

Inside Out

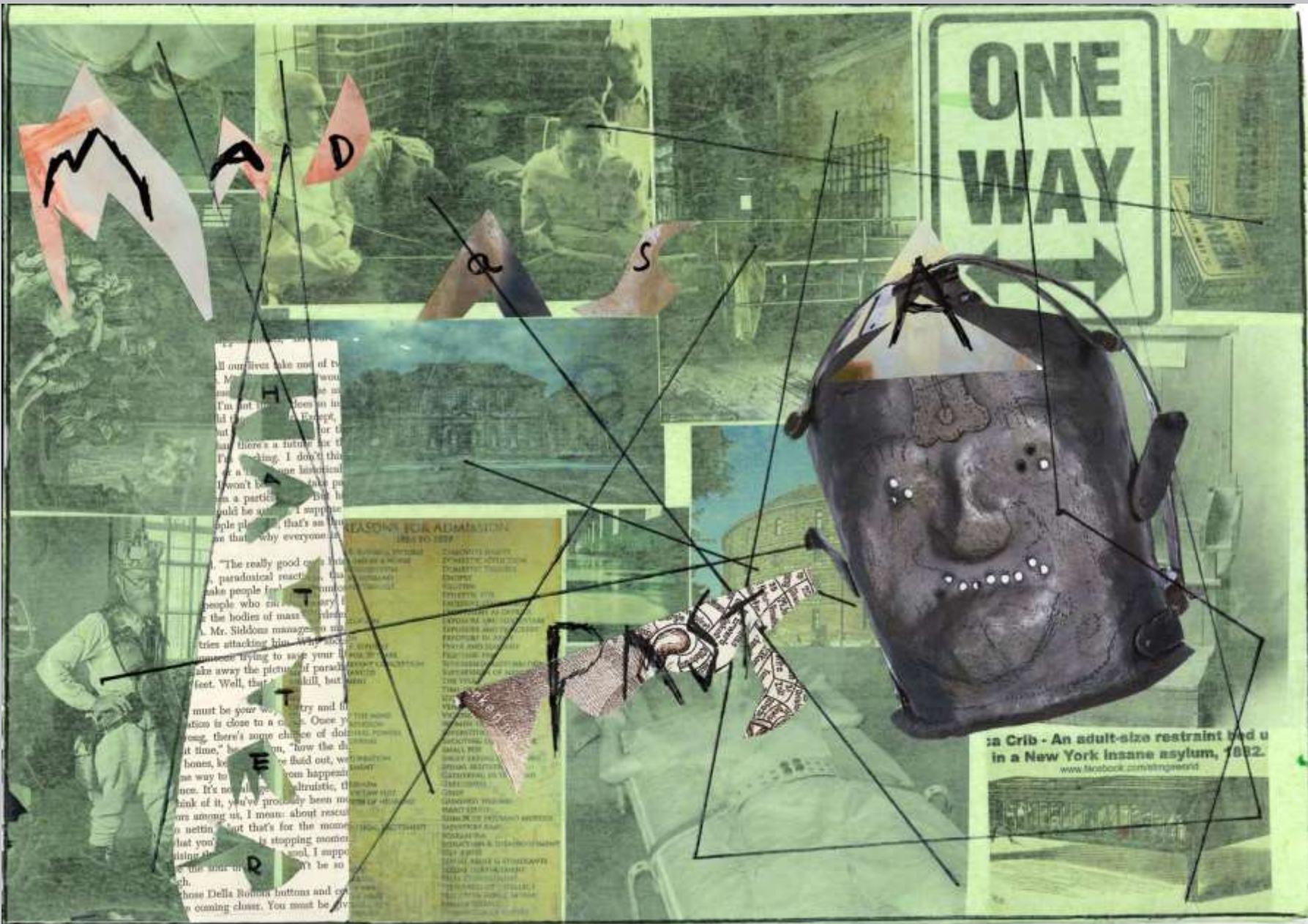
AN EXPERT'S GUIDE
TO MENTAL HEALTH

CHAPTER ONE

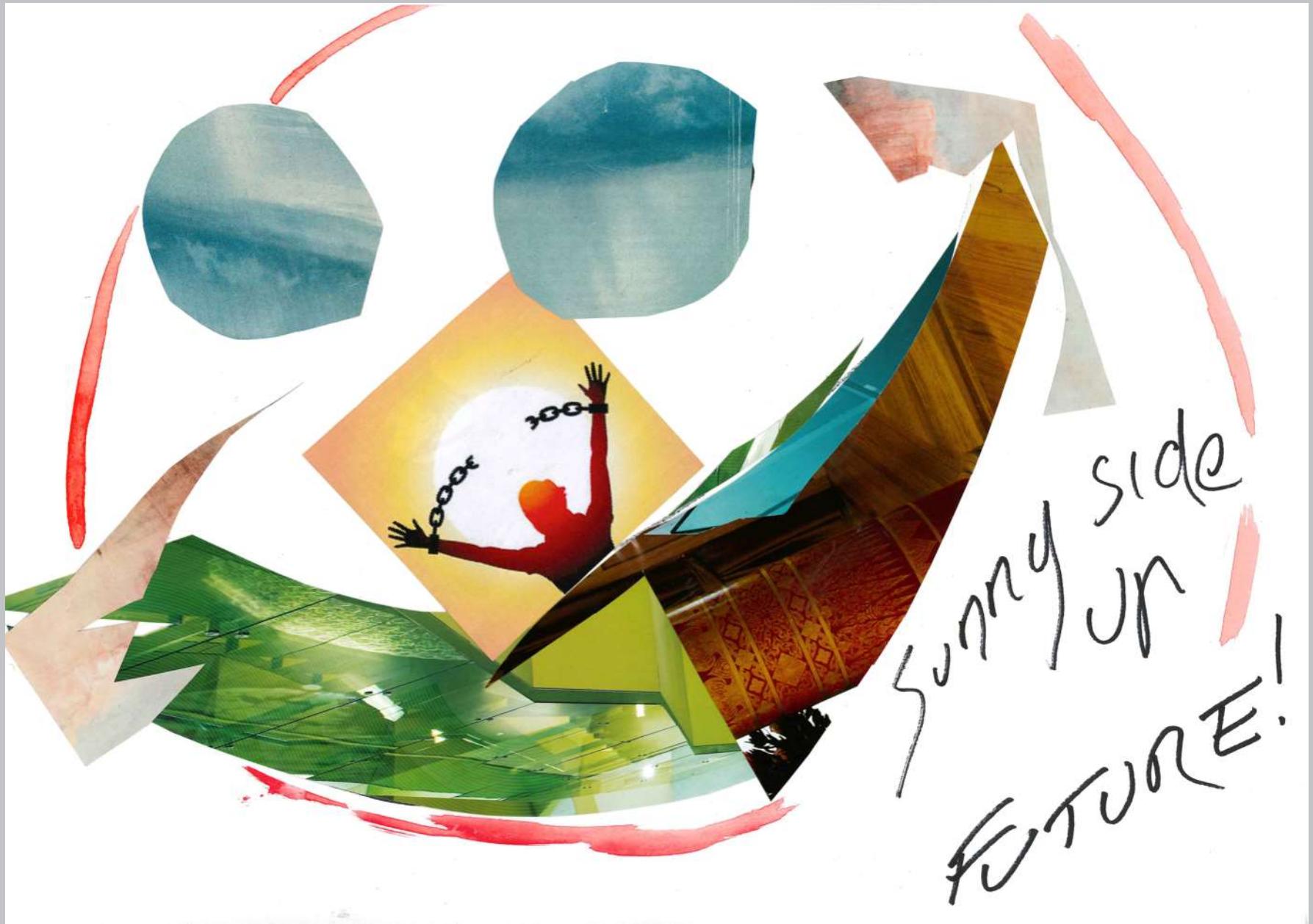
Historical rePLAY

The artists were asked to revisit historical imagery and use collage to re-invent the past and imagine the future. New images were produced that tell of a more positive future for people experiencing mental illness and mental health institutions.

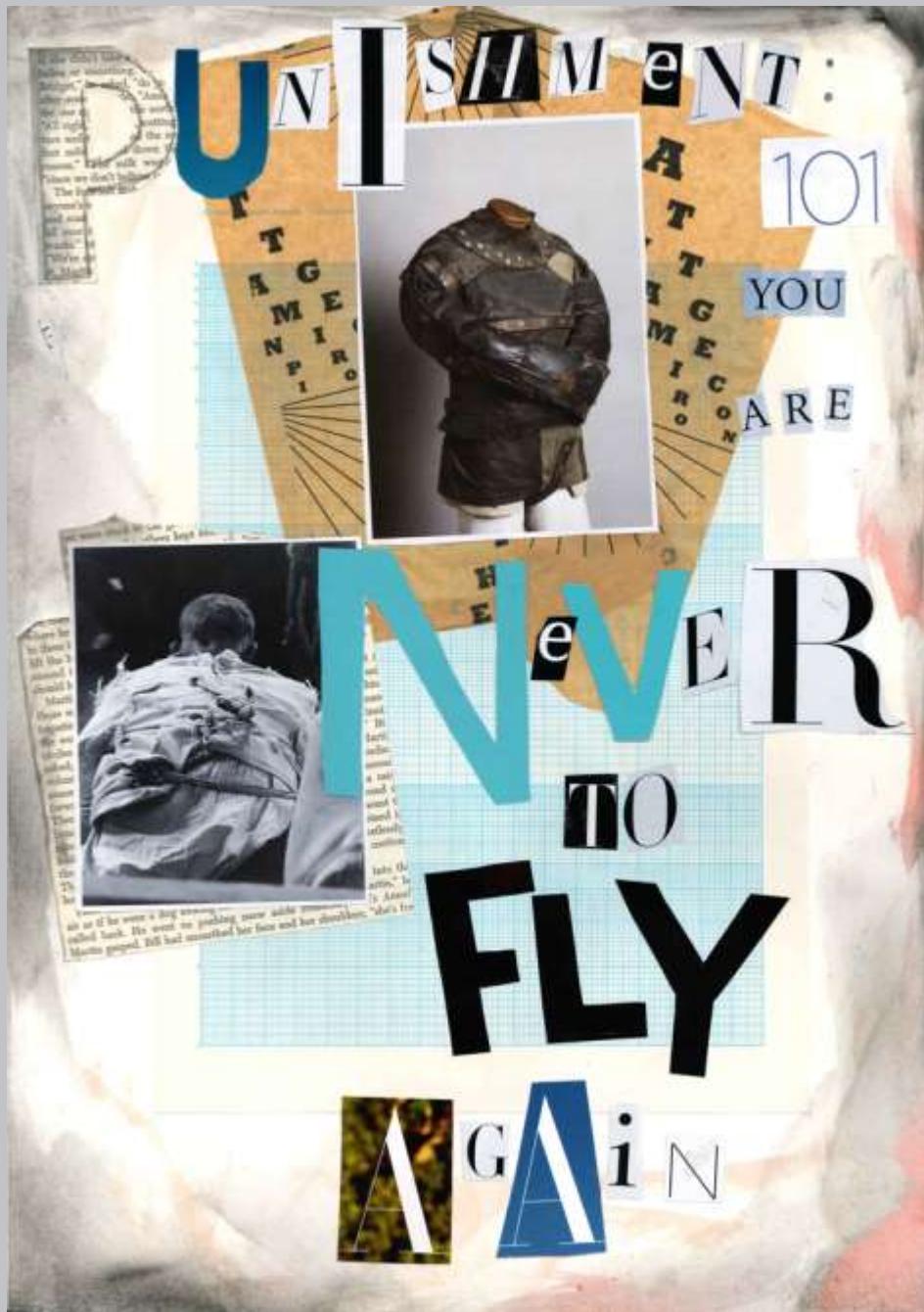
The ideas and workshop for this chapter were developed and co-facilitated by Grant.



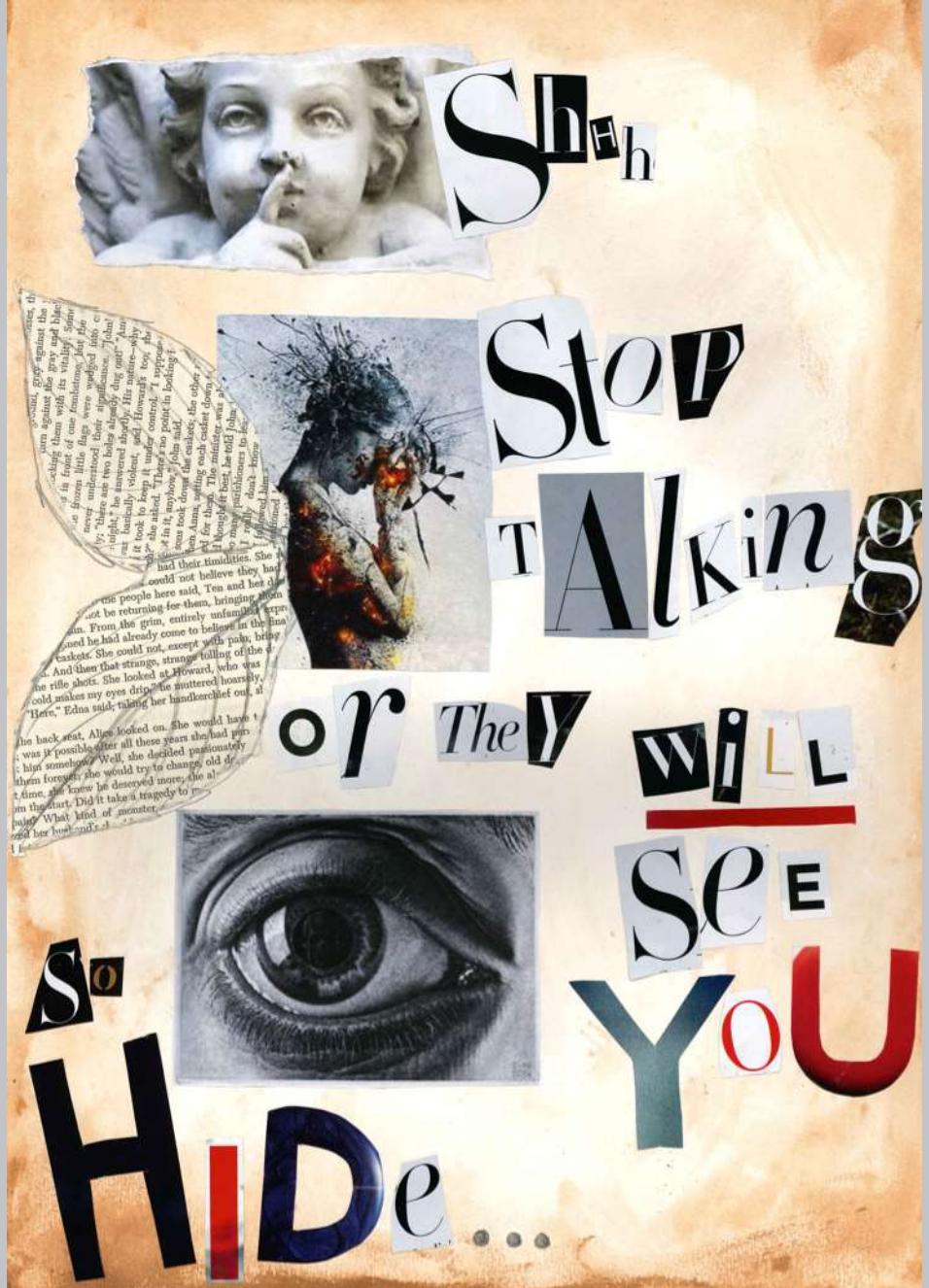
Grant, Bleak Brake Past, 2014.



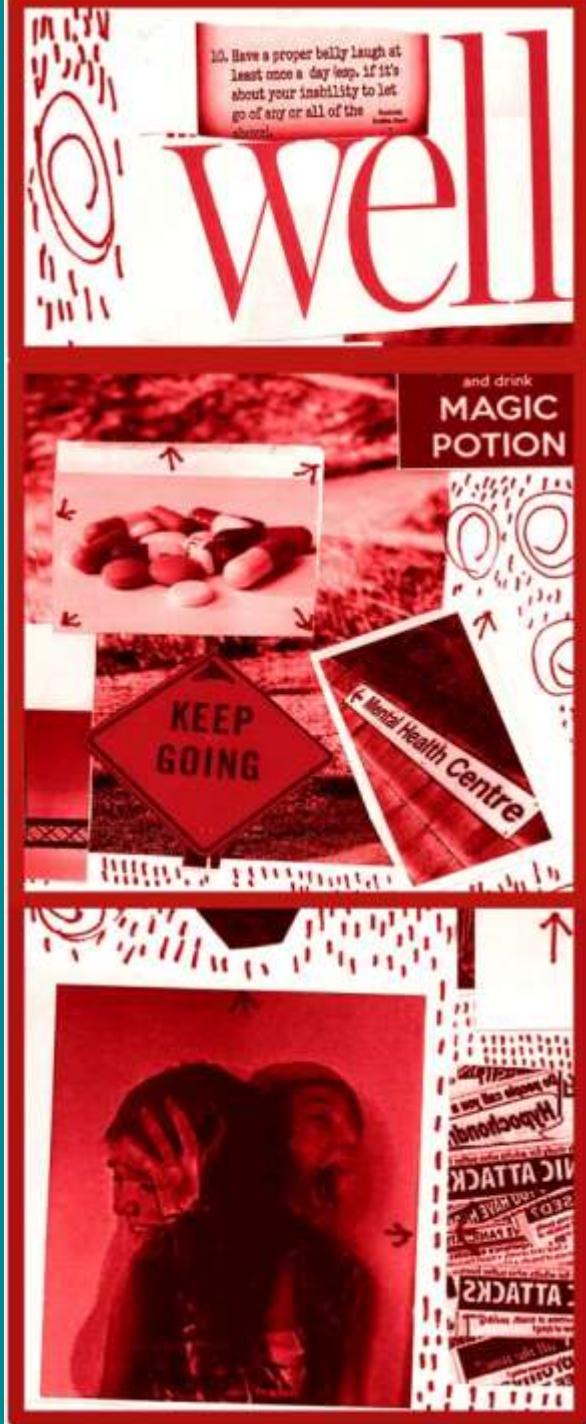
Grant, *Hope is what you do*, 2014.



Lucrecia, *More Untruth*, 2014.



Lucrecia, *Unruths*, 2014.



A FUTURE OF MORE THAN JUST PILLS

We come from a pretty dark past when it comes to mental illness and understanding mental illness.

In the recent past, we have developed more understanding of the biological and chemical nature of mental health. This has lead to modern medicine.

We now have improved pills and efficient medication but where is this leading us?

Kathryn



Tamara, *My Journey (Past: Detail)*, 2014.



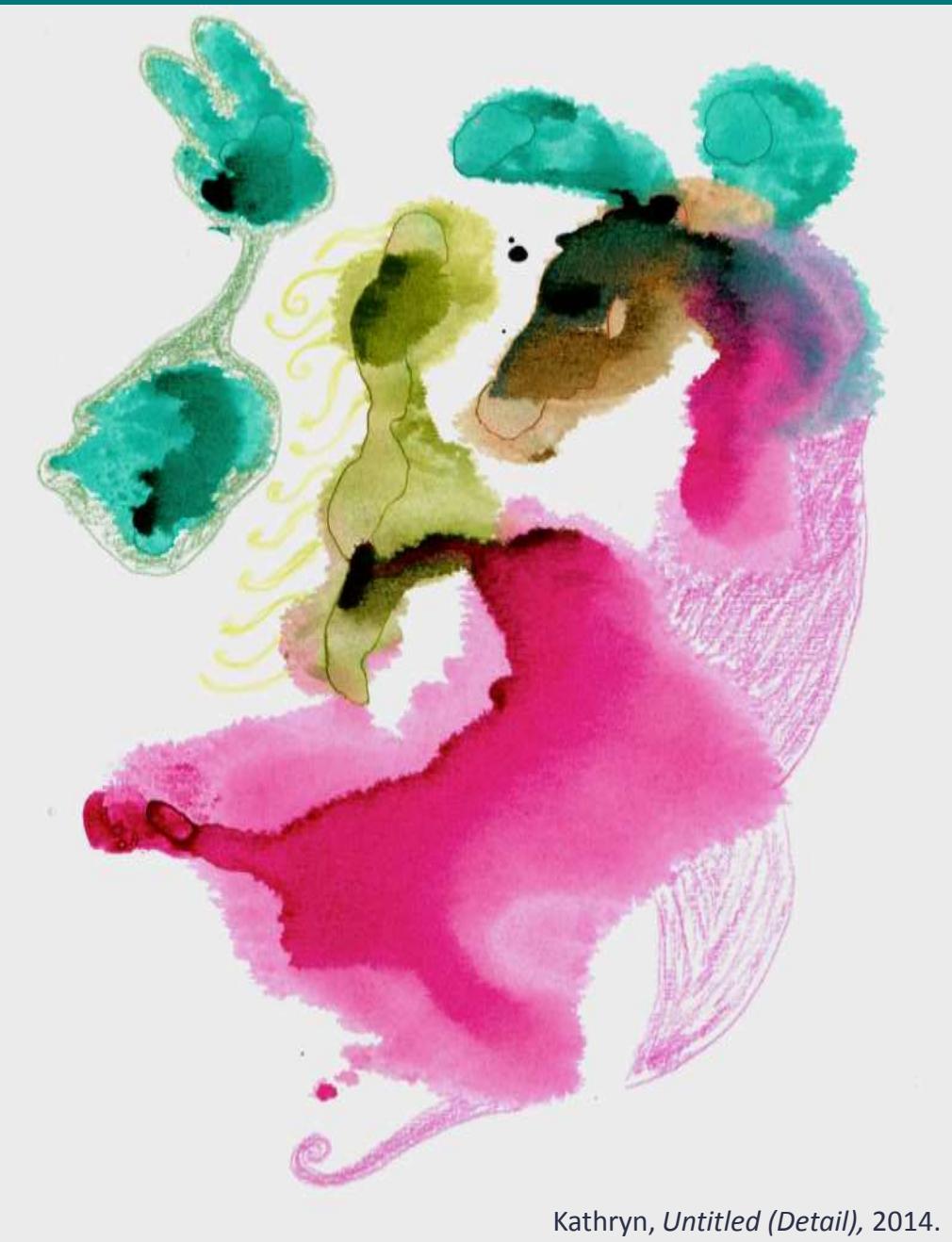
Tamara, *My Journey (Future: Detail)*, 2014.

CHAPTER TWO

Amalgamated SELVES

The artists made a series of inkblots to represent their internal and external selves. Through reclaiming the imagery once used as an imposed tool of diagnosis for mental illness the artists have expressed their dynamic selves; the parts we share and those that are unique.

The ideas and workshop for this chapter were developed and co-facilitated by Kathryn.



Kathryn, *Untitled (Detail)*, 2014.

DIAGNOSING CREATIVITY?

This work reflects my creative self.

I have drawn animals playing together into the inkblots.

Using colour, imagination and expression I have created images that make sense of ink blots on paper.

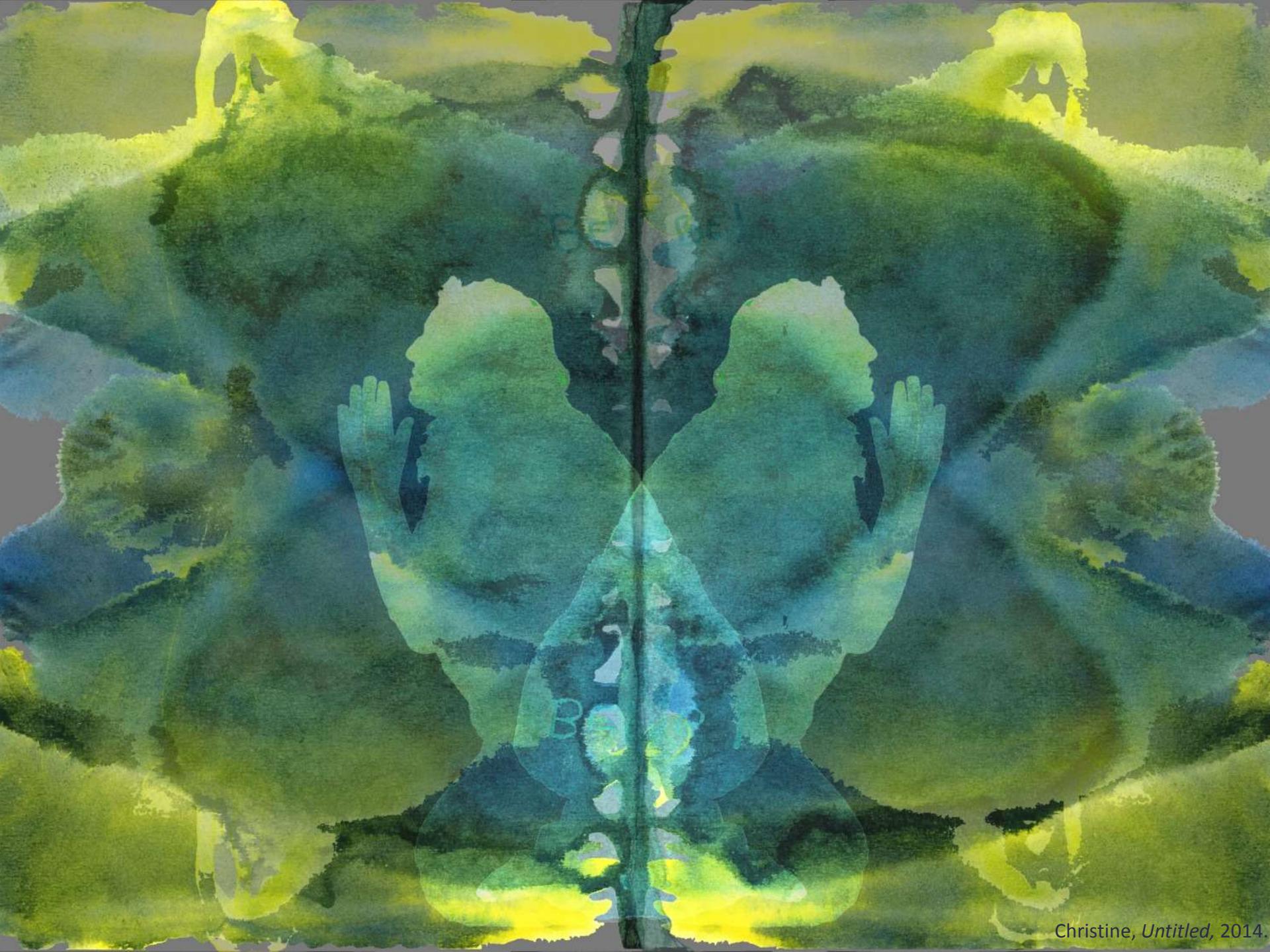
Just because you see a horse or a saucepan in some ink that doesn't mean you are sane or insane.

Everyone has an imagination.

Kathryn



Kathryn, *Untitled*, 2014.



Christine, *Untitled*, 2014.

**EMOTIONAL AND
PHYSICAL PAIN
TRIGGER THE
SAME
RESPONSES IN
OUR BRAIN.**

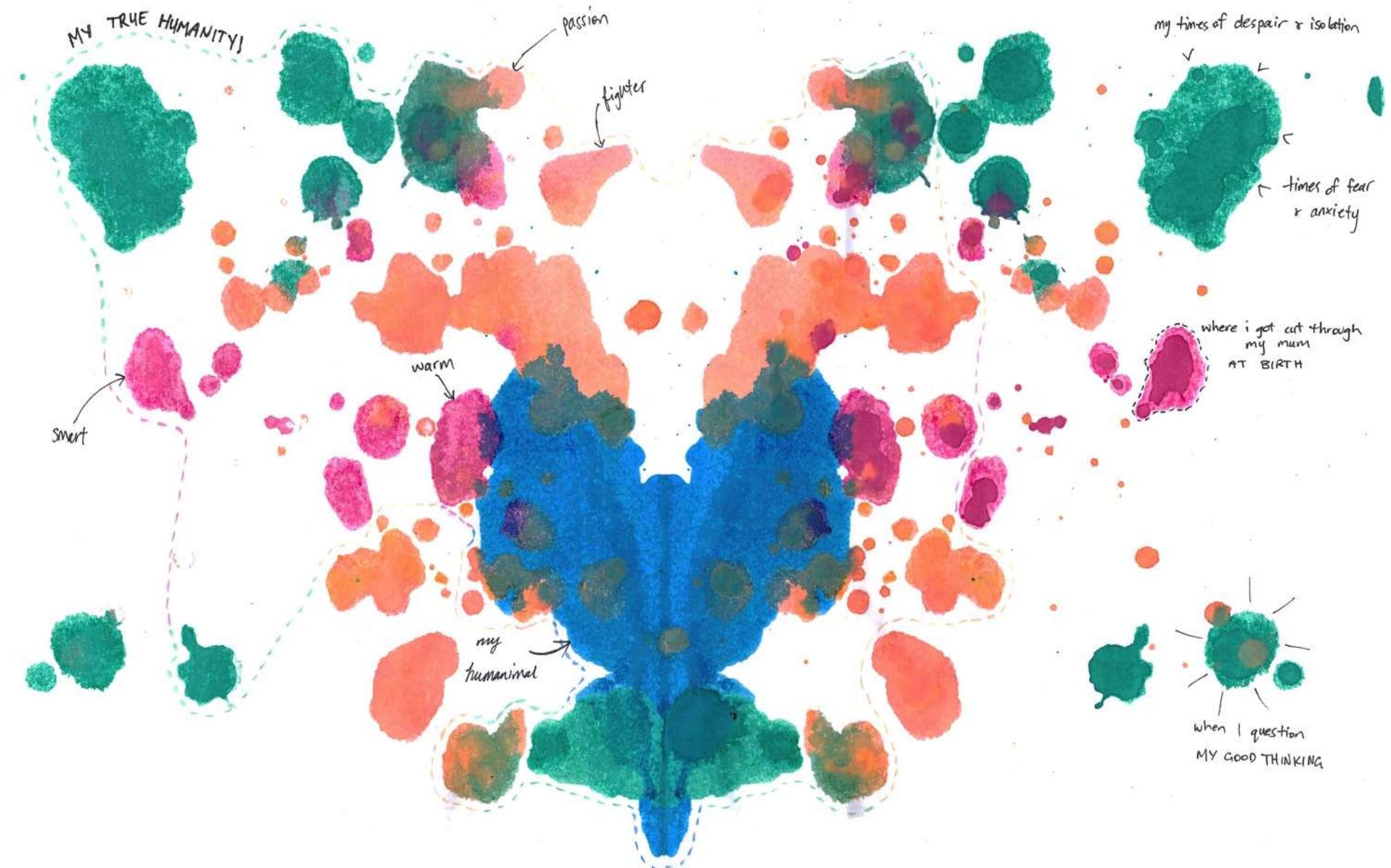
Christine



Christine, *Untitled*, 2014.



Amie, *Untitled*, 2014.



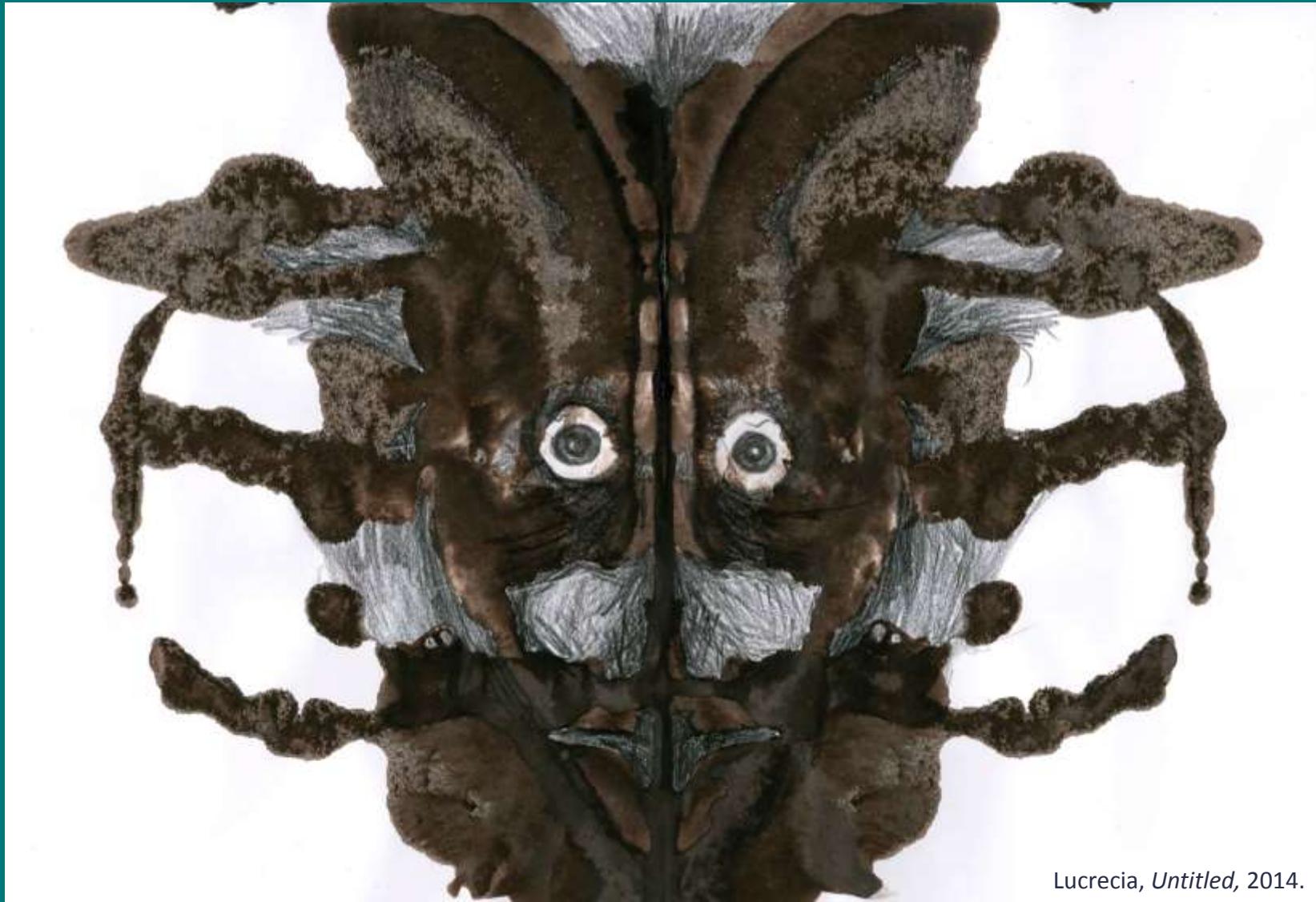


I created this
following
instructions.

It is very
balanced and
pretty looking.

I think I create
things to make
other people
happy, but it
doesn't say
anything about
myself.

Lucrecia



Lucrecia, *Untitled*, 2014.

I speak a lot of demons that live inside of me when I am unwell. Interestingly, this one isn't actually scary. It looks scared. I think instead of it looking at me, I'm looking at it. Which could be frightening for a demon.

Lucrecia



Grant, *Untitled*, 2014.

MENTAL ILLNESS IS NOT A BROKEN ARM

In my picture there are two characters side by side. One can be interpreted as before mental illness and the other, after.

On one side the writing reads, '*mental illness is not a broken arm, you cannot see it*' and on the other side it says, '*nor is the heart about to be broken*'.

These are amalgamated selves.

They are all the parts of myself coming together.

The self is too dynamic to say that there is a constant that exists. The self is a creative thing. We have a very limited idea of what being human is. So it is up to artists to expand the minds of psychologists and the like to, in fact, not have a limited idea of the self, but a self that comes together as moments evolve. Dynamic.

Grant



Grant, *Untitled*, 2014.

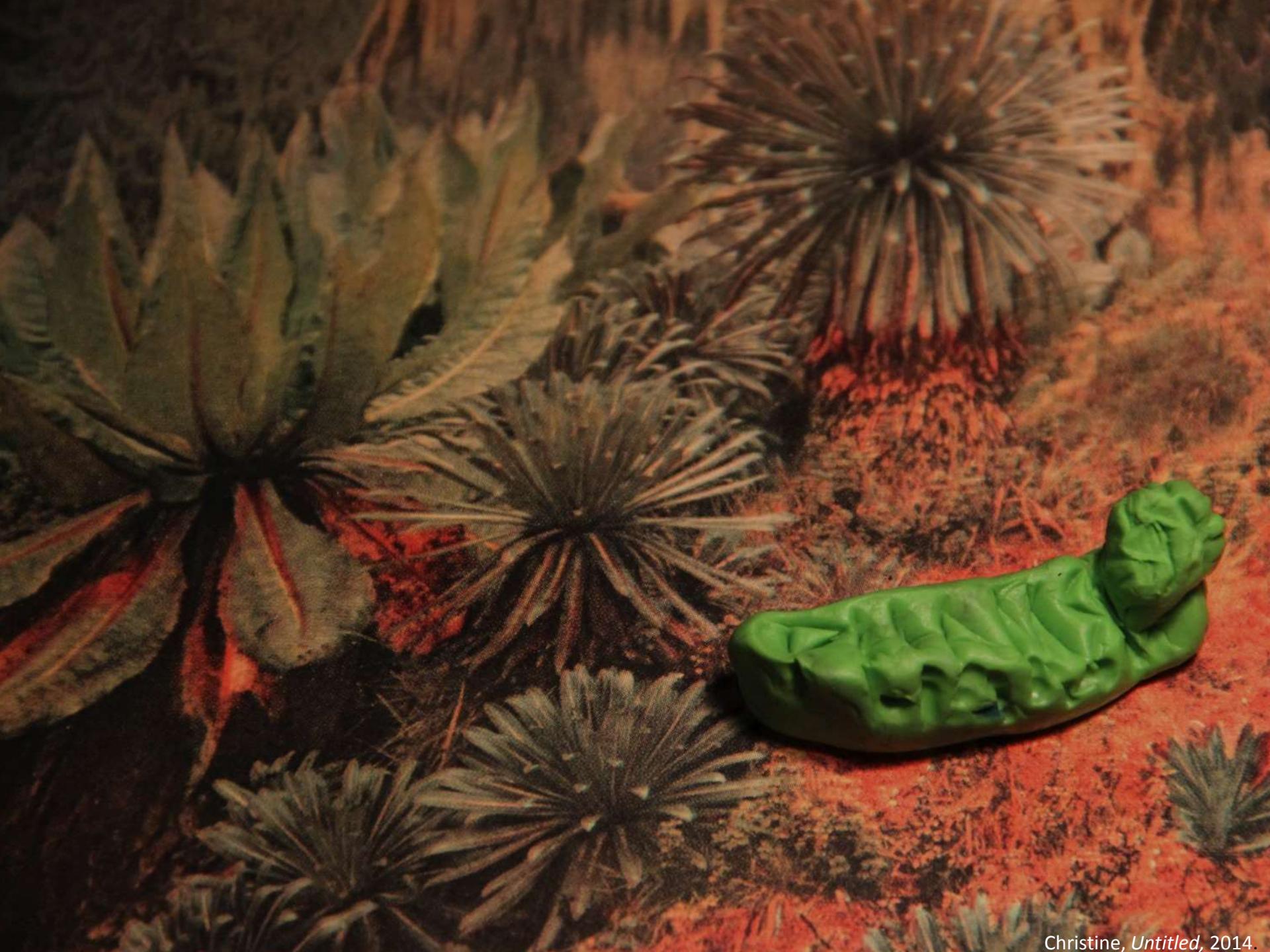
CHAPTER THREE

A question of CURES ?

Artists were asked to respond to the idea of a 'cure' for mental illness. They modeled two sculptures. One exploring a cure they had come across themselves and one proposed to them by someone else. Each work is accompanied by the story of that experience. The ideas and workshop for this chapter were developed and co-facilitated by Christine.



Christine, *Untitled*, 2014.



Christine, *Untitled*, 2014.

CHRISTINE'S 'CURES'

I was not comfortable with the word 'cure'. We have so much available these days to assist us in our healing, but 'cures' isn't really the right word. There is no cure. It takes a whole society to support our collective mental health and this is an ongoing process of balance.

STORY 1

Unfortunately, in the past the 'cure' I thought was my last resort was attempting suicide. At that time, I felt so unworthy in this world; worthless and not good enough. But it is not an easy fix by any means. I live with chronic pain. It is very hard to live with burning all over with no relief. With mental illness as well... they exacerbate each other. So, I made a person, me, as my sculpture. The colour was blue. It made me feel isolated as I was doing it, but it reminded me of the strong feeling I had that I wouldn't want to abandon my children and my family.

STORY 2

However, even though I had gone back through going into hospital [because of this] I had come out and reached out to PHaMS. If it wasn't for PHaMS I don't think that I could be participating in this type of project... and meeting the people in this group. That gives me this sense of support and self acceptance. Knowing that I can just be me and I appreciate that. My sculpture is a tree, it is meant to symbolise my love of nature because that is my sense of relaxation. It reminds me that there is such a beautiful world out there and that PHaMS have been incredibly supportive. I've printed next to the tree - which is my landscape - a squashed word of PHaMS.



Grant, *Untitled*, 2014.



Grant, *Untitled*, 2014.

GRANT'S 'CURES'

There's no such thing as a perfectly healthy person. People that are diagnosed with anything go through motions and feelings like everyone else. You are still a person no matter what you've been through. It is scientific and medical thinking that suggests there should be a cure. I mean what is a cure? It's just all yin and yang isn't it? Ying yanging around.

I did three items of model clay. One was a laughing mouth, one was a crystal and one was a bicycle.

STORY 1

The two outside suggestions was the humor and the bike riding. When I was very sick in the 90's, my mum noticed me laughing my head off at a John Candy film. She suggested to try and get Grant laughing as something that would really help to get me out of those experiences. Around 2004 when I had a bit of an episode, my family got me a bike. They thought it would give me freedom and I really got into it big way. Both of these things worked for me in terms of some kind of healthier mental state. When I am riding a bike I feel free.

STORY 2

I got a crystal. I was into crystals for a while. That was something I thought to myself might work. I don't think they necessarily work. They say if you believe in them they work. They are supposed to connect with some energy in yourself. Some crystals are for the mind, some are for physical ailments, but the crystal I have is more for your consciousness. The idea is just to focus on it and it gives you a centered feeling I find. I couldn't verify whether they are actually a cure but I think they are good for you. When I am using a crystal I feel focused.



Tamara, *Untitled*, 2014.

TAMARA'S 'CURES'

STORY 1 AND 2

The black of my diamond is all about saying that we can't be programmed, which means to me that no one can sculpt you to be something that you don't want to be. Everyone wanted me to be something different. Well that only made me sad. The black is the darkness of people trying to make me something that I was never going to be. The red represents my freedom and being who I am; to say what I have to say and not be scared to say it. I have made the two pieces together as I am putting my own story over the story that others tried to impose on me.

The bass clef is because I am a blues singer. A lot of us run off bass. Music has always been my thing. My mum used to say to me that when I was a little girl I would not say, '*oh, mum can I have a biscuit*'. I would sing that to her. People can't change who you are. You've got to embrace what you are and who you are because if you go ahead and try to be something that you are not your soul is never going to be happy. That is what my songs are about. I tell people that they need to stand up and be who they want to be.

When I was a little girl I didn't like wearing shoes, but my mother and father would say, '*would you get your shoes on*'. Why not just let me embrace feeling the earth because that's what I want to do? Everyone knows who they are deep down but a lot of people are in denial because they are scared of what society is going to think.



Amie, *Untitled*, 2014.

AMIE'S 'CURE'

I was thinking about the idea of cures that were offered to me. When I was experiencing a period of grief, I went to a GP to see if I could get some reprieve from Centrelink obligations. The GP asked me if I had ever taken anti-depressants and gave me a BeyondBlue checklist of symptoms. If I ticked a certain number of them that would mean that I was depressed and I should consider taking medications. I said 'I'm grieving'. I wasn't sleeping at the time but that, to me, was an imposition and medicalisation of what I think is a human process that we should get to experience and be provided support and understanding. My sculpture is a ticked box, reducing human experience to a checklist.



Kathryn, *Untitled*, 2014.



Kathryn, *Untitled*, 2014.

KATHRYN'S 'CURES'

My theme is on the sun. I did two different images of the sun.

STORY 1

One image is a bright colour because using sun is a good way to help me with my mental illness. It has worked but not completely. It's not a cure. It might be a way to manage my health but I found there is draw backs.

STORY 2

I did a black sun to represent that it's not going to fix me, it's not going to cure me. There is no total cure. The draw backs of the sun are you cannot have the sun as the answer to everything. Its just part of the solution and like everything you can have it in moderation. There are drawback like getting sun burnt. it isn't the fix, it is not the holy grail. There's a positive and negative side to everything that is claimed to be a cure.

Credits

This was a joint pilot initiative by the ACT Community Cultural Inclusion Program and Richmond Fellowship ACT Inc in collaboration with participating Artists from the Personal Helpers and Mentors Support Program (PHaMS).

ARTISTS

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Christine Williams
Grant McLindon
Kathryn Leo
Tamara
Amie Illfield

PRODUCER/FACILITATOR

Robyn Frances Higgins

PRODUCER/SUPPORT WORKER

Amie Illfield

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ACT
Government

