

Making Sense of Mad Studies Conference

**30th September – 1st October 2015
Holgate Centre, Grey College, Durham
University**

Programme & Abstracts



**Supported by:-
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PROGRAMME: Wednesday 30th September 2015

10.30 - 11.00	Registration/Coffee	
11.00 - 11.10	Welcome	Victoria Armstrong and Dr Jenny Laws, NEMS forum & Durham University
11.10 – 12.00	<u>Key note paper:</u> “Safeguarding the future of Mad Studies”	Prof. Peter Beresford, Brunel University Chair: Victoria Armstrong
12.00 – 13.05	<u>“Doing Mad Studies” stream:</u> “Institutional improv and academic ad-libbing: autoschediasm as a springboard for keeping innovation at the heart of Mad Studies” “ <i>Theory as healing:</i> Mad Studies reading groups in Amsterdam” ““Doing’ Mad Studies? Reflections on co-teaching Approved Mental Health Professionals” “Mad Studies in the North East” “Doing Mad Studies: Experiences, influences and impacts. How was it for us?” “Complex conceptual imbrications”	Alisdair Cameron, Launchpad & Dr Toby Brandon, Northumbria University Grietje Keller, The Netherlands Mad Studies reading group Dr Dina Poursanidou (King’s College, London) and Dr Lisa Morriss (Lancaster University) Mark Allan, Janice Clark, Bill Scott and Victoria Armstrong (North East Mad Studies Forum) Megan Bain, Elaine Ballantyne, Cian Bell, Shirley-Anne Collie and Lili Fullerton (Queen Margaret’s University) A short film by Cian Bell Chair: Victoria Armstrong
13.05 – 14.00	LUNCH	
14.00 – 14.30	<u>Doing Mad Studies: Audience reflections</u> Q & A with speakers	Panel questions & group discussion Chair: Victoria Armstrong
14.30 - 15.00	“Seven short films about madness” Film and Q & A	Sean Burn, artist & writer Chair: Kate Mattheys
15.00 – 15.30	“If RD Laing hadn’t existed; would Mad Studies need to invent him?”	Dr Jon Warren, Durham University Chair: Kate Mattheys
15.30 – 16.00	Tea/Coffee Break	

16.00 – 16.20	“insurrection of subjugated knowledges’ and the case of the Scottish Union of Mental Patients (SUMP): Doing history from ‘a level below which you cannot sink’”	Mark Gallagher, Glasgow University Chair: Roz Austin
16.20 – 16.40	“Demystifying the role of the ‘client’”	Adam Timlett Chair: Roz Austin
16.40 – 17.25	<u>Keynote paper:</u> “Navigating distress. Writing, language, and the impossibility of closure”	Prof. Brendan Stone, Sheffield University Chair: Roz Austin
17.25 – 17.30	Closure of first day and details of conference dinner	Victoria Armstrong

Wine Reception at Durham University Business School 6.00pm- 6.45pm

Conference dinner at Fusion Restaurant, Durham University Business School 7pm onwards

Thursday 1st October 2015

9.45 – 10.00	Arrival/registration	
10.00 – 10.45	<u>Keynote paper:</u> “Recovery has been co-opted, colonised and corrupted!”	Representatives from ‘Recovery in the Bin’ Chair: Jenny Laws
10.45 – 11.15	“The Neoliberal Politics of Recovery”	Dr. Brigit McWade, Lancaster University Chair: Jenny Laws
11.15 – 11.35	“Unwreckovery College H.O.T.S.H.I.T.” workshop	Mark Allan, NEMS forum Chair: Jenny Laws
11.35 – 11.55	Tea/Coffee Break	
12.15 – 12.40	<u>Keynote paper:</u> “Doing Mad Studies: The subject and object at boiling point” With respondent Prof. Brenda leFrancois	Richard Ingram Chair: Kate Mattheys
12.40 – 13.40	LUNCH	
13.40 – 14.05	“Educate, agitate, organise: interdisciplinary and inter-movement connections for mad studies and mad activism”	Dr. Mick McKeown, Chair: Janice Clark
14.05 – 14.35	“Mental Health Arts and Culture	Aidan Moesby, independent artist

	- It doesn't have to be crap!"	Chair: Janice Clark
14.35 – 15.00	"Representing & Performing Mad Expertise and Experience in artistic production"	Johanna Zinecker, PhD candidate King's College London & Humboldt Universität zu Berlin Chair: Janice Clark
15.00 – 15.20	Tea/Coffee Break	
15.20 – 16.15	<u>Publishing Panel:</u> "How can Mad people get published and Mad Studies be publicised?" Brief introduction from speakers, then Q & A with audience. Come with your ideas and questions!	Sean Burn, NEMS forum, poet, author, and artist Prof. Brenda leFrancois, Memorial University of Newfoundland Dr Brigit McWade, Lancaster University and co-ordinator of the Mad Studies network site Prof. Alan Roulstone, Disability and Society editor Bill Scott, NEMS forum and website developer Chair: Victoria Armstrong
16.15 – 17.00	<u>Keynote paper:</u> "Acknowledging the Past and Challenging the Present, in Contemplation of the Future: Some (Un)Doings of Mad Studies"	Prof. Brenda leFrancois, Memorial University of Newfoundland Chair: Toby Brandon
17.00 – 17.15	Open Mic "Reflections and final thoughts"	Chair: Victoria Armstrong
17.15 – 17.30	Closing Comments and conference close	Victoria Armstrong

KEYNOTE SPEAKERS: ABSTRACTS (in order of presenting)

Safeguarding the future of Mad Studies

Prof. Peter Beresford Peter.beresford@brunel.ac.uk

Mad Studies has emerged from Canada to offer perhaps the most participatory and promising challenge to psychiatry in modern times. It has demonstrated a potential to engage different stakeholders in equal relationships, prioritising the experiential knowledge of survivors and committed to a participatory praxis (meaning analysis combined with action), which challenges the individualisation and pathologising of madness and distress. Mad Studies is emerging as a truly international movement – in the UK pioneered in Scotland, following engagement with Canadian pioneers and initiatives.

But there have been many other developments in modern social policy which have either begun by being user led and inspired or gained strong interest and support from people as service users, which have then been subverted and co-opted by policymakers, service systems and professionals.

The aim of this session is to explore ways in which Mad Studies may better understand and resist such pressures, in its development, process, aims and activities. It is hoped to divide allocated time equally between formal input and discussion from conference participants from the range of stakeholder positions.

Navigating distress. Writing, language, and the impossibility of closure

Prof. Brendan Stone, b.stone@sheffield.ac.uk

Can new modes of writing or speaking have any role in what Davidson and Strauss call “...the rediscovery and reconstruction of an enduring sense of the self as an active and responsible agent...” (which is to say, a movement from a sense in which the world happens to us to one in which we have some control over our lives)? Even if so, how far can language take us, when we live within intersecting social worlds and practices which may be toxic for wellbeing, and which ‘author’ us in ways which feel harmful to identity?

In this talk I’ll draw on my own personal diaries and some writings by others which were produced in the midst of episodes of ‘madness’, and also refer to writing from quieter moments when the signal of distress was weaker. I’ll speak about the strangeness of the hinter worlds of madness, and of the paradoxical beauty found in solidarity and love - forged even as we felt our worlds collapsing. I’ll touch on ‘surviving’ in the ruins of madness, and hopefully sketch out some thoughts on the perplexing relationship between selfhood, the social world, language, and that which often seems to exceed representation.

Recovery has been co-opted, colonised and corrupted!

Representative from Recovery in the Bin

Recovery in the Bin is a Facebook-based group of survivors and allies who are fed up with the way colonised 'recovery' is being used to discipline and control those who are trying to find a place in the world, to live as they wish, trying to deal with the very real mental distress they encounter on a daily basis. Our individual anger, despair, humour and intellects all come together to generate solidarity, action and knowledge.

In early 2015, the group agreed 18 Principles: our presentation will focus on three of them:

1. We believe the growing development of this form of the 'Recovery Model' is a symptom of neoliberalism, and capitalism is the crisis!
2. We believe "UnRecovered" is a valid and legitimate self-definition, and we emphasise its political and social contrast to "Recovered". This doesn't mean we want to remain 'unwell' or 'ill', but that we reject the new neoliberal intrusion on the word 'recovery' that has been redefined, and taken over by market forces, humiliating treatment techniques and atomising outcome measurements.
3. We refuse to feel compelled to tell our 'stories', in order to be validated, whether as Peer Support Workers, Activists, Campaigners and/or Academics. We believe being made to feel like you have to tell your 'story' to justify your experience is a form of disempowerment, under the guise of empowerment.

We will also put forward some ideas on how to make human rights and social justice real for mad people. We'll use funny pictures, long words and witty quotes.

Doing Mad Studies: The subject and object at boiling point. With respondent Prof. Brenda LeFrancois.

Richard Ingram, Richard.rhizome@gmail.com

Disability Studies has provided one of the enclaves within which it has been possible to engage in mad studies. One of the limitations of working within Disability Studies, however, is that the category "mad" is still understood as a subset of "disability." Inspired by the example of Deaf Studies, I began to wonder in the spring of 2008 whether Mad Studies might one day emerge as an autonomous discipline. It appeared to me that there was a potential for the Mad movement to affirm the identity "Mad" as distinct from, and incapable of being subsumed to, "disability," just as Deaf people had done in establishing Deaf Studies.

Seven years later, Mad Studies is gaining momentum as an academic discourse, but there is not a single university that has set up a Department of Mad Studies. It is important to ask what is gained, and what is lost, when Mad people's knowledge is gathered, accumulated, and disseminated in and through academic archives and channels. How will the lives of Mad people who have had little or no access to the institutions of so-called Higher Education be honoured by Mad Studies? How will Mad Studies minimize the distancing effects that occur when academics find themselves obliged by the pressures of neo-liberal academia to be less

directly involved in the collective work of sustaining, enriching, and emancipating Mad communities? Running through these wider questions is a more specific question, which is raised in the call for papers: “What does ‘doing’ Mad Studies mean?” It is this fundamental question on which I will focus.

My suggestion is that doing Mad Studies means going against the dominant assumptions about knowledge acquisition that have governed the human sciences for two centuries. In the positivist worldview, the relationship between the investigating subject and the object under study is determined according to the goal of neutral perception. The task of the investigating subject is to minimize the influence of her individuality, and to function only through (the) rational mind. In Mad Studies, the object of study is all that obscures (the) rational mind, together with the consequences of everything that was previously dismissed as getting in the way of “unbiased” knowledge acquisition. Moreover, the investigating subject is no longer distinct from object of study, which means that doing Mad Studies can entail being passionate to the extent of being inflamed. In fact, this point was made in 1967 by George Bataille in *The Accursed Share*: “the object of my research cannot be distinguished *from the subject at its boiling point*” (10).

Acknowledging the Past and Challenging the Present, in Contemplation of the Future: Some (Un)Doings of Mad Studies

Prof. Brenda LeFrancois blefrancois@mun.ca

In this presentation I will discuss some of my own experiences and doings as both instructor and student of Mad Studies. A number of institutional challenges to doing Mad Studies will be highlighted, especially in the context of creating openings for this ‘in/discipline’ within neo-liberalized, non-critical and sanest academic spaces. We will explore the impact on Mad teachers and Mad learners of some of the tensions and contests that may arise in these newly ‘disturbed’ terrain. A number of community challenges will also be highlighted, including the accessibility of Mad Studies outside the academy, the involvement of Mad activists as scholars within the academy, and the honouring of a variety of ways of knowing. Some potential un-doings of Mad Studies will be considered, including the potential for co-optation. I argue that the bridging of the academy and our communities are made most possible through Mad activist scholarship, and that this remains our biggest strength in the further development of Mad Studies.

PAPER PRESENTATIONS: ABSTRACTS (in order of presenting)

Institutional improv and academic ad-libbing: autoschediasm as a springboard for keeping innovation at the heart of Mad Studies

Alisdair Cameron, alisdaircameron@aol.com and Dr. Toby Brandon
toby.brandon@northumbria.ac.uk

A talk and workshop on the formation of the Northumbria University Mad Studies module, which will describe its origins, progress to date, and encourage discussion on the issues encountered. We will then canvass views through the medium of an interactive workshop to develop ideas for the future direction of the module, looking not only at course content and ethos, but also its institutional positioning, its relation to other and outside agencies, its intake/admissions procedures and the tension between madness as a subject for study towards a qualification and madness as a qualification to teach on the subject. Can academic rigour, the consideration multiple perspectives, a spirit of honest enquiry, co-exist with sometimes ludic sensibilities, “deviancy”/otherness, and lived distress/trauma in a single enterprise? If so, is it with an integrative model, an assimilative one or an apartheid one?

Theorie as healing: Mad Studies reading groups in Amsterdam

Grietje Keller, grietjekeller@gmail.com

Foundation Perceval – a service user led organisation - offers since 2014 in The Netherlands Mad Studies reading groups. A group of twelve participants reads and discusses during ten meetings Mad Studies texts. The majority of the group are service users. Through the texts the participants are exposed to words and ideas that describe our experiences with other vocabularies and concepts than that of the dominant medical discourse of psychiatry. Mad Studies gives us a treasury full of words, theories and new ideas. This enables us to question and critically view the dominant views on madness.

There is a need for these reading groups. The groups fill up easily and the participants are very enthusiastic. Two reactions: *“Through this group I experienced that madness is not only a problem, it is also an interesting subject to read and discuss about.”* *“Because of this group I started to reduce my psychiatric drugs.”*

My paper will be on:

1. How the Mad Studies groups came about, in what context did we start.
2. What do the groups consist of: what we read, how do we decide what we read, what kind of discussion do we have, who are the participants, how do we lead the group, the spin off projects.
3. What are the difficulties we face. (Among them: not being part of an academic institution, see also Price 2011)

Doing' Mad Studies? Reflections on co-teaching Approved Mental Health Professionals

Dr. Lisa Morriss lisa.morriss@manchester.ac.uk and Dr. Dina Poursanidou

The presentation is a reflection on our experiences of co-teaching on a trainee Approved Mental Health Professionals (AMHP) programme. AMHPs have certain powers and duties under the Mental Health Act 1983 as amended by the 2007 Act including the power to make an application to compulsorily detain someone in a psychiatric hospital either for assessment or for medical treatment. As such, AMHPs are firmly situated within the 'psy-disciplines' (Rose, 1985).

As we come from different backgrounds - Dina is an academic social science researcher and mental health service user whereas Lisa is a registered social worker and an academic researcher in the area of mental health social work - we will discuss how our collaboration developed over time. Following a brief examination of the material we co-taught to the AMHP trainees, the main focus of our presentation lies in critically reflecting on our experiences of this collaboration. For Lisa, this centres on the lived contradictions implicated in being an 'engaged academic' (Cresswell and Spandler, 2012). For Dina, a crucial question concerns how to manage the emotional labour and profound emotional costs of using one's lived experience as 'an instrument of knowing' (Hollway, 2011) and understanding in the process of teaching mental health professionals. Dina will talk about her unremitting struggle with being expected to constantly access and be in touch with 'difficult, unsettling, troublesome and dangerous' (Pitt and Britzman, 2003; Cooper and Lousada, 2005) knowledge, i.e. with mental health service user/survivor (mad) knowledge, as well as maintain continuous contact with the experience of the inchoate (madness) and with the memory of the collapse of rationality and the discomfort and terror they can generate. Finally, we will consider whether the work we did together can be deemed to be 'doing' Mad Studies.

Mad Studies in the North East

Mark Allan, Janice Clark, and Victoria Armstrong

The development of mad studies in the North East has been exponential over the last year and is routed in the desire to author our narratives and redress the power imbalance. Our presentation will highlight how the forum has developed, what future plans are and how members have found community and empowerment within a comradely, open, progressive and safe space to give and receive ideas.

Doing Mad Studies: Experiences, influences and impacts. How was it for us?

Megan Bain, Elaine Ballantyne, Cian Bell, Shirley-Anne Collie and Lili Fullerton,

eballantyne@qmu.ac.uk

Mad Studies offers an opportunity to challenge the dominant discourses around madness. It creates spaces for discussion to critique socially constructed truths. Numerous authors have entered into debates regarding delivering Mad Studies: Where should the course take place? (McWade 2014); the complications of developing Mad Studies in a corporatizing university (Church 2014); issues of ownership, inclusion and colonisation (Russo and Beresford 2014); who should be invited to the table (Reville 2013); and how Mad identified partners and students navigate and are meaningfully included within university culture.

“Mad People’s History and Identity” is a co-created six week course held annually at Queen Margaret University. It has been developed in partnership with Mad identified and Mad positive academics and activists at Queen Margaret University, CAPS Independent Advocacy and NHS Lothian’s Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategic Programme. There have been numerous influences that have guided our work (Reaume 2006, Church and Reville 2013). Our experiences resonate with Costa (2014) that education is knowledge and knowledge empowers us. The first fifteen Mad identified students completed the course in May 2014 and the second cohort in May 2015.

In this presentation, we will examine the influences, experiences, opportunities, challenges and explore the diverse impacts of being part of a co-created mad studies course located in a university.

Seven short films about madness. Film and Q&A

Sean Burn, burn.sean@googlemail.com

I, sean burn, am a writer/performer/outsider artist with an international reputation. i'm also active in disability arts 'reclaiming the languages of lunacy', a reflection on being a long-term psychiatric survivor. my thirty short films have received numerous screenings worldwide, including tate modern and national film theatre, london. *seven short films about madness* is my proposed new short film premièring at your conference - fitting closely with your 'narratives of madness' theme. after a recent heart attack and between two operations, it seemed what i was working on could be my last creation, concentrating my mind. i returned to short gestures summing up aspects of mental ill-health that i have used repeatedly in live performance. this series of seven short performances to camera (plus a q&a with your participants/audience) is what was on my mind - each humorously, beautifully and compellingly answering back phrases such as barking, cracking up, screw loose, nutcase or the default media position for depression (head in hands). the accompanying soundscape is an original electroacoustic composition recording seven days worth of psychiatric medicine-taking - the whole ritual of running the tap, filling a drinking cup with water; opening the tablet drawer; popping tablets from blister packs; swallowing them; then putting everything away. over the top are subtle 'glitches' - lightly processed elements of sound-art, verbalisations, include 'barking' and the subtle sounds of bark / 'screw-loose' and the beautiful sound of screws being dropped / 'cracking up' and the sounds of walnuts being cracked are layered over this.

If RD Laing hadn't existed; would mad studies need to invent him?

Dr. Jon Warren, Jonathan.warren@durham.ac.uk

It is now over a quarter of a century since the death of RD Laing. For many, Laing was the anti –psychiatrist par excellence, although this was a label he rejected. However Laing was more than just a psychiatrist, in many ways he was one of the key intellectual figures of the 1960's counterculture.

As a psychiatrist he was able to use his position and insider status to question and attack the psychiatric establishment. Laing did not reject psychiatry as a discipline but rejected its practices, in particular psychiatric diagnosis. He argued that psychotic episodes were events that were not just the result of underlying issues but phenomena which had meaning in their own right. By their analysis, progress could be made which might benefit the individual. For Laing madness was not unintelligible, it had meaning (a path which would later lead him deep into existentialist philosophy). However it also manifested itself in practice, for example in the 1950's he even took the unusual step of talking to his patients! Such behaviour was something which was until then the habit of the psychoanalyst but not that of the consultant psychiatrist.

For many with an interest in mental health Laing is a familiar figure, but to many he is a more remote figure belonging to a time half a century ago when mental health and everything around it was very different and many of the ideas and practices we are familiar with now were just emerging. This presentation will give a brief overview of Laing's life and work and ask what his legacy can contribute to mad studies.

Insurrection of subjugated knowledges' and the case of the Scottish Union of Mental Patients (SUMP): Doing history from 'a level below which you cannot sink'

Mark Gallagher, m.gallgher.3@research.gla.ac.uk

In a series of lectures in 1976 Michel Foucault explored themes around 'historical knowledge of struggles' and the 'insurrection of subjugated knowledges' which suggested a way forward for those conducting research into histories of resistance to psychiatric power. By exploring some of the 'suggestions for research, ideas, schemata, outlines, instruments' which he offered, contemporary Mad Studies can appropriate a powerful conceptual armature with which to confront the realities of historical and contemporary conflicts between psychiatric patients and powerful institutions like psychiatry, hospitals and universities. I will set out some of these suggestions and elaborate on the significance of his use of the concepts of power/knowledge, power relations, subjugated knowledge, genealogy, local critique, tactics and strategy. I will briefly demonstrate the extent to which I have followed some of Foucault's suggestions in my research on the history of resistance to psychiatric power in Scotland and how the approach I have adopted is connected to an unmistakably Nietzschean local skepticism. By using the short case study example of my research on the Scottish Union of Mental Patients (SUMP) I will reveal the ways in which SUMP founder Thomas Ritchie was able to resist psychiatric and state power by thinking, speaking and acting tactically and

strategically, in a manner uncannily resembling the outlines and instruments which Foucault proposed a few years later. In this way I propose a means to transcend the boundaries erected by forms of disciplinary power which have historically pervaded asylum and university life.

Demystifying the role of the 'client'

Adam Timlett, joe.stare@gmail.com

I propose to present a paper about a radically client-focused model for critiquing and participating in therapy. The paper uses everyday examples of advice to argue for a commonsense understanding of the client's role, even in a talking therapy in which the client is part of a complex therapeutic relationship and is expected to explore their feelings under some theoretical framework. It is argued that theoretical baggage can and should be left at the door by the client, and that the client can learn to critique any advice developed while in therapy or on their own, using informal reasoning to adapt or improve that advice. To show that this can be done is the main task of this paper. This approach is conceived of as a radical way of placing the client's thought processes and context at the centre of any therapeutic process. This also means one can more easily theorise about and monitor when therapy may become harmful. For instance, it is argued that the failure to develop specific enough advice in a therapeutic process is likely to greatly increase the rejection of that advice and may result in harm. This paper argues that it is possible to demystify the role of the client in exploring therapies and therapeutic processes, by emphasising the role of the client in being able to criticise and adapt ideas developed in therapy to suit their own circumstances and to assert their own opinions about the value of any therapeutic interventions.

The Neoliberal Politics of Recovery

Dr. Brigit McWade, b.mcwade@lancaster.ac.uk

In this paper I provide a Mad Studies informed analysis of the implementation of "recovery" as a policy object and commitment in the UK. This can be situated as part of the New Labour government's (1997-2010) reform of the NHS during the 2000s. Through a textual analysis of policy and legislation from this time I draw out a tension between contemporary ideals of choice and autonomy in healthcare and the specificities of a mental healthcare system in which psychiatrists are legislatively empowered to treat patients without their consent. In the UK, evidence continues to show that the most economically and socially disadvantaged members of British society are most likely to be detained under the Mental Health Act 2007. This paper provides an intersectional analysis of the ways in which policy, legislation and psychiatrization enact particular subjects as 'failed' citizens. I argue that these practices of exclusion and detainment are constituent elements of neoliberal state-making, which are discriminatory and unjust. Exploring recovery as part of a global neoliberal capitalist agenda, I propose that psychiatric services can be conceptualised as a state border through which certain bodies are produced as deviant in order to capitalise upon those bodies as sites for accumulation (as Angela Davis and Gina Dent (2001) argue in relation to prisons). In doing so, I draw out the connections between madness and mass incarceration, highlighting multiple and interconnected forms of disenfranchisement, dispossession and social injustice.

Unwreckovery College H.O.T.S.H.I.T. workshop

Mark Allan markswordz@gmail.com

You will be invited to contribute to the creation of the Unwreckoverly College H.O.T.S.H.I.T during this 20 minute workshop led by Mark Allan from the NEMS forum. What would we doers of Mad Studies have on the prospectus (if we would even have one!)..

Educate, agitate, organise: interdisciplinary and inter-movement connections for mad studies and mad activism

Dr. Mick Mckeown MMckeown@uclan.ac.uk

This paper considers mad activism and, particularly, possibilities for alliances with trade unions. This also allows for reflection on the role of the academy, both in supporting activism and developing inter-disciplinary knowledge. Of interest is the role of many universities in the reproduction of the mental health services' workforce and, similarly, trade union studies and education.

Austerity poses significant challenges for unions organising in the public sector and these unions face a significant legitimacy crisis. They have latterly adopted organising approaches aimed at union renewal and revitalisation, and these offer some interesting potential for alliance formation. Arguably, unions should not simply take for granted that effective solidarity can be forged with psychiatric survivor activists. A more sophisticated effort is required that takes thorough account of the subject matter of mad studies and attendant criticisms of service provision, opening up the possibility for stronger, more deeply engaged coalitions and pursuance of more transformational goals. Reflections upon previous UK alliances of this sort inform a critique of forms of imperfect solidarity but also suggest possible ways forward. Reciprocal community unionism and relational organising models are a useful starting point.

In Psychopolitics, Peter Sedgwick makes the case for state funded welfare and mental health care and the necessity of political alliances to achieve this. Yet, the jury is out on whether the left actually appreciates a progressive politics of mental health. Here, a learning and organising solution is proposed that requires democratic practices as the means and envisages a new democracy as its end.

Mental Health Arts and Culture - It doesn't have to be crap!

Aidan Moesby, ajmoesby@yahoo.co.uk

How do we engage with Mental Health? Do we emote or intellectualise? Is it empathy or sympathy? Is it poor them and thank god it's not me? Where are the positive role models around Mental Health? Why in the 21st century is stigma and pejorative language still so pervasive? It was only a few days ago at a Disability Arts event I was asked 'So what's wrong with you then, you look normal to me?'

Mental Health Arts and Culture - It doesn't have to be crap!

In the same way as Mental Health has historically, and currently, sits at the bottom of the disability hierarchy then socially engaged arts practice sits at the bottom of the art hierarchy. It is under-valued and under-respected - and to be quite honest I can see why. Often the same format of workshops are churned out, it is about numbers and keeping people occupied or satisfying funding agendas and KPI's. It doesn't have to be lowest common denominator arts activities. It doesn't have to be a low quality, low calorie experience.

I will present the case that when quality of art and experience is at the forefront with the individual as an active co-constructor of the experience then truly innovative work can be made. Using Open Here Theatre Group (supported by Launchpad) and Periodic Table of Emotions to illustrate - amongst others - I will demonstrate there is an alternative - it doesn't have to be crap!

Representing & Performing Mad Expertise and Experience in artistic production.

Johanna Zinecker, johanna.zinecker@kcl.ac.uk

The paper discusses two recent works from the wider 'Mental Health Arts' context; Gemma Anderson's 2010 installation Portraits: Patients and Psychiatrists and the 2014 performance The Assessment by The Vacuum Cleaner. Both works deal with and critique labelling and classification as disabling (psychiatric) practices through a play with 'alternative' expertise and knowledge. To read these very different works alongside each other allows exploring, by way of example, the potentials and constraints that exist in the entanglements of artistic practice and 'Mental Health' today. Drawing upon an interdisciplinary frame including critical art theory, cultural studies and disability & mad studies, my analysis of the representations and enactments of mental distress and mad experience and 'ways of knowing' in these works will address questions of agency, expertise and participation, both in the context of production (artist, participants) and reception (viewer, participants). As my paper will show, both works, albeit through opposing aesthetic-artistic devices, undermine but also put to work power constellations underpinned by dichotomies and hierarchies that make up normalizing discourse and practices. Following a mad/disability-informed approach to these works, my paper will raise questions about their respective political dimensions as well as the discursive constellations surrounding them, and hopes to open up a discussion about the meaning of 'Mental Health Arts' as a topic for and a contribution to mad studies' knowledge production.

