-in carer is the story of a rare and unexpected friendship. Perhaps this is why the film has such an impact on the viewer – it depicts the power of friendship and finding beauty in the world.

Little Miss Sunshine (2006) is a comedy-drama about a little girl who wants to be a beauty queen and her unconventional family who support her in achieving her dream by setting out on a road trip in their Volkswagen bus. The film does a wonderful job of celebrating our differences and the power of family.

Acclaimed French director Jean Pierre Jeunet's multi-award-winning **Amélie** (2001) is a firm favourite of many. The light-hearted story of a lonely young waitress, played by Audrey Tatou, who decides to help others lead fulfilling lives has had a profound impact on many viewers. Amélie teaches us all how to open our minds and engage with our creative sides so that we may have a more enriching experience with others.



Call For Submissions

Have you created some art work inspired by this art journal?

We would love it if you shared it with us!

Take a picture of your piece of art and email it to:
groupteam@gamh.org.uk

If you would like to, you could include a brief description of why you chose to create this artwork and what it means to you personally.

We cannot wait to see your creations supporting you on your journey to wellbeing!



*" When I allowed myself to slow down,
I noticed my racing heart, my short shallow breath,
my tense face and hands.*

*When I allowed myself to slow down,
I noticed the salty taste and the wind on my cheeks,
the smell of the sea and the cry of the birds.*

*When I allowed myself to slow down,
I noticed that everything changes
My heart calming down, my breath deepening
My mind at ease in this moment of belonging to what is.*

*When I allow myself to be still,
I notice that everything is perfect the way it is. "*

Silke Michels

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