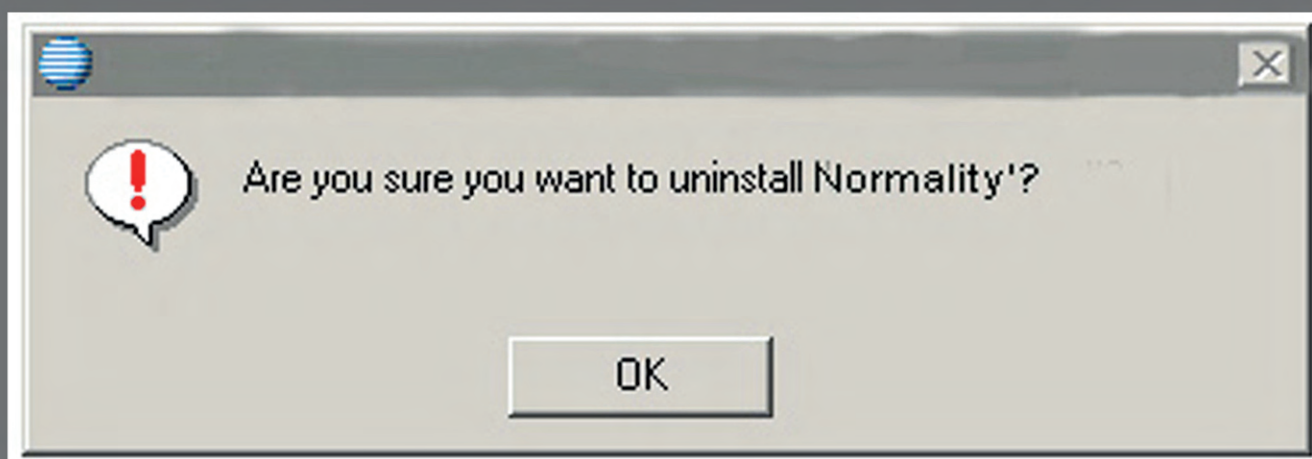


# Uninstalling Normality:

A Study Room Guide on Madness, Mad  
Pride & Questioning Normality



Compiled & written by Dolly Sen  
2024



Live Art  
Development  
Agency

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*Help the Normals (2014) Dolly Sen*

## **INTRODUCTION**

I first spoke to Lois Keidan, who was one of the founders of LADA, just as she was about to leave the role of director. I was hoping we could work together. She suggested I created this guide to do just that.

Who am I? My arts practices crosses writing, performance, film and visual art. My work is seen as subversive, humorous and radical. I am interested in debate and social experiments around themes of madness, sanity, the other, and acceptable behaviours, from an unusual and unconventional position of power. I am interested in this because I have been labelled mad, although I think my challenging of inequality and vicious systems of the 'normal' world makes perfect sense. I am interested in society's perception of mental health and madness – whether people think 'it's all in the head' and not a response to social and political issues. Maybe we don't have mental health difficulties, maybe living in a harsh, unjust, corrupt world causes people to struggle mentally and emotionally. To me, sanity is full of ridiculous acceptable behaviours and strange double standards, such as seeing street art as vandalism but the propagation of demeaning ads selling environmentally damaging things as acceptable. That being loud and aggressive whilst drunk is seen as someone being one of the boys – but if someone is shouting due to being troubled by voices, it is more reason to be scared, even though you are more likely to be injured or killed by the former. The world is sanitised, not sane.

I am a labelled mad person. As I can't work in an office with such label, I am an artist, camouflaging my madness as performance or pushing into the light the reasons people go mad. Camouflaged in the world and going through certain experiences, I want my art to show madness sometimes makes sense and that normality is a bastard that needs its naughty arse slapped.

My journey as an artist has taken me up a tree in Regents Park, to California's Death Row, to the Barbican, Tower Bridge and the Royal Academy, Trafalgar Square, and up a ladder to screw a lightbulb into the sky. More recently, I have 'sectioned' the DWP, and have work displayed in the Wellcome Collection's BEING HUMAN exhibition.

I moved from London to Norfolk in 2016 and then the Covid-19 pandemic hit, so I had little chance to explore the Study Room properly, in fact I still haven't been inside, but I know the work of some of the mad artists there. There are other artists tagged with the keywords of mental health and madness, that is work to discover, I don't know if they identify as mad. I can't tell you about every piece of work in the Reading Room that connects with socio-political aspects of madness. This is more of a guide to make you question or reflect on what you believe madness is, and to offer thoughts, provocations and issues for you to consider.

What is mad person to you? Someone to fear? A sick person? A less than person? A person who is wrong 'un? Are you mad yourself? Does that embarrass you? Make you feel ashamed?

What if I told you madness is political? What if I suggested the dominant discourses on madness need critiquing and dismantling? What if I said it is okay to be mad?

## **LANGUAGE**

Language and ideas around the causes around mental health conditions is a contested area and has been for decades.

Some people are happy with being called mentally ill; some prefer mad. There is no universally accepted terminology or phrase, but some words and phrases are off the table. Words like *retard* and *psychopath* to describe people that don't think normally, just shows who has the power, and who wants to diminish someone's humanity. The rule of thumb is to ask people how they would like to be termed.

That also goes with how you name a person who is in mental health services? Some people are ok with being called 'service users'. I am not. If you think of psychiatric services as a shop, almost every person who needs helps is treated like a shoplifter. Some people don't mind 'patient'. I prefer 'survivor' as I have survived

what made me go mad, the madness itself, and then survived how both mental health services and society have treated me.

There will be those who have mental health conditions who will hate the label of 'mad'. They need to write their own study guide. I will use mad to describe myself.

Madness and mental health are the perfect place to explore the power of language. Some psychiatrists will say there is no oppression and shame in language. Think about it this way: If you take a normal person, and use purposefully degrading language to turn them into something inferior. For example, changing the word 'normality' into 'mediocrity' and 'typical' to 'boring and average', can you see what happens? Do you want a denigrated label? Did you say no? It is a potential lack of insight for you to resist being humiliated?

For some people madness is to do with a broken brain and the remedy for this is medication and psychiatry. Although helpful to some, many others find medication a sledgehammer smashing down on a pinhead, crushing our untidy emotions and inconvenient sense of self. Psychiatry labels our minds ugly. Unless you are in the painful midst of it, you won't know of psychiatry's social control, its brutalisation of the people under its 'care'.

Apart from Bobby Baker and the Vacuum Cleaner, who I interview later on, I know of a couple of LADA artists who have created work around this dark side of the mental system. **CHIRON STAMP** (formerly Ellie Stamp) is part of a recorded debate in the Chiron Stamp Collection in the Study Room, where they talk about their sister who died on a psychiatric unit to psychiatrists on the panel who offer nothing compassionate in response. Stamp links psychiatry to the power structure in society, and links crisis as a state of emergency, but is angered that only a psychiatrist can say what is an emergency.

**LUCY HUTSON's** publication *Everything in my Head at One Time* is a funny, subversive yet poignant take on being in a few mental health facilities. They turned Romeo and Juliet into a science fiction story where no one owns a penis, and when they were thought to be Prince William, they went along with it. Lucy is another artist who has been a psychiatric patient who writes about the inequitable power balance in psychiatry.

With conditions like dementia and brain injury, you can locate it in the brain. Despite billions of pounds and decades of biological research, there are no biological indicators for conditions such as depression, bipolar or schizophrenia. Diagnosis comes from subjective judgements of professional about what is acceptable behaviour. For me, madness or mental distress is not about the broken brain but broken hearts, caused by trauma, adversity, social issues like poverty and disconnection, and inequality and discrimination. Unfortunately, psychiatry aims to treat the broken heart by breaking it farther. Psychiatry has broken my heart. It won't get my love. Instead, it will get a crappy TripAdvisor review from me.

tripadvisor UNITED KINGDOM The rooms are very basic, no hair dryer or tea... - Amstel Botel Traveller Reviews


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**“You don’t have to be mad to stay here ”** ○○○○○

Review of The Maudsley, Denmark Hill, London



Dolly Sen  
London, England, United Kingdom  
Level 3 Contributor  
12 reviews  
8 restaurant reviews  
3 helpful votes

*“You don’t need to be mad to stay here, but it helps.”*

○○○○○

When I arrived, was ignored and was greeted by flying chairs. The staff were so rude, I don’t know where they got their customer training from. I have seen better from Poundland. Some of the people on reception always seemed angry, especially when you disturbed them reading ‘Take or Break’

I gave them my bag to take to my room. Instead they opened up my bag. I think they must have a very narrow washing machine as they only took my belts and shoelaces.

There was no TV in our rooms; we had to watch one in the communal room. The staff kept hold of the remote control for some reason. Most of us were watching the football, when one of the staff turned over to check her lottery ticket. We couldn’t really complain, as we saw what they did with people who did. They did something called ‘control and restraint’. I think it was a spa treatment.

The staff kept shining a light in my room during the night, but didn’t bring me any room service.

The meals tasted of hospital food, for some reason. The after dinner mint made me drowsy and made me twitch and shuffle. I tried to refuse it but they offered me their spa treatment if I didn’t take it.

There was no chocolate on my pillow. Based on the general attitude of staff, I half expected a poo on my pillow. There was only one working toilet for 16 guests, so it wasn’t in the realm of impossibility.

Hopefully I won’t be back here again.

○○○○○ Value                      ○○○○○ Service  
○○○○○ Atmosphere                ○○○○○ Food

Madhouse Trip Advisor (2016) Dolly Sen

The argument rages on whether suffering emanates from inside the human or outside the person, but you can tell which one has got the money and the power. Critics of the social model of madness say if you removed all inequalities, injustices and trauma, some people will still be mad. Yes, some would, but I guarantee mental health services would not be overwhelmed. Just look at how the Covid-19 pandemic has impacted on the mental health of people. Of course, there are biological and medical reasons why somebody’s mental health might deteriorate,

but the industry of mental health totally ignores the external influences and reduces it to being about the individual not being up to scratch in a capitalist world.

The social model of disability was created as a way to understand disability that challenges the medical model of disability. The medical model of disability states the person is the broken thing, that the individual with the impairment is the problem, and that it is the focus of the medical professional to alleviate or cure the impairment - the world around that person does not need to do anything more. Although the social model recognises the impairment or illness causes problems in themselves, it believes the biggest impediments come from the world around the disabled or ill person, the barriers being environmental, attitudinal and organisational. For example, there are the obvious physical barriers, such as steps into buildings being inaccessible to wheelchair users, but there are also attitudinal or systemic barriers. This is not to say madness and mental distress can't be devastating and painful to the person and their loved ones, but that has been done to death as an experience to study and reflect upon, funnily enough not by the people experiencing it themselves, they are not allowed to own their own subjectivity. The 'experts' on psychosis watch it from the outside, but also ignore what else stands on the outside of madness.



*Pathologise This (2016) Dolly Sen*

Abuse and alienation are quite common experiences for mad people, theirs is the breaking heart that keeps on breaking. Try being mad and getting justice in the legal

system, or fair treatment in the health system, or obtaining just a simple thing like insurance. People and politics can be bastards to us. Some of us fight back with art in our activism.

Does this oppression/discrimination have a name? Some people call it **SANISM**. It is a term some people use to describe discrimination and oppression against people who have, or who are labelled or perceived as having, a mental illness, or being neurodivergent. Yet again it is a contested term, but it is an interesting idea to explore and it is one of the things Mad Studies are concerned with. Mad Studies will be discussed later on.

## **THE TYRANNY OF NORMALITY**

There is the tyranny of normality, and uninstalling normality is a necessary pursuit for anyone who wants to dismantle the master's house. Look at the history of madness, which has never been a static state, and has various definitions and rationalisations to reflect the society of the time. It is telling that madness is always a dumping pot, a dustbin for whatever is 'wrong' with society at the time. In the Middle Ages you were mad because you were possessed by the devil. Then later on when the animalism of man was seen as the worst thing you could be, that was reason you were mad. It mostly has religious connotations but madness isn't exclusively a religious construct. More recently in our capitalist epoch, the mad person is despised because he or she is not a unit of production, so therefore there is something 'wrong' with being mad, for the most part. You are marked as undesirable. Psychiatry allows for exceptions based on one's cultural background. If "symptoms" can be explained by accepted beliefs in one's culture, there is no illness. Does cancer stop existing if you're from another country? In some countries hearing voices is culturally acceptable. Here in the UK, resisting oppression or not being a wage slave is seen as culturally unacceptable, and often pathologised.

Why should we want to be part of that kind of society that heaps the causes of mental distress onto people's shoulders and then criticises them for reacting to that bullshit? One of the current fads in mental health is resilience-building, not that they care for your strength or stamina, they just want you to take on more bullshit. Maybe we want to create our own alternative world, our own culture. I would like a culture that doesn't produce a suicide every 40 seconds. Before we get there, let me show you how I went from meek mentally ill patient to a proud mad person.

## **I AM MAD**

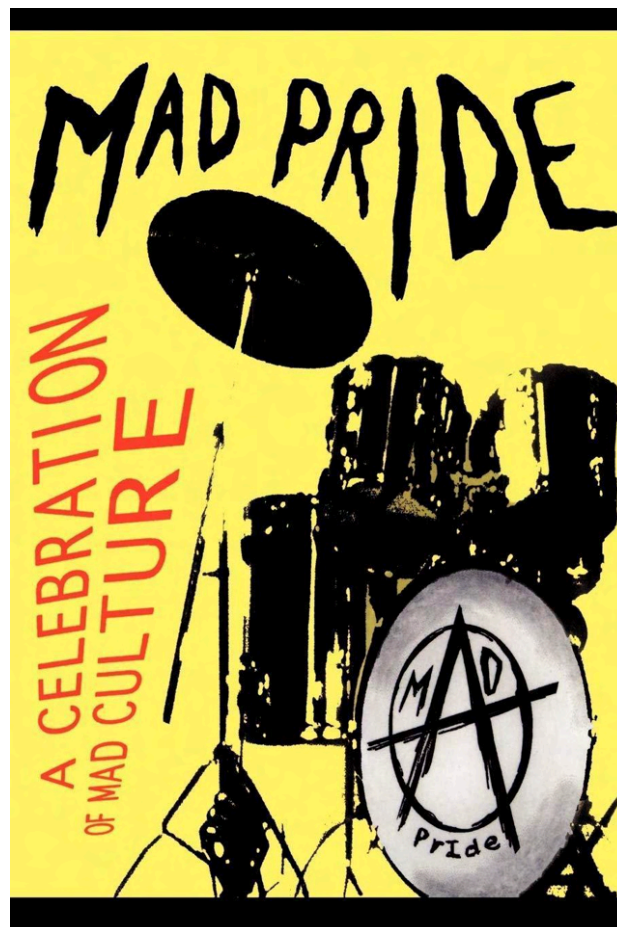
After a very brutal childhood, I had my first psychotic episode at 14, which was a terrifying experience. Psychosis is an altered state where you can experience voices, sounds, vision, smells and tastes other people can't experience, and what



psychiatrist call *delusions*. I think what is delusional is up for debate, what I did have was painful ideas about myself and the world around me. During the times I was not in hospital, I sat in my bedroom too scared to do anything for the next two decades. For most of my early madness I was alone and self-hating. At age 30 I decided to re-join the world and live a life, which started with creativity, especially writing. When I was 32, I had my first book published. At the book launch of my memoir *The World is Full of Laughter*, I had no friends. My publisher invited most of the people who attended the event. There was Robert Dellar and a few others from Mad Pride. I hadn't heard of them before. Robert Dellar showed me utter kindness and encouragement, more than any mental health professional had done before. Maybe there was something in this Mad Pride lark. Anything that takes away the feeling of shame, that is based on action and creativity, was good enough for me.

## **MAD PRIDE**

**MAD PRIDE** came out when a bunch of mad people went to a Gay Pride in London in 1997 and thought “we could do with a festival like this” 1999 saw Mad Pride’s first gigs and concerts. 2000 saw their first book ‘Mad Pride: A Celebration’ which elevated it to cult status. They called madness ‘the new rock and roll’.



Mad Pride put on several events, campaigned against compulsory treatment orders, and gave the Winston Churchill statue an injection into his bottom. Churchill was a manic-depressive, and the point of the stunt was to say if Churchill was numbed by strong psychiatric meds, perhaps he wouldn't have done as well during second world war. The Mad Pride idea started small but is now a worldwide phenomenon.

The argument against Mad Pride have been offered by journalists like Clare Allan who said in 2006 "Mental illness is an illness, just as cancer is an illness; and people die from both." (Allan, 2006)

Madness can be painful, and I have counted many friends' descents into early graves. But a lot of them were pushed into oblivion by unstable housing, unaddressed trauma, poverty, loneliness, and benefit cuts, the besieging symptoms of capitalism. It's back to the social model of disability or madness again. Maybe it's the world that's mad and we are reacting in a very human way?

Mad Pride were not the only groups trying to reclaim madness and make sense of their place in the world around this time. Mad Studies has been around forever, but **MAD STUDIES** as a field of theory has been more concentrated in recent decades.

As Lucy Costa, from The Empowerment Council in Toronto, Canada puts it: 'Mad Studies is an emergent area of scholarship that aim to bring to the academic table the 'experiences, history, culture, political organising, narratives, writings and most importantly, the PEOPLE who identify as: Mad; psychiatric survivors; consumers; service users; mentally ill; patients; neuro-diverse; inmates; disabled – to name a few of the "identity labels" our community may choose to use' (Costa, 2014).

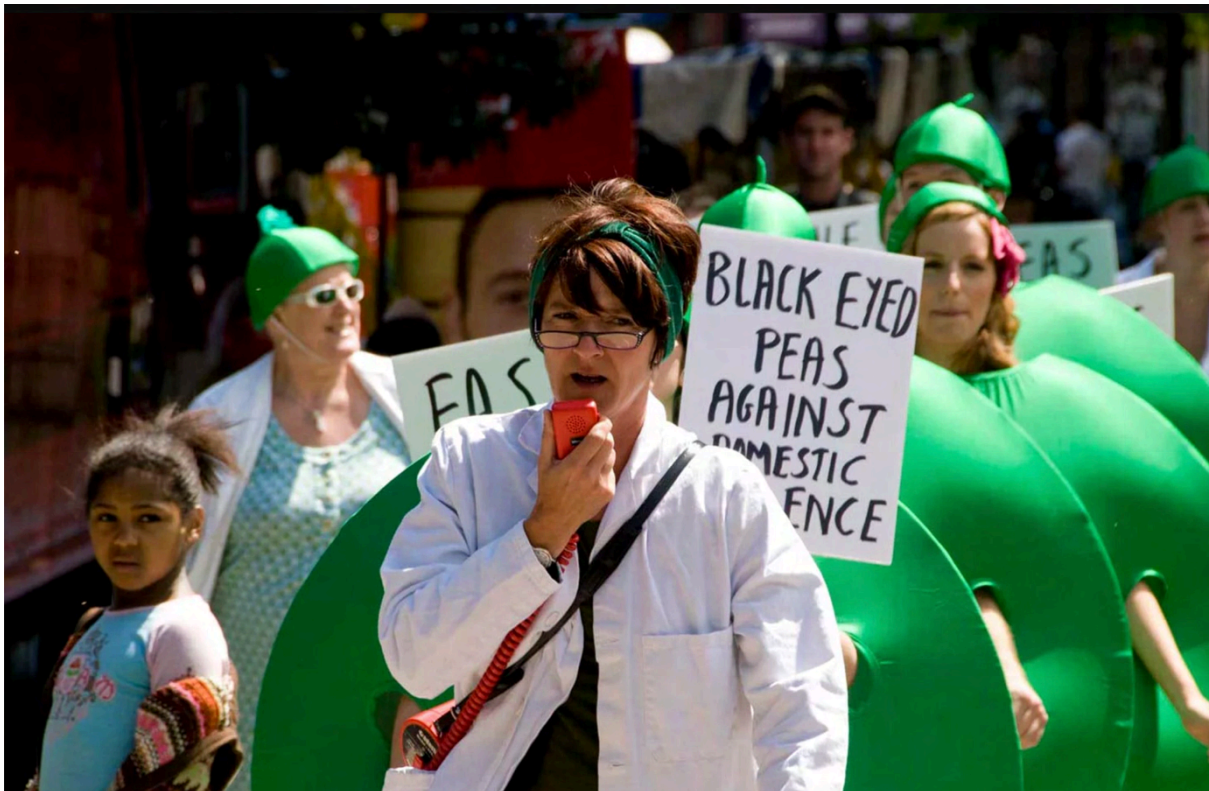
In the early Noughties I began to meet a wide range of these people aligned to this new human rights movement. I did some creative work of my own, nothing too flamboyant, I made a short documentary about a friend who had the label of schizophrenia. [https://youtu.be/V20AXahbP\\_g](https://youtu.be/V20AXahbP_g) and I put on a short play about a character who could see the play's audience but her psychiatrist thinks she is delusional. I called it *Acts of Madness*.

Through that work, I met Sarah Taylor who had just started up a mad-run arts organisation called *Creative Routes*. Creative Routes offered creative workshops and performance opportunities, but its crowning glory was **BONKERSFEST**, which was a free music and arts festival held in South London, that simply celebrated madness and creativity. It was first held in 2006, and then again in 2007 and 2008. I was one of the festivals organisers and we commissioned musicians, visual and performance artists to explore madness creatively or offer to denormalise people. We offered an alternative definition of normal.

**a normal\***, *n.* slang. [Informal.]  
1.[a]. Term to describe a person who conforms and blends in with society. Does not express any elements of individuality, flat and boring..Extremely straight and perpendicular person, cannot cope easily with chaos. Is oblivious to surroundings; Overt displays of emotions will disturb them. Difference will disturb them. Could also be described as the living dead. Does not dare express over the top displays of emotions in case they might be seen to be mad. [plural: "The Normals."]

*From the Bonkersfest Programme*

It was at Bonkersfest I first became aware of Bobby Baker and the Vacuum Cleaner's work in Live Art, amongst others. Bobby Baker organised a procession of people dressed as pea demanding rights or asking us to give 'Peas a Chance'.



*Give Peas A Chance, 19/07/2008 © Bobby Baker. All rights reserved, DACS/Artimage 2021. Photo: Andrew Whittuck*

It was also at Bonkersfest I created my first piece of Live Art, when I went up a ladder and attempted to screw lightbulbs into the sky because the normal world needed more light.



It was a great fun. But like the genesis of any emerging movement, you have to consider intersectionality, although I wasn't aware of the word or definition at that time in the mid Noughties. The beginnings of Mad Pride in the UK were driven by straight white males. I came to it a couple of years after it began and saw sexism and homophobia present in some of the people taking part.

One of the responses to this was some of the female members of Mad Pride to set up **MAD CHICKS**, which aimed to address issues specific to women, such as sexism in the NHS, childcare, and mixed wards. It launched at London's Union Chapel venue on 27<sup>th</sup> November 2004, with workshops, massages, debates, videos, art, food, and an evening gig with Gina Birch & Ana da Silva of the Raincoats doing solo sets, the Band Gertrude and impossible vocal fireworks of Maggie Nicols, amongst others.

The Mad Movement has its own intersectionalities. There is the worried well, the white middle class with depression and anxiety doing polite anti-stigma campaigns, encouraging us to talk to each other, as long as that talk doesn't criticise the government, the mental health system, or argue that mental distress stems from social and political inequality and damage. The not so pretty or the too poor, too medicated, too traumatised, too fucked over by the demands of capitalism are not allowed to take part in the socially acceptable mental health awareness campaign.

Every bloody year around Mental Health Day, usually the 10<sup>th</sup> October, everyone and their mum tells you to reach out and ask for help if you are struggling. What they don't tell you is that you will get no timely support, will be offered tablets that may or may not help, and have more chance of encountering coercion and neglect than effective treatment or kindness. If you are Black more likely to be sectioned or die under control and restraint in a psychiatric hospital. Both psychiatry and

psychology have their foundations built on sexism, racism, homophobia, colonialism. They are more a product of culture than science.

With the arrival of psychiatry came the rise of the incarcerated women. Before that, insanity was the domain of men. Victorian psychiatry decided that female insanity was linked to their reproductive symptom. Women were unable, it seems, to have a lifetime of sanity. Victorian psychiatry deemed women as intrinsically unstable. One of the behaviours in Victorian women that defined insanity was unbridled sexuality, 'an offense to decorum'. The dialectic of reason and unreason took on sexual meaning. The paternalistic tradition of psychiatry meant asylums were run like a family, following the father's rules. It was part of the reason they were not allowed to work, vote, or have a separate opinion. Psychiatry linked ambition in women with hysteria.

Women were considered mad when they went against 'feminine propriety'. Those Victorian women who wanted more than society could give them were prone to 'hysteria'. Yearning for independence and freedom from marriage and motherhood, in the minds of psychiatry, was the cause of hysteria. Rebellion against the domestic life was pathologized. Any rebellion, in fact, was pathologized. The hunger strike of suffragettes at Holloway Gaol was seen as a symptom of hysteria. Psychiatry was a machine to ensure women were dutiful wives. Some 'treatments' included putting ice into vaginas, or removal of the clitoris, or years in a lunatic asylum.

## **RACISM LOVES PSYCHIATRY**

Did you know there was a mental illness called 'Drapetomania'? It was the illness that made Black slaves not want to be slaves and flee captivity. Did you also know the beginnings of both psychiatry and psychology privilege the white man's purported rationality as the default, as the aspiration of health, of superiority? That psychiatry and psychology both have deeply embedded racist beliefs at their foundations. A good book to read about racism in Suman Fernando's book *Institutional Racism in Psychiatry and Clinical Psychology: Race Matters in Mental Health*.

My interview with Rebekah Ubuntu brought up that 'mad' was not a useful word to them. They say, "mad to mean angry, which brings to mind the liberating project of anger... [but] has been similarly weaponised against Black people... I don't know if I have a relationship with it yet."

Madness is a complicated, disruptive entity. It has more layers of meaning and connotation than the geological layers of an unquiet earth. Why it is a more fraught relationship for Black people needs a little more unpacking.

In our white supremacist world, Blackness and madness cannot stand separately, rendering them both political. The white supremacist capitalist world currently owns the idea of sanity. Sanity is not a static and scientific entity; it is contingent on mainstream values and is completely subjective. The goalposts shift dependant on economic, political, and medical caprices. Birthed from white supremacy roots, psychiatry and psychology have linked Blackness with madness, by labelling Black people as less moral, too emotional, even having inferior brains to their white counterparts. The white western middle-class men who state these claims say science proves this. Actually, what these men did was use themselves as the 'ideal' and manipulated the data to fit this very convenient and conceited concept.

Although psychiatry does not overtly sell this story these days, it hasn't abandoned those beliefs or values. They have just become more insidious. It is still racist. Black people in the UK are still more likely to be sectioned, die under control and restraint, and have the police part of their mental health 'care'. Madness is used to punish, destabilise and belittle Blackness. Psychiatry wants to pathologise people for being Black and Brown, and not because the world is anti-black. Black and Brown people are driven mad by a maddening world that sees itself as sane.

Franz Fanon, in his book *Black Skin, White Masks* looks at the experience of being Black in a white world. He puts forward that cultural assimilation profoundly damages Black and Brown people. In popular culture, everywhere a Black person looks, whiteness is equated with goodness and superiority, the aim to make the Black person feel inferior and insecure. To stop this sense of pain, they want to be part of white culture, to assimilate, but they end up feeling alienated as to who they really are. The Black and Brown identity is put in a lose/lose situation. They are not taught in the society they are in how to navigate this quicksand; the map comes from the people before them who found their own way back to themselves and peace of mind.

W.E.B. DU BOIS also writes about this, calling this phenomenon **double consciousness**, which is a sense of seeing the self through the eyes of others, of being measured by a tape that is intentionally short, by having two elements of your identity irreconciled with each other. This is without the added trauma of experiencing overt and covert racism. This is why I think madness and/or mental distress should be seen as an injury rather than an illness. The one of the biggest lies psychiatry has told is that madness belongs only to the individual experiencing it and not an outcome of carrying the untenable burden the world has given them. Psychiatry is really terrified of giving Black and Brown pain the time, care, and reparation it deserves.

Those Black and Brown people who fight against injustice in the world will find their righteous anger transformed by medicine into insanity. The hurt Black person is labelled mad to lose any dignity and power to be able to do anything with that hurt.

bell hooks touches upon the fear of madness and how injustice could lead to madness.

“Madness, not just physical abuse, was the punishment for too much talk if you were female. Yet even as this fear of madness haunted me, hanging over my writing like a monstrous shadow, I could not stop the words making thought, writing speech. For this terrible madness which I feared, which I was sure was the destiny of daring women born to intense speech (after all, the authorities emphasized this point daily), was not as threatening as imposed silence, as suppressed speech.”

– Bell Hooks, Talking Back: Thinking Feminist, Thinking Black

The space allowed for Black and Brown people to experience madness safely and meaningfully can be found on a pinhead. Where is the space for them to do this? Certainly, at this moment, not in Mad Pride.

Joining a mostly white Mad Pride is still a cultural assimilation that can damage Black and Brown people. There are several Mad Pride groups around the world that understand the intersectionality of oppression and how no-one is free until everyone is free; but there are also Mad Pride groups who carry the racism, sexism, homophobia, etc, of their conditioning.

The mad Black person is erased on almost every plain, even unwanted in most of the Black world. Communities who fight for rights don't want mad people in their mix - they think it dilutes their argument and complicates things. It happened with the fight for depathologising gayness. Queer activists in the 1960s and 1970s fought to remove homosexuality from the DSM, the psychiatrist's 'bible'. Activist Frank Kameny said 'the movement is going to stand or fall upon the question of whether homosexuality is a sickness.'

In 1973 their activism bore fruit and homosexuality was removed as a disease from the DSM. The other fruit it bore was bruised – the rejection and alienation of the mad queer. They had no room for the queers with mental health conditions, either in activism or queer spaces. The campaigners had to 'sell' homosexuality as healthy, and health is not a scientific and objective entity, but what is socially acceptable and privileged, such as gender conformity, proximity to whiteness, economic merit, obedient worker, etc. This distancing from those who were mad, or didn't fit into a restrictive society, cast adrift LGBT+ people with mental health difficulties and those too queer. Therefore, with Black and Brown people, who want to be accepted in a society that doesn't really accept them, distrust and disavow the mad Black or mad Brown that might make them look bad. Is it because being mad is seen as justification for discrimination and inequality? or is it the acknowledgement that intersectionality makes it a harder battle to fight? The dance around a single axis of oppression has less steps but its music loses its soul.

Black and Brown people are not precluded from having Mad Pride, but it is both slippery and thorny to separate a parasitical attributed label of 'mad' from an unusual or differing mind that has a right to exist and celebrate itself. It can be repossessed and also refused.

Those who understand intersectionality and fight for rights still have not plumbed the depth of the conversation about: what happens when you add madness into the intersectional mix? And what can we do about it? Mad Academics like Lucy Costa and Fady Shadoua in Canada talk about intersectionality and madness being decolonised, but the discussions need to be wider. I think Live Arts can help towards that.

## **QUEER IN THE HEAD**

Being gay or transgender in the mid 20<sup>th</sup> Century meant being given treatment that would constitute torture in other settings: genitals being electroshocked, or 'patients' being force fed emetics. Psychiatry was part of the trinity of tyranny strangling the queer person, the others being the law and religion. This trinity ensured queerness was shoved on its knees and destabilised. To label a person 'abnormal', 'criminal' or 'sinful' is a perfect way to do this.

I am also Queer. Queer studies and activism have some overlap with Mad studies, etc. For example, psychiatry can de-power Queers by hinting that their queer sexuality and gender is part of their pathology, their madness, their abnormality. Homosexuality was decriminalised in 1967, and removed from the mental disorder list in 1973.





By the time Gay Liberation was in full swing, it was hijacked by the middle-class white queer, who once they had their rights did not care about the other walls that imprison the queers, such as class, racism, etc, and some of the movement became transphobic. This feeds into our present in that London Pride takes money from arms companies who sell to regimes who murder Queers, but won't have overtly political groups as part of the parade. Check out Sylvia Rivera's speech at a Gay Rights Rally NYC in 1973 about being banned from there for making the other gays 'look bad', and the booing she had to endure when she reminded the crowd of the origins of Gay Liberation. Part of the speech she says: 'I have been raped, I have been beaten, I have been thrown in jail, I have lost my job, I have lost my apartment for gay liberation, and this is how you treat me!'

Mad studies/mad politics and psychiatric survivor groups are not a spectrum of frameworks that flow smoothly in and out of each other, or honour each other. It is arguably not part of the amphitheatre of identity politics. For me, it is more a 'fuck you for fucking us over in the past, present and a fight not to be fucked over in the future. It is a critique of 'normal' and its underhanded push into the cookie cutter mould of human-shaped conformity and acquiescence. Normal is not neutral. Normal is bias and bullshit. If something doesn't suck the cock of the power and privileged then it can't be counted as normal. Normal is a binary world where one side is seen as preferable and is more powerful than the other. Normal can bully you into madness if you don't do what it wants of you. Normality is testing your sanity until the strain becomes intolerable, and then blame you for the madness it can cause in you. As I said in the beginning: it is all about power. It is a great area for Live Art to understand, explore and ultimately fuck with.

Are you mad? I am fucking livid at the bullshit I am expected to adhere to just to be able to breathe in and out, and being endorsed as a human being? I am angry at being brutalised by the preciousness of sanity? Rage is the fire that will burn the bullshit that hurts too many people. It also keeps us warm when the world is too cold. Are you mad too?

## **SOME OTHER LIVE ART ARTISTS WHO LOOK AT MADNESS AND/OR NORMALITY**

**Those who have work in the Study Room will have SR next to them.**

Bobby Baker – <https://www.dailylifeld.co.uk/> **SR**

Vacuum cleaner – <http://www.thevacuumcleaner.co.uk/> **SR**

Hannah Madness - <https://hanamadness.art/>

Ria Hartley – <https://www.islingtonmill.com/tenant/ria-hartley/> **SR**

Selina Thompson - <https://selinathompson.co.uk/> **SR**

Scottee. - <https://www.scottee.co.uk/> **SR**

Alexandrina Helmsley - <http://alexandrinahelmsley.com/about/>

Charlotte Cooper <http://charlottecooper.net/> **SR**

Extravagant Minds/Kontejne - <https://www.kontejner.org/en/projekti/ekstravagantna-tijela/ekstravagantna-tijela-ekstravagantni-umovi-2/koncept-7> **SR**

Kim Noble - <https://mrkimnoble.com/> **SR**

Fox Irving - <https://foxirving.com/> **SR**

Nwando Ebizie - <https://www.nwandoebizie.com/> **SR**

Rebekah Ubuntu - <https://rebekahubuntu.com/>

Lucy Hutson - <https://lucyhutson.com/> **SR**

Chiron Stamp - <https://www.chironstamp.com/home-1> **SR**

## **THE INTERVIEWS**

### **WHO IS BOBBY BAKER?**

I will let Bobby tell her artist story in her interview but she is one of the most prolific and enduring of UK artists, much of her work performative and explores the place of women in the world, especially the belittled and stigmatised parts of it, such as domesticity. There is always cheekiness, beauty and defiance in her work. In much of her work, she uses food as an artistic medium. She also draws work from her mental and physical health difficulties, such as subverting the idea of therapy to create the work *HOW TO LIVE* (2004), where she becomes a self-proclaimed mental health guru to teach the world how to live, such patients include a frozen pea.

Bobby was one of the artists I looked up to. Whatever your marginalisation, you need role models to show you wonder, possibility and love in the world. She inspired me to keep working on my art and to be myself.

### **WHO IS THE VACUUM CLEANER?**

The Vacuum Cleaner is an artist collective of one, sometimes called James Ledbitter. His work is political, provocative but also playful. Like Bobby Baker, I was introduced to his work at Bonkersfest. I loved his defacing of signs and logos project RE-CALL, LOGO FAULT, such as turning 'Police' into 'Lice', and 'Starbucks Coffee' into 'Fuck Off'.



*vacuum cleaner (2005)*

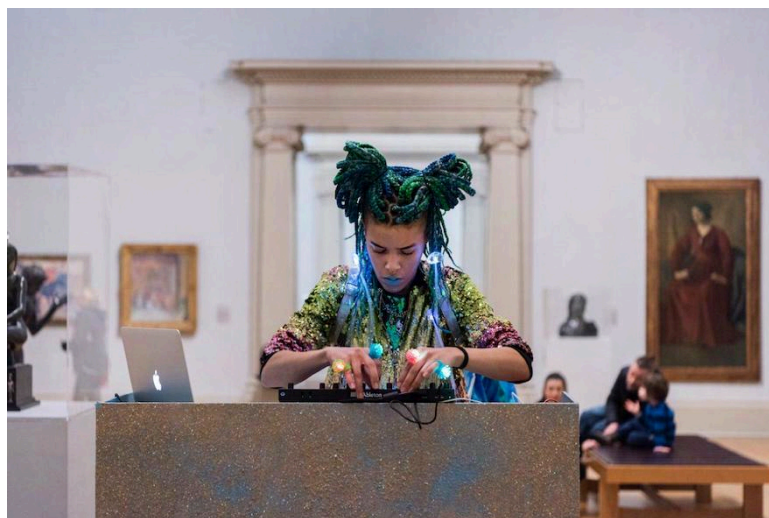
Lois Keidan, formerly of LADA says this about him “the vacuum cleaner is one of the most significant and exciting artists working in the UK today. Blurring the boundaries between art and audiences and between performance and politics, the vacuum cleaner’s work not only gets people thinking about things, but actually doing things to effect social, cultural and political change.”

Why do I think James would be a good person to interview in this guide? He has works called ‘Mental’, ‘Mad Love’ and ‘Ship of Fools’. It’s not hard to see why. Also, I love the way his mind and heart works.

## **WHO IS REBEKAH UBUNTU?**

Unlike the other two, I have not worked with Rebekah before, or know her personally. Rebekah Ubuntu is a multidisciplinary artist, musician and university lecturer based in London, UK. Their practice explores speculative fiction, ecologies and belonging through voice and sound art, electronic music (composition and improvisation), moving image, writing and performance. They also co-create in mixed reality, installation, podcasts and workshops.

Rebekah introduced me to speculative fiction and showed me how you can mix up reality even further. It was great to chat with them and look on the subject with a different perspective.



Artist Rebekah Ubuntu (pictured) commissioned performance at Tate Britain, image courtesy of Tate London.

## **INTERVIEW WITH BOBBY BAKER (2021)**

**DOLLY:**

**I'm gonna ask you what do you understand by the word mad?**

**BOBBY**

Liberation. I mean, it's quite odd, isn't it? I think I see it so politically. It's probably very different to how I saw it when I was younger.

I can trace back my understanding of the word to where I went to the first Mad Pride. Well, I think it was one of the first time they decided to do big festival in Clissold Park. It's now become really trendy around there. It's full of all these Cognoscenti, but it was very empty then. I went with some friends I'd made from the day centre. It was in the late 1990s, I think.

We couldn't see anything going on. We sort of wandered around until we saw these tents. There was one woman in one really big tent, trying to arrange some beanbags. It was chaos. I don't know if anything ever did happen. But it I just wanted to be with those people who rented a tent, got some beanbags, and nothing really quite came together because they were all mad. [Laughter] That's when I began to be a bit political.

Yeah, I can only see it as Mad Pride, which led to mad studies. That's what I think of mad.

**DOLLY:**

**Do you see yourself as mad?**

**BOBBY:**

I'd like to be counted as part of the Mad Pride community. I mean, I wouldn't put anyone through all the anguish and suffering and abuse or whatever. But I feel proud to be different. I feel proud to be part of a community of some of the best people in the world, because that's what I really found in the mental health system. I remember Andrew my ex, we're not together now, but we're friends. We went to a pub near the day centre, where I had started meeting all these people. There was this lovely guy called Mick. You wouldn't believe what Mick's life had been like. He was a musician, a really, really brilliant musician, and really gnarled. He was on so much medication, he was on that one where your eyes get stuck looking up sometimes.

**DOLLY:**

Oh, yeah.

**BOBBY:**

He was an outstandingly gentle, wise, clever, dignified man. That night there was a band playing in the pub. Andrew was chatting to Mick and asked him: "What do you think?" Mick sat back very quietly for a long time and he said: "Inconsequential."

[Both Bobby & Dolly laugh]

**BOBBY:**

I just felt this love of these of people. And I felt like I'd come home. I wouldn't say that of everybody, but I've met people in the system who are more sensitive, more interesting - they are the people who react to the abuse of a family. Say a family has alcoholism or incest or whatever, it damages everybody, but some people react more acutely to injustice. I'm that sort of person. My family was not so troubled or traumatic to grow up in, but I absorbed everything going on and tried to make sense of it – that's my motivation as an artist. Sensitive people are like litmus paper who experience trauma or injustice in different ways.

It's a serious subject, and it's about great sadness, but also what can come out of it, like the Friends of East End Loonies, for example, with their poetry. I just would love to be counted as part of that community really, because it's where some of the most interesting observations are made. I haven't ever read any Foucault but I've read about Foucault, but that idea of the ship of fools and the court jester, I really relate to that. I would have liked to be that person.

**DOLLY:**

what are all the themes in your work? And have they changed over the years?

**BOBBY:**

Oh, hugely. Because it's all based on the principle that I'm making work about what's going on in my life. I started making art when I was 23, and I'm now 70, so it's not the same subject. But it is fundamentally the same. The deepest part of it is feminist, striving for a sort of gender equal world, which is very holistic in its view. So that's always there.

Obviously, I've gone through all these different phases, and after making work about my experiences in the mental health system, I found that very problematic, because I'm now in such a different space in my life.

I felt burdened by it. I knew that was the risk with the diary drawings. I knew that there was a risk it would be the narrative about me forever. But it felt so important that people got to see the pictures, to see another narrative about mental health. It was a worry, and to a degree, I think it always will be my burden. Because I've always been honest in my work about what's going on in life. There was probably three minutes in *Drawing on a Mothers Experience* about a very short period of postnatal depression. I was astonished to find that people who'd seen the show back in the day said, 'Oh, that's the show about postnatal depression'. I'd go 'No, it's not, it was about bringing up small children!' The sense I made of it is that when I mentioned it nobody ever bloody talked about it, so they were shocked by that, that it stuck in their mind.

I suppose I've always felt I was close to the edge for a long time, so it's always there a bit. But since I got discharged from the mental system, and my life changed,

for the last 12 years, I've been in the best, happiest state in my life. My 'mental health' is better than pretty much anyone I meet having made sense of my life. I couldn't draw because the drawings were only ever seen as being about mental health. I made *Mad Gyms and Kitchens* about a holistic way of living, but then that became a burden. I really wanted to do something for the Olympics, and it was almost quite a tactical show, because I wasn't interested in me just then. I was interested in seeing if I could get the audience to make drawings about their own lives, rather than it being about me. And that worked, but we toured that show 37 times around the country and East London. God, that nearly broke me. It was a useful thing to do, but definitely the last piece of work specifically about the mental health system.

I did *How to Live*, where I created my own 'Therapy Empire' in 2004. Then I had a period where, in hindsight, I realised, I didn't want to make my own work much so it was interested in promoting other people's work and I loved that. It was all a bit hand to mouth financially, but I'm really proud of some of the things we did, the street exhibitions particularly. But then I was offered this amazing commission from 14-18 NOW, was just such a godsend and resulted in *Great & Tiny War* in 2018.

It's about transgenerational trauma, it's about what I'm really interested in: challenging the diagnostic framework and psychiatry, which is a patriarchal, colonial view of understanding distress and classifying it as order versus disorder, and challenging that. I get really, really wound up about psychiatry, I feel so frustrated, but I feel things are shifting like with the 'the Drop the Disorder' campaign. I realised that when I became political about mental health, I didn't want to go to all these meetings and see lots of angry people. I thought: I'm an artist so will make work about it. But I suppose what I want to do is step back and look at the bigger picture. So EPIC DOMESTIC, that I'm working on now, is about creating a revolutionary party fit for the 21<sup>st</sup> century - not at all about women's mental health at home, it's about treating people fairly, people having good lives and being valued for what they do. I see that the most important thing in the whole world is how you treat children. I care for children and people who are caring for them.

**DOLLY SEN:**  
**Why live art?**

**BOBBY:**  
I did never call it 'live art'. I did painting at art school. I think that that's where I get really excited is drawing and painting. I was very earnest you know, wasn't supposed to go to art school. I was gonna go to secretarial college, that sort of thing. I went to a school where there was a wonderful art teacher and I wanted to be an artist all my childhood, then my dad died and I knew I was lucky after that to get into a good art school. Even though I was thrilled to be there and be able to escape Bromley I objected to the elitism. I think it's probably a bit like you're a *fine* artist, you just do sculpture, or you do painting, and of course it was there were virtually no women making work – or at least I subsequently discovered, no women's work

got shown. It was an odd time. I just couldn't see how I could fit. I didn't know what to do. It was the Easter holidays, so I just drew my teddy bears in my bedroom for my final show. I had to have some work to show, and I did hundreds drawings and paintings of shoes and teddy bears for my show. They're accomplished paintings, but of course, it was embarrassing in 72. People were like 'ooo, so not cool.'

**DOLLY:**

But that's what's cool about it.

**BOBBY:**

Well, at the time, it didn't get me anywhere. I was so lost, and on the point of cracking up all the time. It was so awful when I look back on it, and I got taken over by this very abusive man. So I applied to Royal College, and I was living in a squat. It's just one of those times in your life, you think: wow, you survived that. I thought: you're never going to get into Royal College, and then I left and it was like this moment of liberation, of thinking: 'well, fuck that world'. I remember walking out of the door of St. Martins onto Charing Cross Road and thinking, I'm free.

For a little while, I indulged the idea that I was going to be a business woman, because I was selling that home-dyed baseball boots from this squat. I was going to make money. I got into spraying boots silver, and I remember going into NME office wearing these platform boots that I dyed silver wearing all silver clothes. But it was such a grind. I then made this baseball boot cake, just for the hell of it. Because I was so frustrated not to be making anything, that just was the most liberating moment. I suddenly realised I had this notion that I'd call it a work of art of great significance and go back into St. Martin's and say, 'Hey, you sculpture guys, look, beat this badly made cake!' [Laughter] 'Yeah, Anthony Caro, match this work of art of such great significance.' It was so joyful. I think I laughed for about an hour. But then I didn't know what to do with cakes, and I'd have these parties. I met this guy, and he said, 'Come and join us, we're performance artists. Bring your cake.' The first performance I was Princess Anne on Charing Cross Road. It was on her wedding day and I'm the same age as her. That was my introduction. But it wasn't called 'live art', it was called performance art. I just hung around with all these people and start making performances with food.

It wasn't I decided to do that; I always thought I was an artist. But that's how I was making work, and then installations and stuff. It was where the money was as well. I just got caught up in that world. And then suddenly - I think Lois Keidan is partly instrumental - because they all got very serious and called it 'live art'. I remember some talk and I wrote a challenge to that just said, 'Why call it live art when it's performance, why not just call it art.'

I don't want to be arsey in a community that I like, but I don't quite know what the term means. I see the way Live Art Development Agency frame it and the way Lois has talked about it is political, art that's on the edge. But I remember running some workshops at some festival in Chelsea, and there were some interesting people and



there were these three people came and they were like 'I'm a live artist, I'm live artist' and I just thought urgh, it's like it's become a thing, like some cool cult. That's the bit I don't like. Do know what I mean?

**DOLLY:**

Yeah, I've seen it when I first came into the art world, and it's still around in various manifestations. I don't know why people do that, though.

**BOBBY:**

I think they do it with anything, they want to be part of something. Probably but it worried me because a lot of the work I see that is most radical and interesting, like Aaron Williamson, are rather on the edge and not as well known about mainstream as they should be, because they're called 'Live Artists'. All this shit performance art that goes on in galleries, with professional dancers and people with fashionable bodies, I can't bear that, I can't bear it.

**DOLLY:**

I usually go to the toilet when that's happening!

**BOBBY:**

Whereas I used to go up a lot to Glasgow, to the National Review of Live Art. There was an incredible array of work. Not all of it was good, but it was such a curation of thrilling, edgy, odd, exciting, radical work that is so much better than so much that's going on now. I think it can be a bit of a burden, because I think the people in powerful positions, they've managed to put it on the edge still.

**DOLLY:**

**Do you want to change anything outside of yourself?**

**BOBBY:**

How long have you got? Do I want to change anything outside of myself? Yes. I'd like to ban psychiatry.

**DOLLY:**

Yes, I can't argue with that.

**BOBBY:**

I could talk for several hours about the medicalizing of misery. I think that would be my main thing. I'm a feminist, so deeply want to change the value of care. It's what Sandy Toksvig calls, 'grossly undervalued domestic product', or everyday life. Those are my two things: I'd put living wage in and I'd burn psychiatry.

**DOLLY:**

I can't argue with that at all. It's funny, because when people say: do you think psychiatry should be abolished? Or do you think it can be changed? And I say, No, I'm one of the people who said I think it needs to be abolished. And I get flack for it.

**BOBBY:**

Yeah, I just feel I've read too much. I've heard too much. Dr James Davis, a medical anthropologist, trained psychotherapist co-founded 'The council for Evidence-based Psychiatry', which provides evidence where psychiatric drugs cause harm. He's part of that whole 'Drop the Disorder' network. He's written some good books about the psychiatric system, as have others. He wrote a book a while ago called 'Cracked'. 'Sedated: How Modern Capitalism Created Our Mental Health Crisis' is his latest one. I recently heard him give a talk online at some weird conference on wellbeing in young people, he was the keynote speaker. It was outstanding talk about his research about how the diagnostic framework came about with DSM 3. He interviewed some of the people who were on that committee. I'm not going to spoil it for you because I bought the recording of the talk, and I'm going to somehow spread it around because it was astonishing. The DSM 3 was a group of white men and two women sitting around a committee meeting weekly, arguing and voting - that's how they came up with some of the main diagnoses, by voting. Anyway, he's really good news. This tweet he did the other day: 'More funding for mental health? Be careful. Our medicalised system has had over 40 years to prove itself. By most measures, it's failed.' He's one of the many people now who I feel relieved to speak on our behalf and we can just get on and work in our different ways.

**DOLLY:**

**Do you have any advice for fellow artists?**

**BOBBY:**

Sounds corny, but stay true to yourself, trust your gut feeling. I mean, you see Grayson Perry's done this wonderful graphic 'Lessons in Creativity'. I always have to print it out and have it on the fridge because it really saved me.

It's like: be uncool; don't aim for global appeal be a prized local cheese; nobody's original - don't feel embarrassed about borrowing; play seriously.

When I'm talking to people, people who actually bother to ask what you think about something, like a decision they're making. I just say: 'What's your gut tell you? What's your intuition? What's your integrity? What's right? It's getting to know yourself and being true to yourself, rather than performing being somebody else. Or sometimes you have to copy things because you learn from it.

**DOLLY:**

**Do you mind that people copy you?**

**BOBBY:**

No, I'm quite flattered really.

I certainly wouldn't mind. I've been very inspired by people. What I'm proud about is that when I was young, there were just no women artists visible. I gradually found out they were there, but I didn't know about them. In those days there was no

internet and only just a few books in the library, and there were no books about women artists. I am proud if I've encouraged anyone. Because I think role models can be really great. The only people I really knew about and admired were Virginia Woolf and Jane Austen. You can write more easily as a woman, because it's in a little book, whereas making artwork is so different. That's why I think there were so many women writers initially, because of the economy of it, they could hide what they were doing.

I'm very happy about that if it helps anyone as long, as I can tell them what not to do. [Laughter]

**DOLLY:**

**What should they not do then?**

**BOBBY:**

I think what I've suffered from and still do to a degree is lack of entitlement, lack of being able to ask to be properly paid. A lot of us, including pretty any woman I've ever met, doesn't have that. I would say entitlement is feeling competent to ask to be properly paid, because my biggest problem has been overworking and not feeling allowed to be an artist. Overwork and bad pay, I'm shocked when we look back on how much work I was doing. It was ridiculous, but I survived it. But I hope people don't do that. But at the same time, it's a complicated thing, because art doesn't pay, and it's going to get harder. I think there's been a kind of education system, which encouraged young people to think that they could go into something and just earn their living. I wasn't encouraged to think that. You always had another job; you always found another way to earn money.

I think of people who constantly bowled me over like James Baldwin. You keep going back to and just thinking, you can't believe people like that existed, who were that clever, that wise and wrote and produced that work. It's so cheering to encounter the amazing work of people you didn't know existed. It's that authenticity or that integrity is what resonates with people long term. To be true to yourself rather than perform being an artist, or perform being a cool person.

The use of the word vulnerability, because I really hate the use of the word 'vulnerability'. It's sort of used in society to categorise people, rather than seeing that those people are usually the strongest people in the whole world. It's actually the power of vulnerability, the power of being honest, which hadn't quite occurred to me before. Being honest and saying things as they are to you, is hugely helpful to people, they don't necessarily think about them. The whole point in my work is not what they think about me, but that they think about themselves, that people go away, reflecting on these issues in relation to themselves or somebody they know. I suppose it is honesty and the safely art can provide to talk about things in non-conventional way, but in the context of art is very good. I was lucky to know Helen Chadwick, the artist, and she selected me to be in this Hayward annual

exhibition in 1979. It was my opening to get big time in the art world and then I had a child, but it was an amazing experience.

There were a group of us doing performances and so got really friendly with Helen for a while before she so sadly died. I remember her talking later about Frida Kahlo. She made Frida Kahlo's work more public, because people just didn't know about Frida Kahlo. It was the early 80s. She talked about it and nobody's ever heard of this artist and she'd gone out to Mexico and put her name out there. Look at Frida Kahlo now.

It always pleases me that I see the world is sort of raving about Frida Kahlo, whose husband was Diego Riviera, and now she's a million times more significant than him. That's quite a good story, isn't it?

## **INTERVIEW WITH JAMES LEDBITTER (VACUUM CLEANER)**

**DOLLY:**

**So, James, how did you get into live art?**

**JAMES:**

How did I get into live art? I was invited to the National Review of live art in Glasgow. In, I want to say, 2002. So, at that time, I was living in a homeless hostel in East Finchley and my friend Robert had been to Darlington College of Arts and then moved to Glasgow. And he was making like kind of theatre performance stuff and then said how does this festival have all that all the freaky weird shit, you'll really like it. And I can get your ticket fairly cheap, so come and hang out. And you know, was on disability benefits then so I had some available time and stuff. And yeah, that's when you can still smoke inside, a sneaky smoke a giant in the bar and go and watch like, Franco B. Actually, it's the first time I ever saw Bobby [Baker]. I quite liked it. I kind of felt like I didn't feel weird or different there. There was a fair amount of body-based performance are and the, you know, the previous another year long admission in the mental health hospital. And so everything that had been medicalized or frowned upon within the mental health system was kind of fetishized, anaesthetised and celebrated in this weird festival. So, and people were approachable. Like, you didn't feel that it was all these massive egos. Maybe there is, I don't know. I mean, yeah, I kind of belong here.

**DOLLY:**

**That was your introduction? What kept that interest going? Were you interested in doing something yourself? Did you have ideas? Or did you just kind of go along with the flow?**

**JAMES:**

Kind of went with the flow. I just started talking to Franco B in the bar, right. And I told him a story about like, having a history of self-harm. And how was what he did

different. He just spoke to me about it for ages and a really thoughtful, intelligent way. And then he said, I wish I could hang out in my studio. And I did that a bit. I kind of had this idea of making my own work as well. I had been doing a bit of political activism at that time around the British and American invasion of Afghanistan, and Iraq was on the horizon as well, and some Palestinian solidarity. I don't really like, like mainstream activists like marching around, sort of boring. I wanted to do something a bit more creative. I started doing a bit of that.

A few years after that, just bombing around like, Lois Keidan encouraged me to apply for this thing called East End collaborations, which was like a merging festival at Queen Mary's, which I did, and then they're like, oh, we'll pay you 100 pounds. At a time, I mean, it's almost like disability benefits was 120 pounds a week. It's a lot of money.

I was doing my art so to speak, I would just do it. Because I think, like you, probably I was informed a bit by RD Laing, Critical Psychiatry, and I've been on that journey of reading stuff but hadn't quite discovered my pride yet. But I've definitely been on this thing of like, I'm not the mad one here. Definitely not the mad one. But where's my place in the world? I kind of experimented with my agenda in the hospital, not being really shut down by the psychiatrist. I felt like trying to have a voice, and trying to make art that had some impact on the world, was a way of staying in a healthier place or whatever.

**DOLLY:**

**What kind of impact did you want to make?**

**JAMES:**

There was a film called... I think it's a John Carpenter film where he takes off the glasses and puts the glasses on, and he realises there is the obey sign everywhere.

**DOLLY:**

I know it. Roddy Piper played the main character. I know what you're talking about the obey. And people are aliens. [The film is 'They Live' made in 1988].

**JAMES:**

I didn't have this delusion that I was going to change the world or anything. I just wanted to create moments where like: all of this is bullshit. Like, well, we're walking around shopping centres on buying the same things and thinking we're individuals, this is all so weird. And like, go into those spaces and do things that pierce a hole in the reality of consumer capitalism, or this kind of death wish culture kind of thing. And critically, a bit silly, a bit funny, and a bit of fuck you, but also, sometimes a bit tender can sometimes like. Yes, I can't think of a better way to spend more time really. I mean, I'm never bored when I'm doing that kind of thing.

**DOLLY:**

**What do you understand by the word mad?**

**JAMES:**

Well, that's a really good question. Nobody's ever asked me that question. So brilliant question. I understand that to me, that I and others have been in a form of emotional or psychological, or in our soul, in our being on a deep level has experienced pain. We have been able to own that pain and transform it into something that we can live with. It is still painful sometimes, but can be beautiful at times, it can be powerful at some times, and can be a good tool to keep check of what's important and can help us think about the complexity of things or not get sucked into bullshit. It's like an ability to zoom out of a thing and look at it from all the different angles and complexity.

**DOLLY:**

Yeah, that's what it is for me.

**JAMES:**

It's like a process. The process of healing is madness.

**DOLLY:**

**So do you call yourself mad?**

**JAMES:**

Now I do. And I like it. I love the use of the word mental. I'm really enjoying the word loon at the moment. I've just moved out of London and I can see the stars again. I think about lunar cycles. Doris, the dog, she's now going on the beach every day, she spins around really fast. He and Lily go 'She's such a crazy loon.' All those words are fun.

There's also something about the nature of circular things. Western culture has a really big obsession with linear time, and actually things are much more circular. Because a lot of my life journey as an artist you feel something in your gut, you go on a journey. But I often always come back to that gut reaction of how does that feel?

Mad is also a political strategy and a political statement, because it links in with things around disability, justice, anti-capitalism, and anarchist politics around critiques of power, and who has power and how power is distributed and shared, mutuality, and how we share resources and have alternative communities.

It's that thing of when you're labelled 'mad' by a psychiatrist, then it's a really powerful thing to claim the identity and reject the power structure that pressures you. That power structure exists within madness, but also within racism, and sexism, and misogyny, and all those kinds of things. It's kind of like: fuck you to that power structure. I'm owning my madness, but that's the thing, it took me a while to understand. Mad Pride is different to like gay or lesbian pride. It's a bit more complex than that. Yes, we can be proud about it, but that doesn't mean that we

ignore the pain and suffering of those moments. It's like a double-edged sword kind of pride, which I don't think a lot of the like mental health charities and mainstream activism get the actual concept on a deeper level. I think live art is intrinsically aligned politically with mad pride. Because it is all the freaks and weirdos and queer people and trans people, people that reject mainstream thinking around diversity and all that kind of stuff.

**DOLLY:**

**I've been following your work for a long time. The themes in your work have changed a little bit, or do you not think they've changed? Do you say: next time we'll work on this theme or is it more organic than that?**

**JAMES:**

I think it's a bit of both, like I wasn't out for a long time. I'd like to be out as a mad person. When I started in 2002, 2003, I didn't have that as part of my identity. It was still part of my daily lived experience. I was focusing on consumerism and climate change, the G8 and climate camp, and co-founded the Laboratory of Insurrectionary Imagination... I don't like the term 'relapse', but let's just use it as shorthand. In 2009 and getting sectioned again and it all going like really messy, I had a moment where somebody said to me you've got so many skills around fighting for things, you should apply them to yourself. [Laughs]

I emailed Kim Noble the man, and not the other one, about making work whilst coming out of hospitals, stuff like that. He replied and just said, 'I wouldn't bother mate I would just focus on going mad as creatively as you can.'

I made a piece called 'Mental', which was probably the main time I've made something about me from my experiences, even though it was within a political context of my records and everything like that. So things are responsive, like situations or meeting people or 'The Ship of Fools' piece, or like I just need to survive. Or MADLOVE, which is 'I'm in a hospital that's shit and joke I could do better than this,' and then they go, 'off you go then, fine.'

Then asking what does it mean to co-author that, and bring lots of people into that process?

You don't do the same thing your whole life, fuck that, no way! That's why I can't do like a normal job. Oh my god, I like the excitement and I like learning on my own. I can't be in a university, but I listen to podcasts, or chat to people and say you seem to know a lot, can I learn from you? Or just walking on the beach and thinking about things.

**DOLLY:**

That makes a lot of sense.

**JAMES:**

Is it not the same for you though? Do you like an adventure?

**DOLLY:**

Definitely. I am always excited by what I do, or what I am seeing other people do. I said to my partner Allison, I can't work in a normal job. I mean, I could, but you'd probably have to live with a person who's deeply, deeply miserable for the rest of your life.

**JAMES:**

I've had my quota of miserable.

**DOLLY:**

So have I, like before the age of 2! I've filled up the loyalty card, thank you very much.

**JAMES:**

Yes, I've got all the stamps for a miserable coffee!

**DOLLY:**

Yeah, and it's a really rubbish loyalty card as well. You stamp the card and it breaks.

**JAMES:**

It's a nice idea for a piece though, isn't it? Stand outside a hospital and go, 'You've got you've got your card of miserable complete. Here's your free coffee.

**DOLLY:**

I had a madness loyalty card. One of the first things I did when I was part of Creative Routes. I was handing them outside of Maudsley Hospital until I got ejected. The Madness Loyalty Card is really old. It's almost 20 years ago.

**JAMES:**

I really love that photograph of you trying to screw a lightbulb into the sky.

**DOLLY:**

That was that Bonkersfest. Yeah, that was cool. What was cool about it there were these kids that were saying to me 'What you're doing? I said, 'I'm screwing a light bulb because the world needs more light. 'And they say, 'Well go on then, we want to see more light.' I went under my breath. 'Oh, shit.' Anyway, I climbed the ladder and I screwed the light bulb. And as luck would have it, the clouds parted. And then was there was light. And I thought, wow, this is magic.

**JAMES:**

That's pure magical thinking, not good for delusions of grandeur!

**DOLLY:**

Well, yeah. I've had a bit of an unusual upbringing because my dad was an actor. So I was in stuff like 'Star Wars' and in the 'Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom



'and 'Empire Strikes Back', stuff like that. Al told one psychiatrist this and he put it in my notes I had delusions of grandeur.

**DOLLY:**

**How? Yeah, do you have a process or it all you just work as you go along? What do you have kind of a strategy?**

**JAMES:**

I have some rules. One of my rules is nobody's allowed to die.

**DOLLY:**

That's a good rule.

**JAMES:**

I mean, particularly when you're working in like, forensics, or CAMHS, the wellbeing of the person is more important than not. I try to stay flexible so that if something comes up, there's the space and time to respond to something. I generally start with a question that I'm interested in. I don't really work to a particular form. Like you, I can make a film or performance. I can't paint or make sculpture or anything like that, I can't do proper art, but am good at talking to people. I really like talking to people in hospitals, particularly children, children have got amazing imaginations. I think probably similar to you, I'm always trying to look at the world and flip it upside down. So rather than me being sectioned, it's like you go: I will section the DWP because that's the sick thing, not me. It's just trying to flip everything on its head. And then you just have these silly little ideas and just kind of sit with you and niggle away at you, and then often I try something and it's like, okay, it works in that form, or it doesn't work in that form.

I've been filming all these health workers from Newham for a project called 'Exposure'. That was purely a health worker saying to me: 'somebody just needs to capture these stories.'

It's a combination of reacting to something, and calling it out, or trying to imagine something that doesn't exist. There seems to be a pattern there of calling out bullshit or trying to imagine something that doesn't exist.

**DOLLY:**

**Do you think quite far ahead of time about your work?**

**JAMES:**

No, I don't. I can't do that. It's really hard to do that because I get bored. I've got to a point where people are asking me to do that. I am signed up to do something in two- or three-years' time, which feels horrible. But also, there is some advantage in taking things slowly, and being considered. That's difficult for funders. They go: what's your five-year plan? And I go: to stay off drugs and get another dog.

**DOLLY:**

Woohoo! There are not enough dogs in live art, I think.

**JAMES:**

We need to work on venues being more dog-friendly, that's the issue. The venues are dogist.

**DOLLY:**

I agree! How dare they.

**JAMES:**

Art is a survival strategy, isn't it? Whether that's my survival, or the survival of my community, or friends or society. I am starting to think try a bit more long-term, particularly in this COVID world about care. I don't think things are going to get any easier. So how do we care for each other long-term? How do we care for each other in the face of climate change, and all these other things? I think also it's taken me a while to find financial stability, and I've got pay myself and stuff. Now that I've got that, it's a bit easier to go: what's the next gig? Like today, we decided to turn something down, because we are kind of okay for money for the next six months. I don't need to panic and go to work.

**DOLLY:**

**What advice would doris give to up-and-coming artists? And what advice would you give? Is there a difference?**

**JAMES:**

Doris wouldn't give advice there. She'd say: cuddle me, give me some snacks under the blanket - which is quite selfish.

To being an artist, you're in for the long haul. You've got to make a lot of good work. I think some people think that 'I can just make if I make one good piece, I'm sorted'. You got to quit art school, go and get a job in a care home or a prison, go and experience the real world, and then you'll have loads to say about it. Don't do what anybody tells you and listen to your gut. Don't do what the art world wants you to because the art world is really risk averse. And listen, listen, listen, listen. If you want to make a 20-hour performance art piece and the curators go, 'we've got an hour.' Go 'I want to make a 20-hour art piece, I need that time.' You've just got to find a way to support yourself for the first 20 years and make the work you want to make rather than the work you're told to make.

The other thing that I try to do is trying to find at the edges of stuff, like what is the most interesting thing around like mad culture, or disability culture, or politics, or social policy, or whatever it is - what are the interesting things? I don't really go to art shows. You don't need to play the game. You don't have to get an Instagram account, if you don't want one. get one. I don't go to private views. I don't like to go to festivals. I just admit what's important to me, and push, push the boundaries of

what is acceptable. We don't need more boring art. We don't need more art made by people from the Royal College of Art. We need more art made by people who've been fucked over by the system, or who've experienced discrimination, or who just don't belong, those are the interesting things. If you've got loads of money from mommy and daddy, I just don't care about it, go support other people to make art, step aside.

**DOLLY:**

**is there anything in the realm of madness and live art that hasn't been addressed or tackled yet?**

**JAMES:**

You know when you're in that state of pain, or whatever it is, and you're a bit lucid, and normally we get sectioned or locked away. I think that we're still held ransom to the system. Me, you and other mad artists haven't been able to seize the means of production, because people don't trust us or people think we're crazy. Do you know what I mean? Like the story of the Tate refusing to work with Creative Routes unless there was a sane person in charge. I still think we have a way to go to be trusted and have autonomy over our funding and spaces, like there isn't really a mad-led art space that has been able to survive like Creative Routes was a really amazing example of that.

Bethlem [Gallery] is great, but it's not mad-run. I fantasise about this little island of madness where we could support other people to go mad and make amazing art and be held in that space and not have to defend it from normative shit. I think it would be amazing and I think it would be really popular and successful as a form of discovery around human potential and all that kind of shit.

**DOLLY:**

Yeah, that'd be amazing.

**JAMES:**

Yeah, that would be amazing. We'll be cool. You could be the artistic director.

**DOLLY:**

I want to be passport control.

**JAMES:**

You're too normal now, fuck off. [Laughter]

I want to be chief washer upper. I'm quite happy cleaning out the dogs because there are dogs in this space.

**DOLLY:**

Of course, of course. I think they'll outnumber the humans.

**JAMES:**

Like that place in Costa Rica, have you seen that dog sanctuary in Costa Rica. [Territorio de Zaguates is an extraordinary dog shelter located in the mountains above Heredia, Costa Rica, where dogs roam the mountains.]

I don't buy into that horseshit that being mad makes you better artists. But I do think that period where you are without constraints, there is potential for creativity in that space. It's dangerous as well, because we can be quite angry and upset and that needs holding. Yeah, we need a Mad Artists Development Agency – MADA!

**DOLLY:**

Well, that's awesome. I have enjoyed speaking to you. Is there anything else you want to say that I haven't covered?

**JAMES:**

Well, I feel like I would like to ask you all these questions. I'd be really interested to know what you think about it all.

**DOLLY:**

We can do that.

**JAMES:**

Email me the questions and we'll flip it because I think in this whatever this thing is, your voice is really important as well, because you're a pioneer.

**DOLLY:**

I'm happy to have a chat. Yeah, we will do that at some point. Yeah. Yeah.

DOLLY starts awwwing at Doris, James' dog....

## **INTERVIEW WITH REBEKAH (2021)**

### **What do I understand about the word mad or mental health?**

I think that my understanding is going through a transformation right now because I was recently diagnosed with autism and ADHD. As liberating as that was initially, the cogeneration of race and neurodivergence within pathology is indicative of medicine as a weaponizing mechanism against those considered 'abnormal' and societally 'abhorrent'. However, these diagnoses can be useful because, given the way our society has been set up, there is certain support you can only access if you are assigned a particular label. It's a challenging dilemma to reconcile. I'm currently enrolled in a programme called [Sola Siblings](#) specifically for people who are neurodiverse -- and who resonate with the description of autism -- to develop a greater sense of self-connection and intrinsic value because of our neurodiversity not in spite of it. Rather than relying on a problematic medical model, I am learning to explore what embodied and intuitive self-connection and belonging feel like. I'm

increasingly focused on how I connect to my whole self, integrating mind and body. The word 'mental' sometimes feels like it separates the mind from the body but they are intrinsically connected.

**Resources mentioned:**

Sola Siblings website available here: <https://www.thesolaflare.com/siblings>

**Do I call myself mad? If so why? And if not, why not?**

I think about the word 'mad' in terms of how it has been reclaimed like the words 'queer', 'fat', or 'bitch'. In the USA, they use 'mad' to mean angry, which to me brings to mind the liberating potential of anger in emotional expression and how anger has been similarly weaponized against Black and feminine gendered people. That said, I don't think I've used the word 'mad' before. I don't know if I have a relationship with it yet but I know other people do and I think that if it resonates and feels liberating for the people who use it, then I'm totally for it.

**What are the themes in my works?**

I use speculative visionary fiction to explore surviving, healing and belonging. I enjoy the ways speculative fiction translates across artistic practices like sound and visual art, music, performance, writing, drag and design.

**How do you explore mental health/madness in your work? And why live art to explore these themes?**

A few years after my mum died, I enrolled at theatre-making school and looking back, this is where my live art foundations began. My classes were rich with tears, screams, laughter and a deep intimacy forged out of bearing all in a safe and controlled environment, of being witnessed and witnessing others in a place where courage and vulnerability were acknowledged and rewarded. This setting gave me a gateway to express publicly for the first time my grief after losing my mum, a severing of the closest relationship in my life. This shared and intimate space, which welcomed my outpourings of anger, love and joy, emboldened me to create 'The Procession', an immersive performance where the audience and I play the roles of the bereaved at a fictional memorial service.

The process of writing and workshopping 'The Procession' turned out to be a three-year rite of passage into matrilineal mourning and memorialisation. As the work took shape, I sought to dissolve the boundaries between me, the performer, and the audience by implicating them in the narrative, bringing them into the intimate and sometimes uncomfortable space where grief, resentment and rage found their full expression. During my final performance I felt the magic of the piece take hold as the audience laughed, cried and sang along with me like we were collectively mourning the loss of a loved one. Live art gave me -- and members of the audience -- a public forum to create and share work about personal grief. I think this kind of work is necessary because, in Britain at least, death, dying and grief are often treated like taboos and I feel we need to bring down the unhealthy wall of silence that surrounds these life-altering events.

## **Do you aim to change anything in your work?**

I think one of the things I've been most struck by is the climate emergency that we're all in. Hurricane Maria (2017) really affected my family who lost their home in Dominica. Thankfully they all survived but it was devastating for them, emotionally and financially. In 2019 I made a work called 'Despair, Hope and Healing: Three Movements for Climate Justice', a sonic-visual and live art tribute to global BIPOC communities (Black, Indigenous, People Of Colour communities), who contribute the least but are impacted the most by climate catastrophe. I wanted to amplify two voices in particular: Cheryl Johnson, a Black American climate activist, who continues her mum's legacy fighting for cleaner air in communities impacted by air pollution, and Autumn Peltier, an indigenous water protector, who advocates for everyone's access to clean water. I think artists have a unique role in justice movements and if you have access to the privilege of a platform from which to express yourself creatively, you can use that privilege to amplify the voices of people on the front lines risking their lives for *everyone's* fundamental human rights, including the right to clean air and water. Maybe that's my contribution.

## **Do I have plans for the next few years?**

I recently created a sonic-visual EP exploring belonging through speculative fiction and I'm currently working on its release, which is going to take up the majority of my time this year. It's my biggest project to date and I'm very excited about it.

### **DOLLY:**

That's so cool.

### **REBEKAH:**

#### **Do I have any resources or advice I could offer?**

I'm going to go to my podcast history because if there's anything I can offer, it's podcasts. They've kept me grounded this year during these very destabilising times.

The first podcast is '[Call Your Girlfriend](#)' hosted by Aminatou Sow and Ann Friedman. They're best friends who explore pop culture, politics and conflict through the prism of long distance friendship. Very useful for our current times

The second podcast is '[Still Processing](#)', hosted by Jenna Wortham and Wesley Morris, two culture writers at the New York Times. They're both Black and Queer and do impeccably intricate, intimate and funny analyses of popular culture. I love hearing them talk and their banter.

The third podcast is '[How to Save a Planet](#)', hosted by Dr Ayana Elizabeth Johnson and Alex Blumberg who've joined forces to discuss climate change from intersectional, well-researched and evidenced perspectives giving us hope grounded in facts.

The fourth podcast is one of my new favourites: 'Throughline', hosted by Ramtin Arablouei and Rund Abdelfatah who center perspectives often missing from history

to help listeners understand our world today. I'd recommend starting with their detailed look at Black science fiction writer Octavia E. Butler. It's incredible.

Finally, I cannot recommend highly enough anything by Adrienne Maree Brown: books, audiobooks, podcasts, music - she's brilliant! She co-hosts two unmissable podcasts: the first is '[Octavia's Parables](#)' with musician Toshi Reagon, which offers in-depth analyses of each chapter of Black science fiction writer Octavia E. Butler's parables series; the second is '[How to Survive the End of The World](#)' with Adrienne's sister Autumn, one of my absolute favourites.

### **Resources mentioned:**

'Call Your Girlfriend' podcast website available here:

<https://www.callyourgirlfriend.com/>

'Still Processing' podcast website available here:

<https://www.nytimes.com/column/still-processing-podcast>

'How to Save a Planet' podcast website available here:

<https://gimletmedia.com/shows/howtosaveaplanet>

'Throughline' podcast website available here:

<https://www.npr.org/podcasts/510333/throughline>

'Octavia's Parables' podcast website available here:

<https://www.readingoctavia.com/>

'How to Survive the End of The World' podcast website available here:

<https://www.endoftheworldshow.org/>

### **DOLLY:**

They all sound amazing.

### **REBEKAH:**

I am also enrolled on a 9-week online self-study course called '[Mortal](#)' led by death doula Alua Arthur and mortician Caitlin Doughty. You might have heard of birth doulas, people who assist and advocate for the pregnant person before, during and after a birth. A death doula is similar: they assist and advocate for a dying person and their loved ones, taking them through the dying process, whether long or short. Personally, I have had a lot of deaths in my life, certainly earlier than most of my peers, and mainly on my maternal side: my grandma, my mum and other maternal figures, whose deaths were sudden and shocking to me. And just when I thought I was finally making peace with these losses, the pandemic brought more and on such a global scale that it continues to be overwhelming for me to fathom the level of suffering. Then in the last 6 months alone, I cared for 'two loved ones' who were recently diagnosed with terminal illnesses and for the first time in my life, I was given the time and opportunity to say a proper goodbye, something I was unable to do in the case of my mum and grandma. Shepherding my loved ones through illness and into the hereafter has helped me realise I have unresolved fears around death, dying and loss. It's not just the loss of the person but everything else that comes afterwards, the administration, the paperwork, problematic family dynamics,

everything they leave behind. That's why I recommend the meditations offered on '[Mortal](https://www.mortalcourse.com/)' as a way to contemplate death, and develop a healthier relationship with dying and mortality.

**Resources mentioned:** Mortal website available here:

<https://www.mortalcourse.com/>

**DOLLY:**

Thanks for the gift of your time. That was beautiful. I like food for the brain and heart. Thank you very much. Take care.



## **Documentation of work by artists mentioned/interviewed in the Study Room**

### **CHIRON STAMP COLLECTION**

**Artist/Author:** Chiron Stamp | **Digital Reference:** EF5285 | **Type:** Digital File  
– 2 part audio recording of RE:Create Psychiatry at the Wellcome Collection (1hr24mins and 1hr39mins)  
– Saw it Down/OUT (8:31)  
– audio loop file  
– photo documentation

### **EVERYTHING IN MY HEAD AT ONE TIME IN MY LIFE**

**Artist/Author:** Lucy Hutson | **Reference:** P3668 | ISBN: 978-1-9164243-0-2  
| **Type:** Publication  
An extraordinary response to the artist's experiences within the mental health system. Published in an edition of 200, with each copy personalised by Lucy.

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## **BOBBY BAKER**

### **BOBBY BAKER: REDEEMING FEATURE OF DAILY LIFE EDITED BY MICHELE BARRETT AND BOBBY BAKER (REVIEW)**

**Artist/Author:** Jennie Klein | **Reference:** A0275 | **Type:** Article

### **BOX STORY**

**Artist/Author:** Bobby Baker | **Reference:** P0293 | **Type:** Publication  
Booklet to accompany touring performance by Bobby Baker, commissioned by LIFT. Essay by Michele Barrett.

### **DIARY DRAWINGS: MENTAL ILLNESS AND ME**

**Artist/Author:** Bobby Baker | **Reference:** P1462 | **ISBN:** 9781846683749 |  
**Type:** Publication.

### **DAILY LIFE SERIES: 4 GROWN-UP SCHOOL**

**Artist/Author:** Bobby Baker | **Reference:** D0959 | **Type:** DVD

### **DAILY LIFE SERIES: 5 BOX STORY**

**Artist/Author:** Bobby Baker | **Reference:** D0960 | **Type:** DVD

## **PERFORMING RIGHTS COLLECTION - LONDON - PLENARIES PHOTO IMAGES**

**Artist/Author:** Various | **Reference:** D0586 | **Type:** DVD

Photo library of Images of Bobby Baker, Stacy Makishi and Red Ladies as part of PSi 12.

## **RISK IN INTIMACY: AN INTERVIEW WITH BOBBY BAKER**

**Artist/Author:** Adrian Heathfield | **Reference:** A0043 | **Type:** Article

This item is part of the Study Room Guide on One to One Performance by Rachel Zerihan (P1320)

## **SCANNING**

**Artist/Author:** Bobby Baker | **Reference:** P0473 | **Type:** Publication

Bobby Baker works with students from Middlesex University on the issues of physical and mental health. This item is part of the Study Room Guide on Disability and New Artist Models by Aaron Williamson (P1529)

## **SPITTING MAD**

**Artist/Author:** Bobby Baker | **Reference:** V0523 | **Digital Reference:** EV0523  
| **Type:** Video

## **TABLE OCCASIONS NO 19**

**Artist/Author:** Bobby Baker | **Reference:** V0760 | **Type:** Video

## **TALKING HEADS: BOBBY BAKER**

**Artist/Author:** Bobby Baker | **Digital Reference:** DB0007 | **Type:** Digital File

'Talking Heads' are short presentations by artists to camera about their practice and approaches to making. The 'Talking Heads' films are part of the Agency's 'Documentation Bank' Collection, which consists of an extensive range of artists' 'Talking Heads' films, documentation of artists' works and a selection of Agency projects: <http://www.thisisliveart.co.uk/resources/collections/documentation-bank>.

## **JAMES LEDBITTER / VACUUM CLEANER**

### **ANTI ADVERTS**

**Artist/Author:** The Vacuum Cleaner | **Reference:** D0180 | **Type:** DVD

Actions: Whirl-Mart, Virgin on the Ridiculous, Prayers to the Products, Cleaning the MCA, Taking 'Back' Action, UK Stop Shopping Tour, Re-Call Cup Fault, and Bonus Footage of 'Cleaning Wall St'. The Vacuum Cleaner.

[www.thevacuumcleaner.co.uk](http://www.thevacuumcleaner.co.uk) This item is part of the Study Room Guide: A Bi(bli)ography of Insurrectionary Imaginati by John Jordan (P0793)

### **CLEANING UP AFTER CAPITALISM**

**Artist/Author:** the vacuum cleaner | **Reference:** D2266 | **Type:** DVD

Eight short videos from 2003. Includes: Whirl-Mart, Virgin on the Ridiculous, Prayers to Products, Cleaning the MCA, Taking 'Back' Action, UK Stop Shopping Tour, Re-Call Cup Fault, Cleaning Wall St.  
Part of the Library of Performing Rights (LPR) (P3041).

### **DOCUMENTATION BANK: Vacuum Cleaner**

**Artist/Author:** vacuum cleaner | **Digital Reference:** DB0052 | **Type:** Digital File  
Part of the 'Documentation Bank' Collection, an extensive range of artists' 'Talking Heads', documentation of key works, and a selection of Agency projects.

### **MADLOVE**

**Artist/Author:** the vacuum cleaner and Hannah Hull | **Digital Reference:** EF5276 |  
Type: Digital File

A project based on the artists' experience of mental health, and their desire to find a positive space to experience mental distress ... and enlightenment.

### **NATIONAL REVIEW OF LIVE ART 2008 - THE PROBLEM IS THE SOLUTION (PART 1)**

**Artist/Author:** the vacuum cleaner | **Reference:** D1103 | **Type:** DVD  
Glasgow based artist/activist presents the findings from years of research and development that will enable the future to happen (T1, Tramway, Glasgow, 10 Feb 2008, 16.00 – 17.00). Disc 1 of 2, see REF. D1103/D1104.

### **SELECTED WORKS: A LOAD OF RUBBISH**

**Artist/Author:** vacuum cleaner | **Digital Reference:** DB0051 | **Type:** Digital File  
The Vacuum Cleaner, A Load Of Rubbish, Cleaning Up After Capitalism, Recall: Faulty Starbucks Logo, The Church of the Immaculate Consumption, The Ark: A Global Warming Solution, One Hundred Thousand Pieces of Possibility

### **TALKING HEADS: THE VACUUM CLEANER**

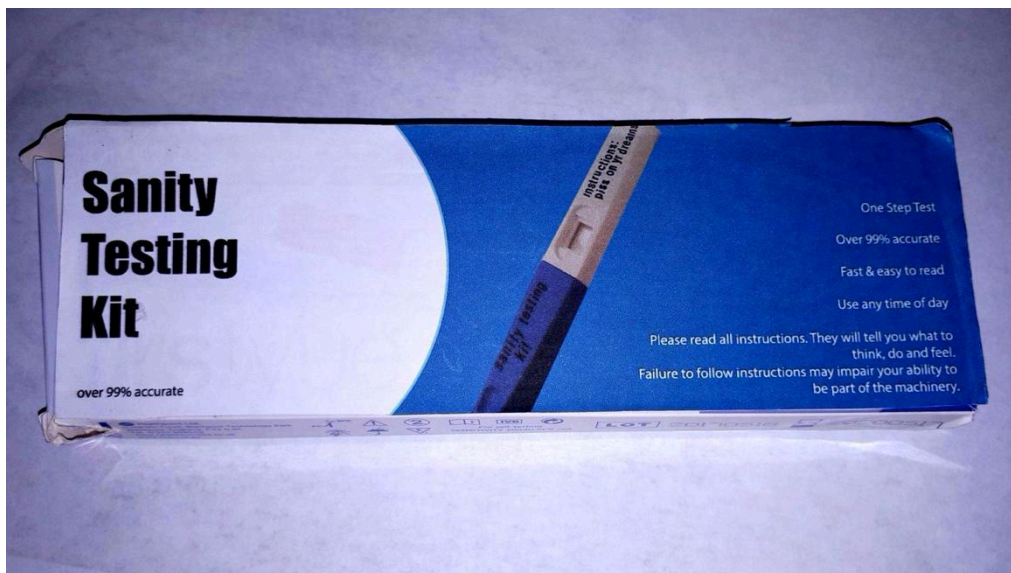
**Artist/Author:** the vacuum cleaner | **Digital Reference:** DB0053 | **Type:** Digital File  
'Talking Heads' are short presentations by artists to camera about their practice and approaches to making. The 'Talking Heads' films are part of the Agency's 'Documentation Bank' Collection, which consists of an extensive range of artists' 'Talking Heads' films, documentation of artists' works and a selection of Agency projects: <http://www.thisisliveart.co.uk/resources/collections/documentation-bank>.

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Fernando, S., 2017. *Institutional racism in psychiatry and clinical psychology*. Palgrave Macmillan.

<https://madstudies2014.wordpress.com/2014/10/15/mad-studies-what-it-is-and-why-you-should-care-2/>



Dolly Sen (2014)

### **ONE STEP SANITY MAINSTREAM TEST by DOLLY SEN**

Please read all instructions. They will tell you what to think, do and feel. Failure to follow instructions may impair your ability to be part of the machinery.

How to use the test:

- Remove the mainstream from the foiled mind.
- Remove the cap.
- Direct your urine mainstream on your dreams for at least ten years.
- NOTE: Do not urinate on the Test and Control windows. They are meant to piss on you.
- Wait at least five years for the red line to appear. If nothing has appeared, piss on your dreams for longer.