

The *Art* of MENTAL STEALTH! ...A COMIC APPROACH



July 25th 10.30–13.30

Programme

Animation and creative studio Woven Ink are here to create a digital and printed rich picture from our discussions. We'll share this at an in person follow-up exhibition for attendees

WOVEN *ink*

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| 10.15 | Arrival and refreshments |
| 10.30-11.00 | Welcome words, introductions, flash talks <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Heike Bartel (UoN)• Liam Mills (artist; Ignite)• Madeleine Burt (NTU)• Matt Gill (NTU)• Jane Burns and Cara Bean (Graphic Medicine)• Casey Soma (artist, poet; Mad Truth)• Elvira Perez (What's up with everyone?) |
| 11.00-11.20 | BREAK - meet and mingle, chat to flash presenters |
| 11.20-12.00 | Q&A session with Ethan Sacks and Naomi Sacks |
| 12.00-12.45 | Creative pause and workshopping... |
| 12.45-13.15 | LUNCH - view artworks and continued creativity |
| 13.15-13.30 | Final thoughts and close |



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Q&A Session



Ethan Sacks is best known in comics as the writer of Marvel's Old Man Hawkeye, Star Wars: Galaxy's Edge, and Star Wars: Bounty Hunters. He also wrote the acclaimed nonfiction comics, COVID Chronicles and Climate Crisis Chronicles for AWA Studios, as well as several stories for DC Comics. He teamed with his daughter, Naomi, to write the hit Image Comics series, A Haunted Girl. Before comics, he was a 20-year veteran at the New York Daily News, covering film and geek culture. He also contributes occasionally to NBC News.



Naomi Sacks may be just 20 years old, but she already has notched professional clips from the New York Daily News, TODAY, and AM New York, interviewing the likes of Steven Spielberg, Ava Duvernay and Lin-Manuel Miranda. She is currently a university student. The acclaimed Image Comics series, A Haunted Girl, which was inspired by her real-life struggles with depression, is her first ... but not last comic book title.

Cleo, is a 16-year-old adopted Japanese-American girl whose anxiety and depression have led to suicidal thoughts and hospital admission. As she tries to reintegrate back into her old life at home and high school, Cleo's experiences of paranormal activity and encounters with a terrifying succession of ghosts, make her start to question her grip on reality ...

A HAUNTED GIRL is a 4-issue graphic horror mini-series which explores paranormal alongside real-life terrors.

Written by comics writer Ethan Sacks and his daughter Naomi, the comic series is inspired by Naomi's battles with depression and suicidality. Ethan and Naomi teamed up with the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention to create the work and the series includes important resources and messaging around mental health and suicide.





Fran has designed our programme and flyer artwork. When she is not moaning about how terrible her recent A' level exams were, Fran spends her time reading, writing and drawing lots of things. She hopes to go on to University in September to study Creative Writing. Fran hopes you enjoy her contributions to this project, as this is her first (major) accomplishment.

WE DO FRAN!



How I create characters, by Fran...

Creating characters for any kind of media is difficult. For me, often a character will appear in my head firstly as a very vague idea, a basic appearance accompanied by some general personality traits. These ideas may be inspired by other works I have seen or watched; mostly this inspiration arises because something about the character, physical or otherwise, resonates with something I feel about myself. These initial ideas are simple enough for me to build from the further I get into the process.

Creation, brainstorm

After the general idea is in my mind, I can brainstorm more deeply. For this project I wanted to create characters dealing with mental health difficulties and so I had a certain question on my mind: **Is there anything unique to the character's appearance that might indicate the nature of their interior world?** I created one character who is sad and has dark circles under the eyes. I used longer, deeper shadows to indicate exhaustion, which alludes to the fatigue that is a common symptom of depressive disorders. The self-destruct character has torn-up shirt sleeves – this is indicative of the anger and carelessness an individual in such a state might feel towards themselves. The vulnerable character is a puddle, which I feel is rather self-explanatory. Each of these designs correspond to the internal traits of the emotions they represent.

Creation, colour

The drawing stage is more simple (and relaxing). Now that I have a more fleshed out image of *who* my character is, and what they represent, I can translate this onto paper (or use Procreate on my iPad if I'm feeling more sophisticated). Since each individual character is supposed to represent one singular person's range of emotions, I decided to create a colour scheme, in order to show this relation. In the above panel, you can see I used those same colours for the backgrounds. For certain characters – *anxious* and *self-destruct* – I also used a different Procreate pencil. This gave me a shaky, wiry effect to the designs to further convey emotional traits.



Ali Jeffries is an artist living in Nottingham with her hubby, youngest child, pet Staffie, lockdown kitten, and a budgie who needs anger management.

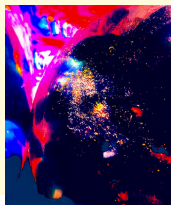
Trained as a Level 3 Teaching Assistant, Ali has worked with autistic children and young adults. She also has a passion for working with parents who are caring for a child with mental health issues, to which she brings a wealth of personal lived experience.

ALI WILL HELP US TO FEEL CREATIVE AS A GROUP AND TO CHANNEL OUR CREATIVITY INTO NEXT STEPS FOR THE ART OF MENTAL STEALTH WORK...

- We'll explore simple ways to use colour and shape to convey emotions, mood and identity
- We'll think about comics and graphic novels in the context of developing mental health interventions for young people...

Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
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Casey Soma is a social entrepreneur and multimedia artist working across film, music, visual arts, public installations and spoken word. Casey is founder and creative director of **Mad Truth**, an arts organisation based around the power of creative expression for improving mental health and promoting personal growth. The idea being we can use creative expression as a remarkable tool for re-framing tragedy, trauma and mental ill-health in a way where these things no longer keep us from becoming our best selves but instead they can become a source of beauty, strength and resilience.



The Art of Understanding is a UoN, City as Lab funded project which brings together experts from the fields of refugee education, linguistics and cultural heritage, and young people's mental health. We worked with young people to understand how they conceptualise well-being and mental health. Participants attend NEST, a unique educational provision for young people from refugee or asylum-seeking backgrounds newly arrived in Nottingham, before they are ready to join mainstream education. Led by artist **Shamila Chady**, we held workshops exploring the ways in which artists convey emotions and their meaning. Young People explored ways of expressing themselves and their feelings and experiences through experimentation with different arts techniques, and reflected on ways of conceptualising mental health and wellbeing in their languages and cultures.



The Digital Definitions and Debates project is compiling short and clear explanations of commonly used language in Digital Youth mental health research. The project brings together young people with lived experience expertise and academics from a range of disciplines collaborating across the **Digital Youth** programme. In workshops we have been sharing and exploring understandings of complex and contested terms (such as resilience). We've worked with artist **@mrtombailey** to illustrate our discussions.

digital.youth.ac.uk



Academics led by the University of Nottingham, joined up with Aardman Animations to launch the **What's Up With Everyone?** mental health campaign funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council. Five evidence-based animated stories have been created to talk about life's challenges, alongside a companion website.

The animations focus on perfectionism, loneliness and isolation, independence, social media and competitiveness and were co-produced with, and for, young people – particularly those aged 17 to 24, who are likely to be moving to college, university or the workplace.

<https://whatsupwitheveryone.com>



Liam Mills is a fiction, games & graphic novel writer and editor at Sealight Studios. Liam worked on the Making Connections project in 2023 with Ignite Futures, researchers from King's College London and young people from the Outburst group at Base 51 to workshop ideas using drawing, storyboarding and modelling. These explored mental health, representation, identity and self expression by collaboratively designing and creating a set of 3D miniature models and creating a table top role play game.



Matthew Gill is Senior Lecturer in the School of Art and Design at Nottingham Trent University, and founder of Raw Print, a platform that celebrates the exciting and dynamic nature of independent publishing through magazines, zines and zine-making. It includes an archive of zines and magazines at NTU, student magazines, the Nottingham Zine Library, as well as publishing projects RIP Zine, Metazine and Sculptorvox. The Archive and Zine Library provides innovative workshops in zine-making, book-binding, books arts, publishing and print. Raw Print also assists in hosting events including the Nottingham Zine Fair, live lectures, and workshops. Zine Power is a practice seeking to provide Zine Therapy, improving mindfulness, wellbeing and mental health. Current Zine Power projects and workshops with NTU Student Support and NTU Join, have been providing positive and creative outlets to support and promote better mental health and well-being through making and reading zines @raw_print



Heike Bartel is Professor of German Studies and Health Humanities at The University of Nottingham and passionate about the use of literature and art for better health. She leads projects bridging arts & humanities and the health sector that integrate lived experiences of eating disorders into clinical practice and research with a main focus on the underrepresented voices of men, boys and the LGBTQ+ population. Together with male experts by experience has designed arts-based training tools. Heike is particularly interested in the role of animation, film, music, poetry, and other writing by those with lived experience to help understand eating disorders better.



Jo Lockwood is a Senior Research Fellow at the Institute of Mental Health, UoN who loves drawing cartoons of people and animals (mainly squirrels) and finds this brings her enjoyment and moments of calm. She brings her interest in the power of creativity to her academic discipline of adolescent mental health and in particular self-harm and suicide and digital mental health @joleadlockwood



Madeleine Burt is a lecturer

and an Illustration PhD student at NTU, specialising in graphic novels. Her work explores how to depict the inner workings of the creative mind and she does this through trying to expand and alter the traditional comics language typically used in graphic novels, in order to allow the reader to truly inhabit a character's mind. Madeleine has been a post-16 arts educator for over 20 years and uses her own experience of young people's relationship to the creative process as part of the inspiration in her work

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