

At Stirling University, Scotland, postgraduate student Emma Scott-Smith is researching how art can be used as a tool to stimulate critical discussion about individuals' daily experiences of mental illness.

The research project, 'the Artivism Intervention', combines art, activism and awareness raising. 'I'm using Conscientisation,' Scott-Smith tells us, 'a concept developed by Freire whilst reading Marx. It can help mental health participants to become aware of social, psychological and political conditions that can oppress disadvantaged groups.'

Experiences of mental illness can be difficult to express into words, so the Artivism Intervention allows individuals to use a visual narrative alongside discussion to express their experiences of mental illness on canvas. This particular artwork is entitled 'Pressure' by an

Artivism workshop member, Zack. 'The work expressed his feeling of being watched and judged by society, weighed down by treatments and medical professionals,' says Scott-Smith.

The art workshops took place in a local mental health and arts support group. 'The Artivism Intervention allowed me to work with people experiencing mental illness during an initial three-month period of art workshops once a week. This culminated in a six-week exhibition of participants' artwork to the public. The exhibition aimed to raise awareness and insight into individuals' experiences

## The artivism intervention

Image by Zack, for a project by Emma Scott-Smith, visual artist and community critical psychologist. E-mail [jon.sutton@bps.org.uk](mailto:jon.sutton@bps.org.uk) to feature in 'Big picture'.

of mental illness, their daily experiences from the discrimination people face.'

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