

Sharing our stories with you



L-R: GÜLER ALTUNBAS AND ADAM KNAPPER WITH ONE OF GÜLER'S ARTWORKS

## Bringing the outside in

**“Artists are the thermometer of society. They know what’s happening in society because they document what’s going on around them. And they do it in an interesting and thought-provoking way.”** Güler Altunbas

Art offers a window into the mind; a unique capturing of the essence of a feeling, a moment in time, or an idea. Collaborative visual artists Adam Knapper and Güler Altunbas are passionate about doing just that. In particular, they both firmly believe in the therapeutic power of art.

To them, art-making is not just for the artist, but for the people experiencing the art as well. For example, Adam is the artist in residence at a local hospital in Melbourne, using his talent to brighten the lives of others, and his

competition-winning artwork, ‘Mumbo Jumbo’, was the face of the Mental Health Foundation’s Mental Health Week campaign last year. Güler received a recommendation for her entry in the same campaign, and has contributed artworks to a number of social justice organisations and causes, as well as taking on various community leadership roles around mental health advocacy. She devotes much of her time to facilitating art-making with artists who have experienced a mental health concern.

‘Outsider art’ or ‘brut art’ are labels used when it comes to artists who have a lived experience of mental ill-health. Adam and Güler, however, challenge this notion. They like to “bring the outside in”, normalising what might otherwise be stigmatised. Says Adam, “We want to challenge people’s ideas about mental health through our art. We try and break through the stereotypes and stigma related to mental health.”

Adam and Güler’s artworks make eclectic use of colour and big, bright, bold elements. Adam in particular is passionate about showcasing his skill and technique, more than anything else. He wants people to know that just because you have a lived experience of a mental health concern, doesn’t mean you are any less talented. And his career now speaks for itself.

He also works across many different media and styles. This extraordinary versatility is part of what makes him so prolific as an artist, and reflects the reality of life with all its ups and downs: “I see things differently at times. Sometimes in focus; sometimes out of focus. Sometimes black and white. Sometimes very surreal.”

Adam and Güler are not only partners in art-making, but also partners in life. The pair met seven years ago at Stables Art Studio at the Prahran Mission and have been inspiring each other ever since.

### Bringing the outside in cont.

Güler works with the concepts and administrative aspects and Adam (in her words) “executes the plans beautifully”.

Says Güler, “We curate each others’ exhibitions, we discuss ideas for canvas works, we discuss conceptual work, we inspire each other, we give constructive feedback to each other... we have fun!”

Together they have curated and participated in mental health-themed group exhibitions at the Dax Centre and elsewhere, worked on a series of illustrations about mental health services for Cohealth, provided artwork for Healthy Planet Café, been involved in Project Melbourne Underground (Australia’s largest private exhibition of graffiti art), and created a stunning wall mural in North Fitzroy.

They are a team in every sense of the word. In fact, they are due to be married next year! (All signs point to a very arty wedding.) Other than wedding plans, the two plan to keep sketching, drawing, painting and exhibiting. They are looking to create a business together around their artistic pursuits, motivated by their desire to work in and amongst the community to affect positive change.

#### Güler

Güler’s website:  
[guleraltunbas.com](http://guleraltunbas.com)

Güler has also put her talents towards creating a shrine and memorial for survivors and victims of family and private violence:  
[shrineforus.com](http://shrineforus.com)

#### Adam

Adam’s website:  
[adamknapper.com](http://adamknapper.com)

You can view works from Adam’s *Imaginarium* exhibition (celebrating 25 years of art-making) at:  
[daxcentre.org/portfolio/imaginarium-works-by-adam-knapper](http://daxcentre.org/portfolio/imaginarium-works-by-adam-knapper)



(L-R): SUPPORT WORKER ADRIAN WITH TOMI

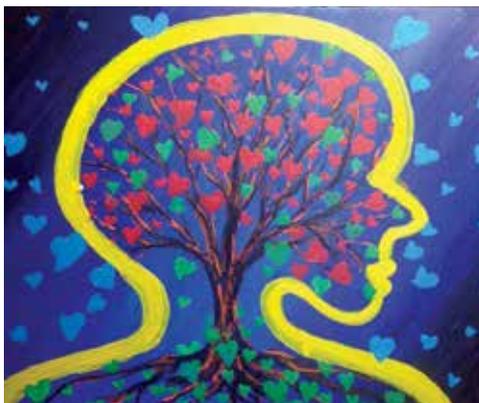
## The nurturing arms of nature

The nurturing power of nature as a healing tool is widely known. Many people find connecting with nature to be grounding and relaxing. Tomi had the opportunity to attend an outdoors camp in Cheshunt in the scenically breathtaking King Valley in Victoria, supported by workers and in the company of other Mind clients.

The trip provided participants with an opportunity to make some new friends and show great leadership skills in trying to work through some conflicts that arose over the course of the trip.

Everyone was involved in meal planning, grocery shopping, food preparation and got to embrace the outdoors through bushwalking, fishing, swimming and a day trip to the spectacular Power’s lookout (the old stomping ground of the ‘Gentleman Bushranger’ Harry Power!) Rounding out their days with night time sessions around the campfire enabled the sharing of stories and experiences, arcing back to a time when storytelling before bed was common practice.

Says Tomi, “It was great fun. I got to meet new people and I was happy to find out that some of the issues that I face are also common for other people, especially when it comes to family relationships. The camp allowed me to get to know people better and it was good for my mum to have a break from looking after me all the time, even though she cried when I left.”



Mind  
Community  
Conferences  
2016 –  
VIC and SA

# The pleasure of putting pen to paper

Residents at Burnside Housing and Accommodation Supported Partnership (Adelaide, SA) got together with peer support workers to come up with what is now a regular Saturday writing group. Each week, residents sit down to pen whatever they are thinking or feeling. Peer Support Worker, Nina, says, "It's been a wonderful activity, where people get to be creative and also stretch their learning muscle."

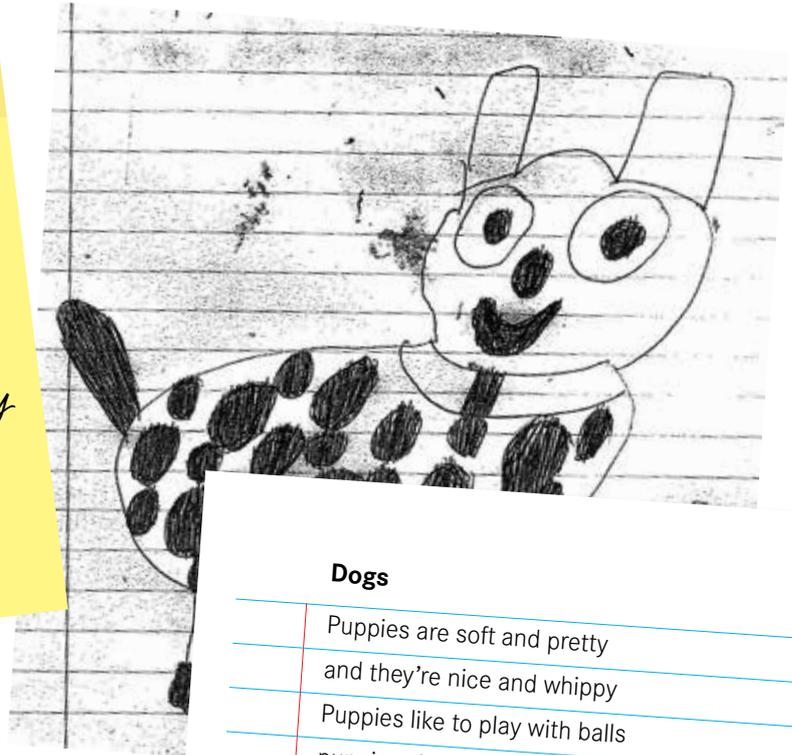
## The Beach

I like walking on the beach and going up the jetty. I also sometimes like swimming in the water and feeling the waves. I also like to play ball on the sand and I also like walking on the sand.

Chris Keleman

^ One of Chris' favourite things to do is to go to the beach. He doesn't go often, but when the weather is warm he loves to wade out into the water, and sometimes dive in!

Marlene has attended every writing group so far. Since starting she has progressed in leaps and bounds, working independently and reading her work aloud to the group. She has written both poetry and prose, and always finds the positive side of life to write about. >



## Dogs

Puppies are soft and pretty  
and they're nice and whippy  
Puppies like to play with balls  
puppies sit and fall  
They eat cake and biscuits  
Powder puppies make you feel  
They roll over and catch a ball and they laugh  
They are nice and clean  
They walk a lot  
They get washed with soap and water.

Marlene Post

They're back, and better than ever! The theme this year is 'Our voice, our choice' and we encourage you all to join in this unique celebration of the Mind community and all that we are able to achieve together.

Melbourne - 21 June | Adelaide - 7 July

Register to attend now at [mindaustralia.org.au/register](https://mindaustralia.org.au/register)

For more information email [conference@mindaustralia.org.au](mailto:conference@mindaustralia.org.au) or call Mind Connect 1300 286 463.

# Hope springs

## The Royal Adelaide Show

The ghost train  
 Show bags  
 Hot dogs  
 Big M drink  
 Donuts  
 Meat pies  
 Look at the cattle  
 Dogs and cats  
 Fairy floss  
 The police band  
 Cadbury  
 Milky way  
 Down the slide  
 The Ferris Wheel  
 The horses  
 Equestrian  
 D max  
 HSV  
 Motorbike hunt  
 Flying through the air  
 The fireworks  
 The toilets  
 Sheep, cows  
 Police were there  
 Some girls I knew from basketball were there  
 Last year in 2014  
 I bought 7 showbags  
 They gave me last year \$200 to spend  
 Ghost train umbrella  
 Milking the cows.

Michael Ratke

^ Michael says the Royal Adelaide Show is a real highlight of his year and is very excited when the money comes through to allow him to spend a day there. His excitement is evident to all who come into contact with him in the lead up and also afterwards!

Mark spent some time at Maroondah Prevention and Recovery Community (PARC). He is a keen, prolific and talented poet.

### Mark's song

Hello everyone and welcome, my name is Mark  
 I'm having a restful break here at PARC  
 The staff are friendly, caring and wise  
 They have seen many people lose their disguise  
 of sadness and fear, loneliness and tears  
 turn into smiles by being surrounded by peers  
 who have had the same troubles and condemnations  
 We all get together and chat about our situations  
 We cook and clean, share and laugh  
 Knowing we are all walking the very same path  
 Throughout all the tantrums and wards  
 and being shunned away by numerous hordes  
 We are here to recover, get better and smile  
 which, for some of us, we haven't done for a while  
 So believe me when I say that this place is great  
 to listen and learn and have a break from the hate  
 I am able to write this rhyme and share it today  
 because the residents and staff are showing me the way  
 So goodbye and good luck for my name is Mark  
 Loving my restful, peaceful, break down here at PARC.

*Mark Robinson*

Brenda is a part of Mind's Personal Helpers and Mentors (PHaMs) program in Nunawading and is enthusiastic about making all sorts of art and loves attending art group. She has been described as "an integral and long-term member of the group".

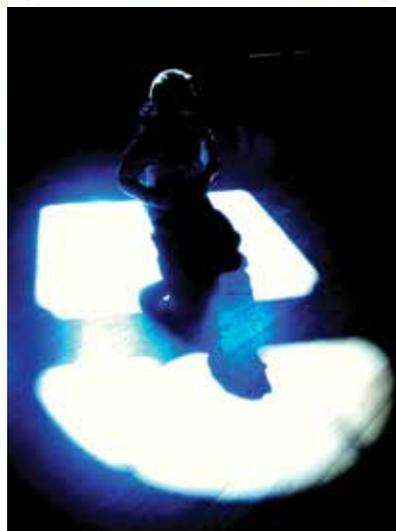
### Mental health

Mental health is a word  
 Word with a mind  
 Mind with a feeling  
 Feelings with despair  
 Despair with a light  
 Light with happiness  
 Happiness with content  
 Content with fulfilment  
 Fulfilment with hope

*Brenda McCarthy*



Bee



John



Israil

**Sprout Community Garden** helps people recovering from mental ill-health find renewed sunshine in their lives through nurturing forms of therapy like gardening, cooking and photography.

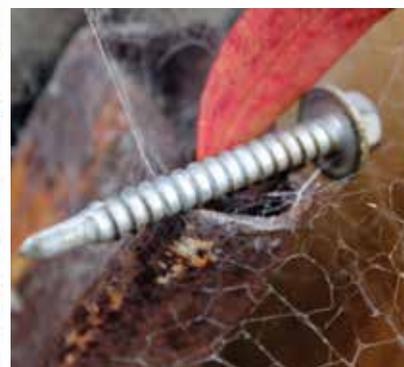
Seven participants in the photography program led an exhibition called **'Seven Minds on a Wall'** at Red Bean Café in Preston, Melbourne, where they displayed the stunning works of art you see here.



Pamela



Darren



Shon

# Coming clean: Chris' story



IMAGE: KT.BEYONDPERCEPTION

**“I wouldn't be writing this if I didn't think that there was any hope or if I was still living the life that I lived.”**

I have been an amphetamine user since I was 15 years old. I was diagnosed with paranoid schizophrenia, acute adjustment disorder, and drug induced psychosis, and I have been back and forth from hospital since my diagnosis. If I know one thing through it all, it is that the ice never helped. I see this clearly now that I am clean. What I also realise now is that support is a major element in your recovery. It is vital that if you suffer from drug addiction or mental health issues you should seek advice and opinions and guidance on ways to recover.

You are all probably thinking that this is the same old story that you hear all the time. And it probably sounds like it. All that I am aware of now, is that I was only using drugs and alcohol as a coping mechanism, due to my mental health and previous past history of psychological scars.

I can honestly say that the PARC\* has been a major influence in my recovery as well as my private treating team and private psychiatrist, and also my community mental health team.

I wouldn't be writing this if I didn't think that there was any hope or if I was still living the life that I lived. I was involved in crime, violence, extortion, and took some wrong paths, but what I now know is that I never lost my values and morals and have been fighting a battle my whole life. Finally I can say that I am the best physically and mentally than I have been in years, thanks to programs like PARC and North Western Mental Health and all of the things they have facilitated. These programs have improved my awareness, and enabled me to work on me.

So, if you are stuck in life and suffer mental illness or drug addiction problems, the best thing to do is to try and solve those issues at hand. It's mainly a lack of knowledge that influences your spiral downwards, but once you are knowledgeable, and with deeper insight, and more life experience, things get better.

The way I see my life now, is that I wouldn't go back. I see my problems from afar, and keep them at a distance, as a controlled element inside my mind. See, its all about positive thinking and consistency in improving.

I thank my private psychiatrist and my treating team once again, and especially PARC for the support they have given me. I see a lot more being gained from facilities such as PARC rather than inpatient units. PARC support has given me a deeper insight into my triggers and how I can cope with them, and what I can put in place to prevent another continuous downward spiral and further deterioration of my mental health.

My life has been better since, and I wish to inspire others to steer clear from a path so haunting and daunting.

Keep it simple, keep your eye on the prize, and know that there is more to life than drugs and crime, and mental illness.

Once you change your perception, and take that first step, you won't look back, I assure you where there is a will there is a way.

**Chris Lock, Age 22**

*The Victorian Government has established a new ice help line. For people concerned about their own ice use, families struggling to cope and health professionals looking for advice, help is now only a phone call away.*

Call **1800 ICE ADVICE** or visit **ice.vic.gov.au**.

\* Chris spent time at Mind's Prevention and Recovery Care (PARC) unit in Broadmeadows

## Contact the editor

If you are a current or former client of Mind and would like to contribute to *Write Mind* or be interviewed please contact Jess Shulman at [jessica.shulman@mindaustralia.org.au](mailto:jessica.shulman@mindaustralia.org.au) or write to the address below. Copyright reserved. For permission to reprint please write to the editor.



Supporting mental health recovery

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