

WONDERLAND EVALUATION REPORT



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INTRODUCTION

Wonderland is a project by Sarah Watson and Will Hanekom, two learning disabled artists. Wonderland will be an exhibition of new work of their interpretation and artistic responses to Wonderland. The project will be a showcase event as this will be the first time Sarah and Will have exhibited their work together. The grant will provide support for Sarah and Will in producing new work and providing support for two artist advocates to help them fulfill their ambition. Wonderland will take place in October/November 2017 and shown alongside partners Oska Bright film festival and HOUSE Biennial.

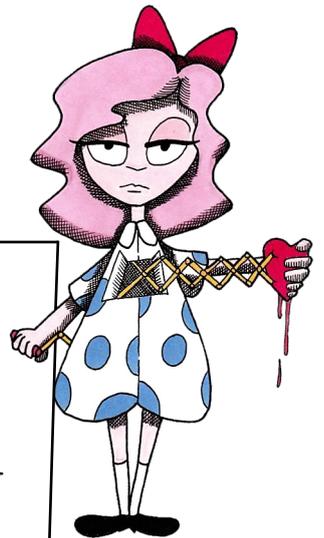
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Everyone has their own wonderland. I have explored what this world means to me with character driven illustrations and scenery. My Wonderland very much stems from my dreams; they express the surreal, the wonderful and the nightmares.

Will Hanekom

My wonderland is full of colour, a window to the other worlds. I relate to the character Alice, she's in all of us, dreams, imagination and craziness. I see wonderland as topsy turvey, a place of dreams. Sarah Watson

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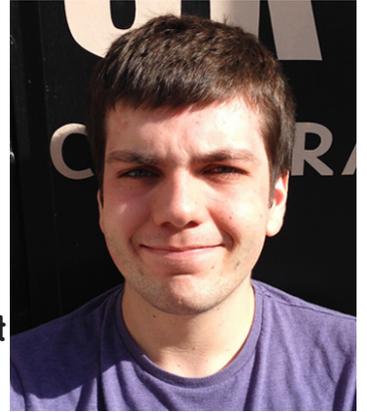


THE ARTISTS

Will Hanekom

Dr Seuss, Metropolis and many Tim Burton films like a Nightmare before Christmas have been big inspirations weaved into my own memories.

The locations that the characters inhabit in my dreams are just as important to me and feature heavily in this exhibition, bringing my characters to life. On the merit of my work since leaving school I have been accepted at the University of Brighton to study illustration for screen arts.



Sarah Watson

Multi skilled, self-taught, I think differently. I have been an artist since I was 15. Art helps to maintain my focus and helps with my anxiety. I am chair of trustees of Carousel, a member of Oska Bright Film Festival.

I express myself through my art. I use lots of different media and techniques: drawing, painting, animation, photography, pen, inks and digital art.

My work is colourful, expressive and bold. I love experimenting and layering colour, patterns and images. My inspirations and influences include films, Van Gogh and Instagram.



ARTIST ADVOCATES

Darren Menezes

Wonderland has been a fantastic new experience for me, from its inception, right through to the exhibition.

Working at The Regency Town House site and at the studio, supporting Will and Sarah, have been some of the most rewarding aspects.

Seeing them both flourish as their self-belief and confidence as artists has evolved has felt the greatest achievement.

I very much enjoyed building the Wonderland website, promoting the exhibition through the social media accounts I set up plus creating and supporting the delivery of promotional artwork for the exhibition.

The support of the Carousel office staff has been invaluable, with their experience of their own projects, supporting me and helping the different parts of Wonderland come together, especially as the pace quickened towards the opening night.

I feel the whole project has enabled me to grow, as well as the main aim of the development for Will and Sarah.



Clare Sheppeard

I have been working with Sarah as her artist advocate and one of the highlights for me is to how Sarah now sees herself as an artist, how her work has progressed and how she is much more confident in talking about her art. An outcome of the exhibition is that people now take Sarah's artwork more seriously.

The studio space at Same Sky was a relaxed environment, a perfect place to work in and enable their creativity. Sarah and Will worked very well together supporting each other throughout, both were open to each others suggestions and ideas building each others confidence.

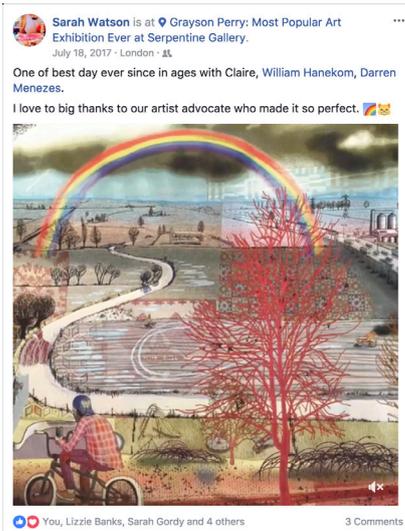
Seeing the work installed and comments on the opening night, which was a buzz, was also a highlight. The audience numbers for the exhibition were high and I was very pleased to get publicity for the exhibition in local media including local tv, the Argus newspaper and Sussex Magazine. Working in partnership and collaborating with Figment Arts, Carousel, Oska Bright, Same Sky, HOUSE and The Regency Town House was a positive experience through the support and the chance to work with, present to and bring different audiences to see and learn more about Sarah and Wills work.

I hope to continue working with Sarah, and that Wonderland will lead onto more exhibitions and opportunities for both Sarah and Will to exhibit their work and that they will both continue to develop their work as artists

THE PROCESS

Sarah and Will were supported by their artist advocates, Clare and Darren through every step of the process.

With this support, Will and Sarah visited exhibitions in London, developed their response to the theme of Wonderland, explored new materials, produced new work, made decisions about framing and mounting, and planned the layout and installation of the exhibition.



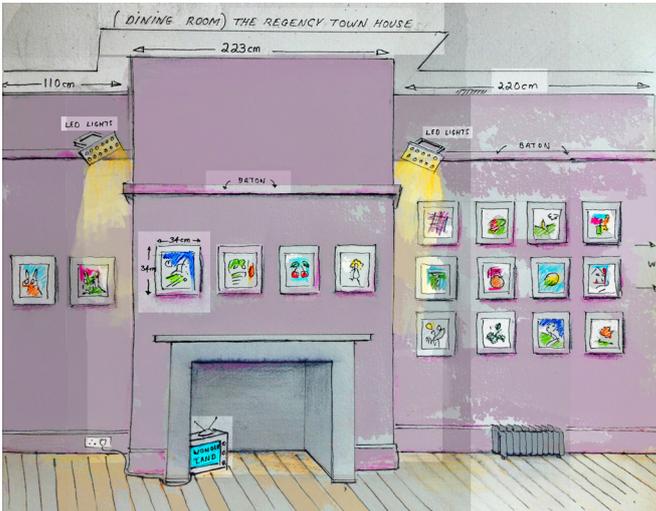
“ I liked painting. Would like to do more. I learned to be more comfortable with mistakes - Sarah ”



Same Sky offered us the use of their studio in-kind for sessions over 6 weeks in the early Autumn.

Sarah and Will experimented with new materials, on a new scale, in an environment which lent itself extremely well to the artistic process.

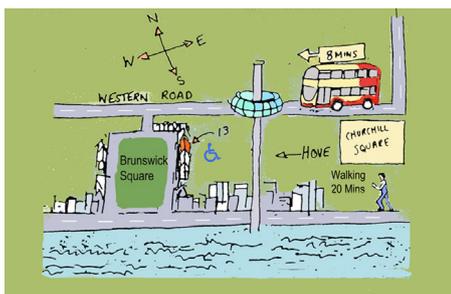
“ I wish I could have done more work in the time. I would have loved to have painted more. I would have liked to have made more work on a larger scale - Will ”



“We got to know each other and became good friends, working together helped me to build up confidence - Sarah”

The team had one week to install the exhibition and decide on the placement of the work. The installation was supported by the Regency Town House and by freelance technicians who were employed to help mount and hang the work.

“Working with Sarah on the project helped me, working together helped to challenge me - Will”



THE EXHIBITION



Will and Sarah presented their work at four special events during the exhibition period, including events at the Oska Bright Film Festival and House Biennial Festival.

They produced 38 new pieces of work including a short artists moving image video.

The exhibition was well attended and the gallery owners expressed the high number of visitor figures compared to their usual exhibitions. The geographic proximity to the Oska Bright Film Festival helped with visitor numbers, when the two events ran side-by-side over the last weekend of the exhibition.



FEEDBACK AND ENGAGEMENT

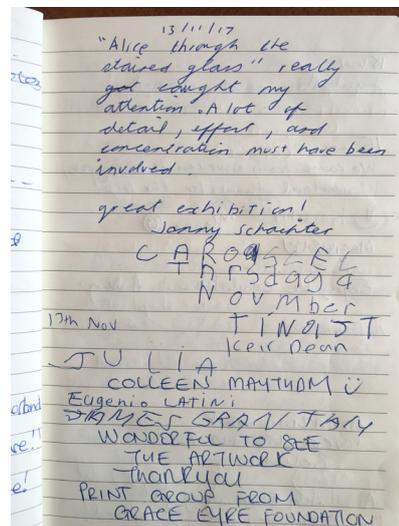
Print
121,000 people reached in print media. Including Brighton & Hove Argus, Art Monthly, Viva magazine, House Biennial programme.

Events
2,422 people saw the exhibition, presentation or screening of the artist's work from October 28th to November 19th.

Online
97,160 people reached. Featured on Disability Arts Online, LatestTV, House Biennial, Fabrica and Carousel websites amongst others.

“ People were interested in seeing us as two artists, sharing their experiences - Will ”

Comments from audience members



“ The work is of a very high quality and it's important for people to appreciate that learning disabled artists often outwit and out perform others

I think Will and Sarah's work could challenge most people's perception of what art by artists with learning disabilities can be. I think it's so important that art is made by a diverse range of people - I want to hear those different voices! Making it possible for artists like Will and Sarah to access further education/ art collage and giving them the support they need is really important.

Engaging, joyful, puzzling.

Experimental, fantastical, accomplished.

Imaginative, fresh, unexpected.”

NEXT STEPS



The project has led to new opportunities for both artists:

- Sarah has been invited to be an Artist Adviser for Outside In
- Will and Sarah have been invited to speak at Brighton University to the MA Inclusive Arts Practise students
- Work from Wonderland will be exhibited in Brighton at the Stamford Medical Centre
- Wonderland will be featured as a gallery of work on Disability Arts Online
- Sarah and Will are presenting at the European Outsider Artists Conference, in Chichester later this year

The Future:

- The Artists and Artist Advisers would like to develop a new project in 2018.
- Sarah would like to undertake a residential placement with ArtStudio01 with Artist Tanya Raabe-Webber in 2018
- Will would like to share his skills and experience in digital arts with young aspiring learning disabled artists

THANK YOU

Arts Council England for supporting this project.

Clare Sheppard and Darren Menezes for fulfilling their role as Artist Advocates brilliantly.

Carousel for providing in-kind support in meeting space and marketing.

Same Sky for providing in-kind support with studio space - and great coffee!

HOUSE Biennial - For offering Wonderland the support of being an Associate Event within their programme.

Regency Town House, for being patient, flexible and supportive of our needs.

Louise and Glen for technical support in the set-up and take-down of the exhibition.

Paul Couchman for the delicious food on the launch night.

Paul Mansfield for the photographs.

Volunteers Boo, Debbie, Alex, Gareth, Hanneke, Liz, Lucy, Bambi for stewarding the exhibition.

