

AUTITUDE!



INFO AND ADVICE!
MOVIES! ART!
AND MUCH MUCH MORE!

WELCOME!

We've reached our fifth edition of Autitude! Illustrated and curated by the talented Ash Loydon, it is a feast not only for the eyes but for the mind too - we hope you enjoy it.

Autitude is shaped by what matters most to you. Each month we ask for contributions from the autistic community and we share your wonderful artwork, writings and creations in this digital magazine.

Keep your fantastic contributions coming. Whether it's a poem, a written reflection, a cartoon, a blog, photography or example of another creative pursuit, we would love to hear about it. If you have something you would like to share, please get in touch with us at autitude@scottishautism.org.

Although lockdown restrictions are starting to ease, life's not exactly back to normal. A certain amount of virtual communication is here to stay we reckon, so check out the Click and Connect groups and see if anything appeals to you.

To make sure you are updated when the latest edition is released sign up here – thank you.

**Scottish
autism**

**WHERE AUTISTIC PEOPLE
ARE VALUED**

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Click & Connect

Click and Connect is an extension of Scottish Autism's Winter Connections project to help enable the autistic community and their families in Scotland to stay connected through the pandemic and beyond.

The Click and Connect groups aim to reduce feelings of loneliness & isolation by providing an opportunity to connect with others online. We are delighted to announce that the following groups will be continuing until the end of the year:

Virtual Art Group
Mindful Autism Support Group
Virtual Choir Group

Mindful Autism Support Group

Come along to our Mindful Autism Support Group for autistic individuals and family members of autistic people in Scotland.

Run by Jonny Drury, the group will take place every Thursday afternoon until 8th July (excluding 3rd June). Each session will run via Zoom and is free to join.

Find out more and sign up to the next session [here](#).

Make sure you register for each group in this block as the link to join will change each week.

Virtual Art Group

Do you want to explore your creative side? Join our online Art Group taking place every Wednesday until 7th July, from 5pm - 6.30pm.

The Art Group is open to autistic people and their families and aims to bring people together for creative expression in an informal and safe environment. It offers the chance for a mindful break from the day's worries and can help to reduce stress.

Find out more and how to register [here](#).

Make sure you register for each group in this block as the link to join will change each week.

Virtual Choir Group

Come along to our Virtual Choir taking place every Thursday until 8th July (excluding 3rd June) from 5pm until 6pm. This group is for autistic people and their families in Scotland, and all ages and abilities are welcome!

Numbers will be limited to a maximum of 15 people so sign up quick!

We will learn a range of songs over the sessions. The songs will be chosen by you and you will be able to submit your favourite song or a song that means something to you when you register for the group.

Find out more and how to register [here](#).

Make sure you register for each group in this block as the link to join will change each week.

REASONABLE ADJUSTMENT

(CRAZY ABOUT THE JOB!)

A SERIES BY LEA B.

4. Summer: Tigger-toeing Around.

June 2019.

Our Megan, aka sweetest manager on the globe is leaving. She's going to do what she was dreaming about for a career. Under regular circumstances I would be devastated to lose her patient and kind companion and guidance. But these are extra-Lea-ordinary times: I am in love. While Henrik shares more and more of the papa-tiger in him, his face shining with an abundant glow whenever we do offspring-talk, at the same time I'm developing mama tiger feelings over Henrik himself. I could punch in the face, figuratively speaking, anyone who attempts to target a single fragment of his weaknesses. I am fierce, blooming and half of my time wondering how and when I should inform him about the true nature of my feelings. I suspect, this is a case of man turned into papa-tiger so profoundly they cannot even imagine one would see the chap in them in the first place. Alas, you'd better spell it out Lea, ASD or not.

But how?? As an autistic person, this is going to be a venture similar only to such magnificent - and bloody long - works like Tolstoy's *War and Peace*, or the longest ever Hungarian film *Satan's Tango* with its seven hours. (Or pipe-repair works in Edinburgh). Whenever I would get anywhere near to uttering, or even mouthing the words 'Henrik, the thing is that I love you', I feel like choking up on my own vocal cords, or my stomach suddenly swallowing my brain to it. This is the anatomy of my selective muteness. Oh, how much I hate this! Two of my attempts turn into random other subjects. I'm miserable but sweetly reassured by Henrik when he picks up on my anxiety (as if that would make this easier, huh!). 'Lea, we don't have to talk about it just now, maybe another day?' or one of his life credos 'There's no rush', or his famous 'Relax, Lea, it is all okay' verse (1 Henrik 18:2). My, did he read up on communicating with the autistic or what. I myself read up about the following subjects, solely induced by my Celtic-half-god-notable colleague: Creative tantrum management under four, Toilet training, Advanced toilet training, Blood pressure management for men.

I swore in my head that I would never start to chat with Henrik in person. It was bad enough already. (And what about Mrs. Henrik?) But then, he is the first person in my history who would write me 'It's been great talking to you' minutes after we wished good morning to each other, that being the sum total of our verbalising. Then his email would carry on: 'Albeit we communicate mainly in writing'. Then I would ask when we should speak face to face. Then he would opt for the first time we are both free. Then we would blather. Then we blather again. And again. Our most notable pieces include, but not exclusively: *Which Winnie-The-Pooh movie would you name as favourite.* And for us, the university educated: *The correct phonetics of 'Tigger'. Recommendations for alternative spelling.* The famous *What are you thinking of Henrik - Nothing in particular I was just up at night, kid had nightmare* (he starting to fall asleep sitting up, me watching, so cute). And our very first talk in private: *It is normal, at this age, that they do wee-wee to the potty but no 'brownies' yet.* And you know what? It was wonderful, even if my experience with small kids can be summed up as lending them above mentioned Pooh in Székesfehérvár City Library many some years ago until all they were interested in was computers. My heart stretches out like a cat near the stove and I feel there's space in my heart, lots and lots of it, warm, peaceful and growing. We talk every seventh day, email in between. He carefully doting on arriving on time, me joyfully guarding the one bench in front of the storages from others going on lunch break. Bradley, the janitor's dog gauging us each time like a forever recording camera. The sun is good. It dances on the man's hands, on the girl's face. Pilgrimage back to work desks. Parting with two bye-s then one more. And: cut. Sneak peek to the next episode: Will Lea get out of this alive? *Mama mia, mama mia, mama mia, let me go!...*

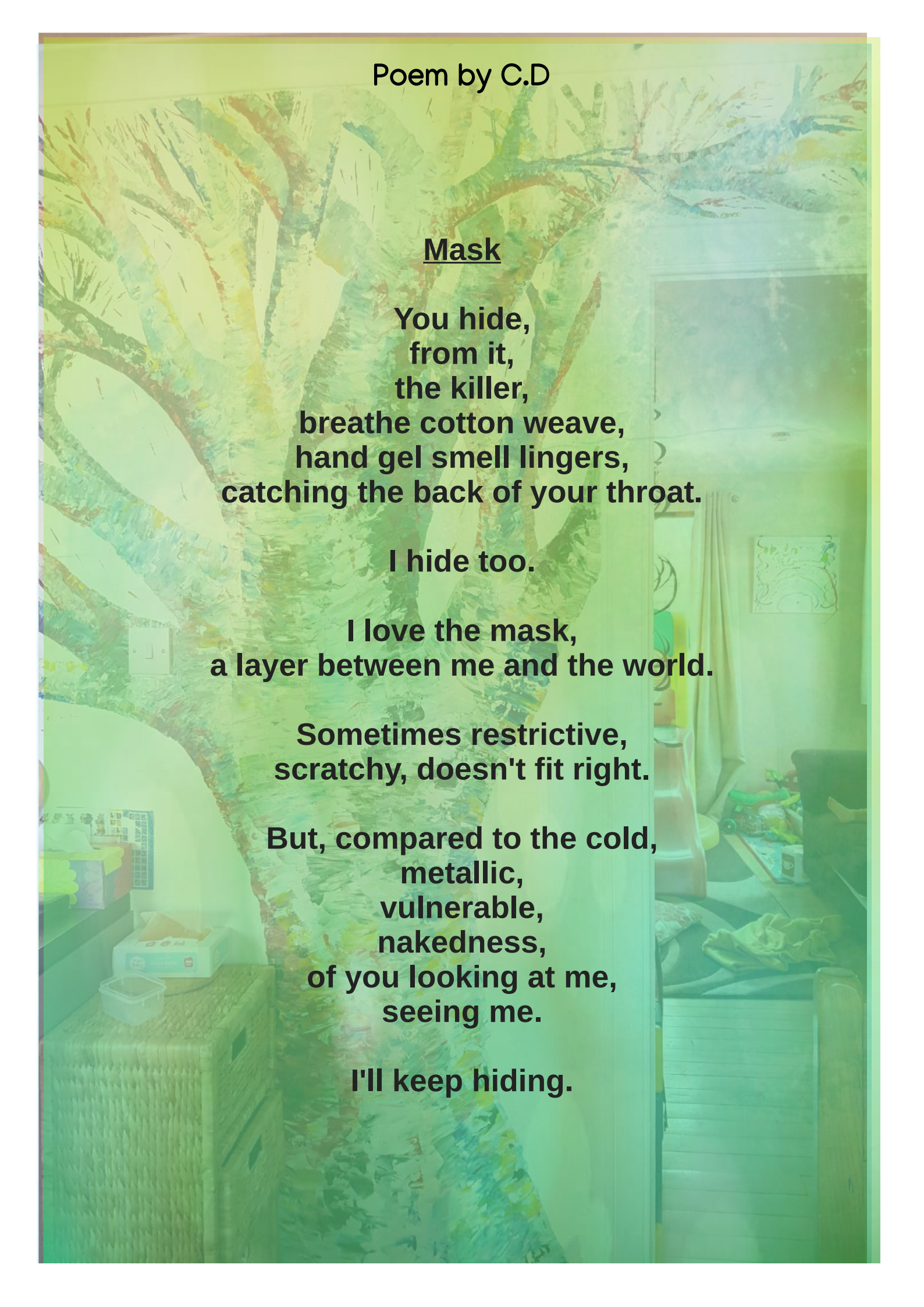
Less than obsession, more than being very fond, once my hyperfocus starts there's not really an end to it. So, we are tigger-toeing around, week by week, Lord only knows where all this is flowing. Beauty is in the eye of the beholder, they say.

Well, I am holding, holding it; when Henrik does an inter-department tour, his schedule reliable like the 14:35 Forfar–Aberdeen train, I forget to continue speaking to the receiver. Slight issue there's a client on the other end. Many autistic people have difficulties with focusing on more than one thing, it is just that, right? Not, oh gosh, *love*? 'Do you understand what I mean?' the voice from another neighbourhood asks after a minute or so that I spent outside known dimensions. I was beholding beauty – till he walked out. 'Uhm sorry, I'm here now'. Am I?... 'You are? Alright.' I don't understand myself. 'Sorry, actually can you hold for another second?' ...No, I still don't understand myself. 'Ma'am, I think it would be best if you'd call your local waste recycling centre. They might be able to resolve your issue.' Lea spoketh. 'Right. Yes, they might be able to come and take it away, finally! Well, thank you very much.'

Right. Well, Henrik already belongs. I don't. It already hurts. Let the dog confess my love, I'm out! (Have you ever noticed how similar the intro of Queen's *I Want to Break Free* is to Coldplay's *Something Just Like This*?)

If you'd like to contact Lea about her article you can do so at leapublish@gmail.com





Poem by C.D

Mask

You hide,
from it,
the killer,
breathe cotton weave,
hand gel smell lingers,
catching the back of your throat.

I hide too.

I love the mask,
a layer between me and the world.

Sometimes restrictive,
scratchy, doesn't fit right.

But, compared to the cold,
metallic,
vulnerable,
nakedness,
of you looking at me,
seeing me.

I'll keep hiding.

A DAY IN THE LIFE.

I always carry a messenger bag with me wherever I go (whether I need it or not, it's a kinda comfort thing) and I've got a couple of keyrings the podlings have bought me clipped onto the far side of it.

So far so normal but stick with it cos the story does get - vaguely - interesting at some point.

Honest.

Recently they got me a rather fab Star Wars keyring for on my bag which was particularly cool for two reasons:

1. It's Star Wars

and

2. It's in the shape of the letter A which is my initial.

See told you it was cool.

Anyway I was really wanting to show this off so that they knew I liked it so for a change I moved the keyrings to the front bit of my bag so you could see them better which was all well and good until that is I was heading to the shops today and noticed that the slight bumping of the keyrings against my bag was really annoying and also meant that my walk was slightly off.

As I was trying to ignore this I noticed that there was heavy duty cleaning getting done in the street which meant that not only was my gait odd but I had to cross the road at a place I never normally do.

Scary I know.

So I decided to throw caution to the wind and re-arrange my keyrings (from front to back) right there and then in order to take my mind off the route change and loud noises coming from the cleaning truck.

Obviously I could of drowned it out by turning my MP3 player up but that would have involved unzipping my jacket and taking it out of my pocket and let's be honest that would have looked a wee bit strange.

Probably.



Anyway with keyring re-assignment achieved I continued off to the shops and completed my purchasing tasks perfectly.*

Until that is I got outside and whilst repacking my bag noticed that my new Star Wars keyring had gone.

So I did what any normal person would do.

I phoned home in a panic.

Luckily my wife Ro is used to stuff like this and basically said that it was just a keyring and I should just head home.

Which I promptly did.

But not before retracing my steps round Morrison's to try and find it obviously.

Oh yes, and then go to customer services to say it was missing.

And finally retracing my shopping trip from finish to start in the hope of finding it.

And all whilst getting more and more upset because, well reasons.

It was at this point (actually that makes it sound like it was really quick whereas in reality I was 3/4 of the way home by now, carefully studying the ground for signs of my keyring - note to self, look up at crossings) that the thought struck me, what if when I was swapping my keyrings around I'd inadvertently unclipped it from that metal hoop thing and it had fallen off?

And with that thought I ran as fast as I could to the point I'd swapped them over.

And guess what?

Yup, I found it!

And with that I sent Ro a photo to share the good news (because obviously she was sitting unable to work until she found out either way) before quickly calling her to see if I should go back to Morrison's to tell them just in case they had staff members looking for it.

She said probably not as they most likely said they'd search to placate me as I probably looked a wee bit mad.

And you know what?

She's probably right.

I mean she usually is.

And the reason I'm sharing this story?

Because I think that it sums up the way my Autistic brain works perfectly.

I reckon that anyone else on 'ver spectrum' reading this will totally sympathize with my dilemma whilst everyone else will have a good old chuckle and think I'm a wee bit mad before cringing slightly as they imagine it.

That's where I reckon I'm lucky to be married to someone who'll react with a mix of both, by being sympathetic of how I was feeling but still being able to have a good old chuckle whilst gently taking the mickey.

And that ends today's TED talk.



***Well I say perfectly but it was touch and go for a second at the tills, you see there was no-one in front or behind me which meant that as soon as I put an item on the conveyor belt it trundled toward the cashier which meant I kept having to go and grab it so I could lay everything out in order.**

Yes, I know.

Time now for some more of our readers creative endeavours as we showcase their fantastic ...

ARTITUDE!

“Andrew Young is a true artist with his own unique vision of the world around him. He never leaves his pencils and paper at home and you will always find him scribbling and doodling all sorts of objects, people and events around him! Attached are some of his recent artwork, this collection is called "The World Through Eyes of an Artist"

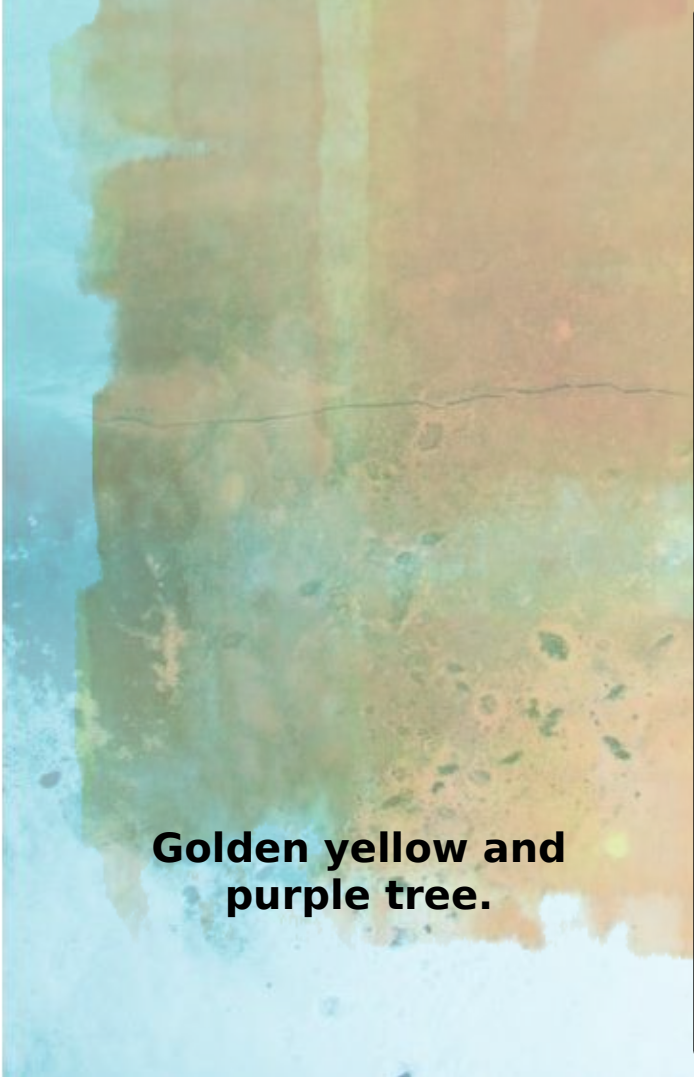
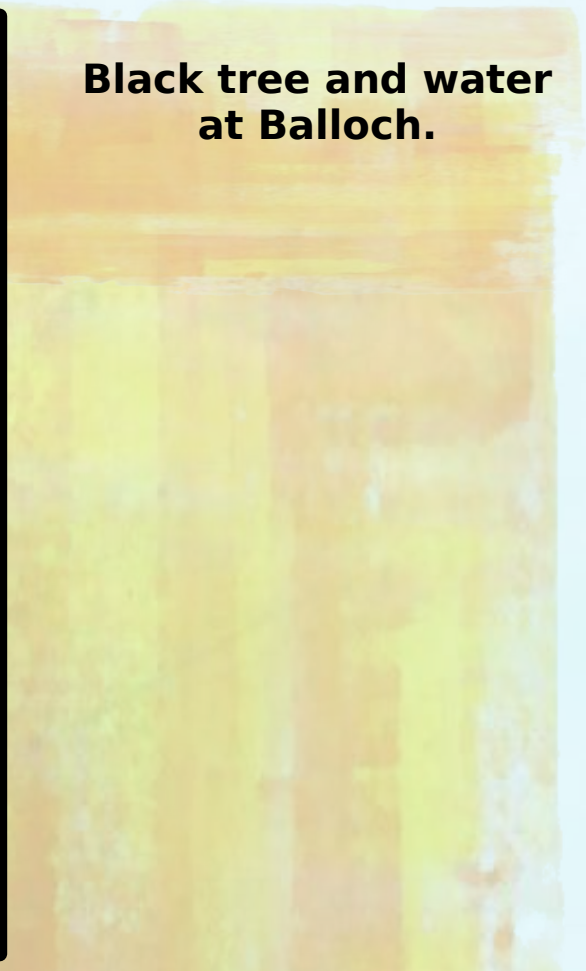
Written by Andrew's key worked Yulia.



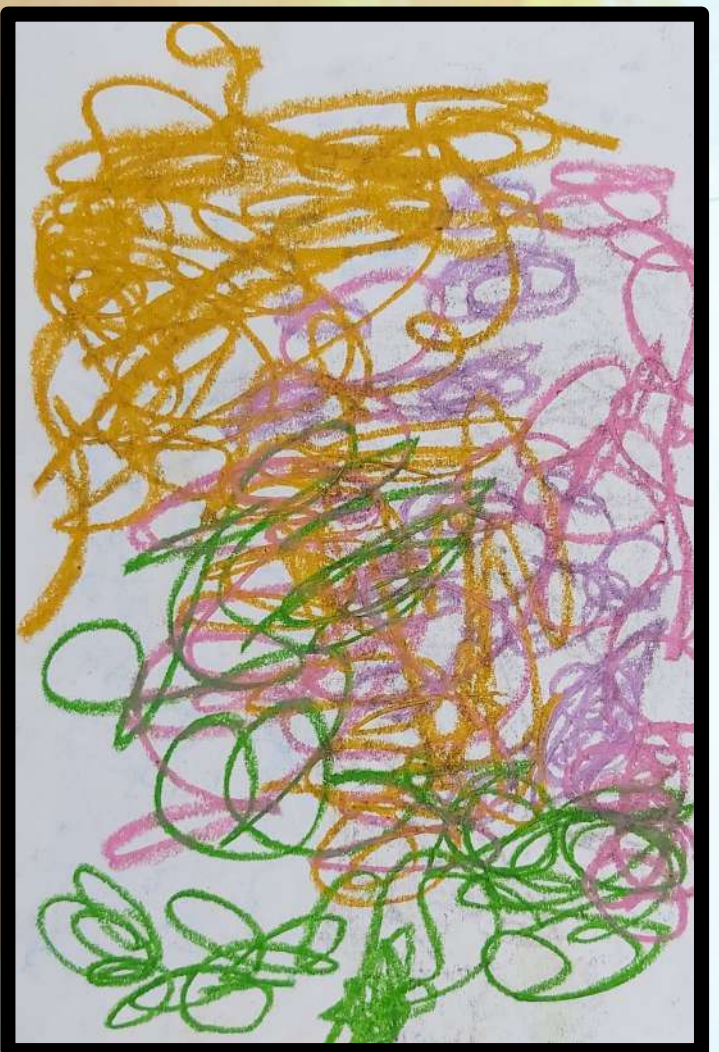
Pylon and black tree.

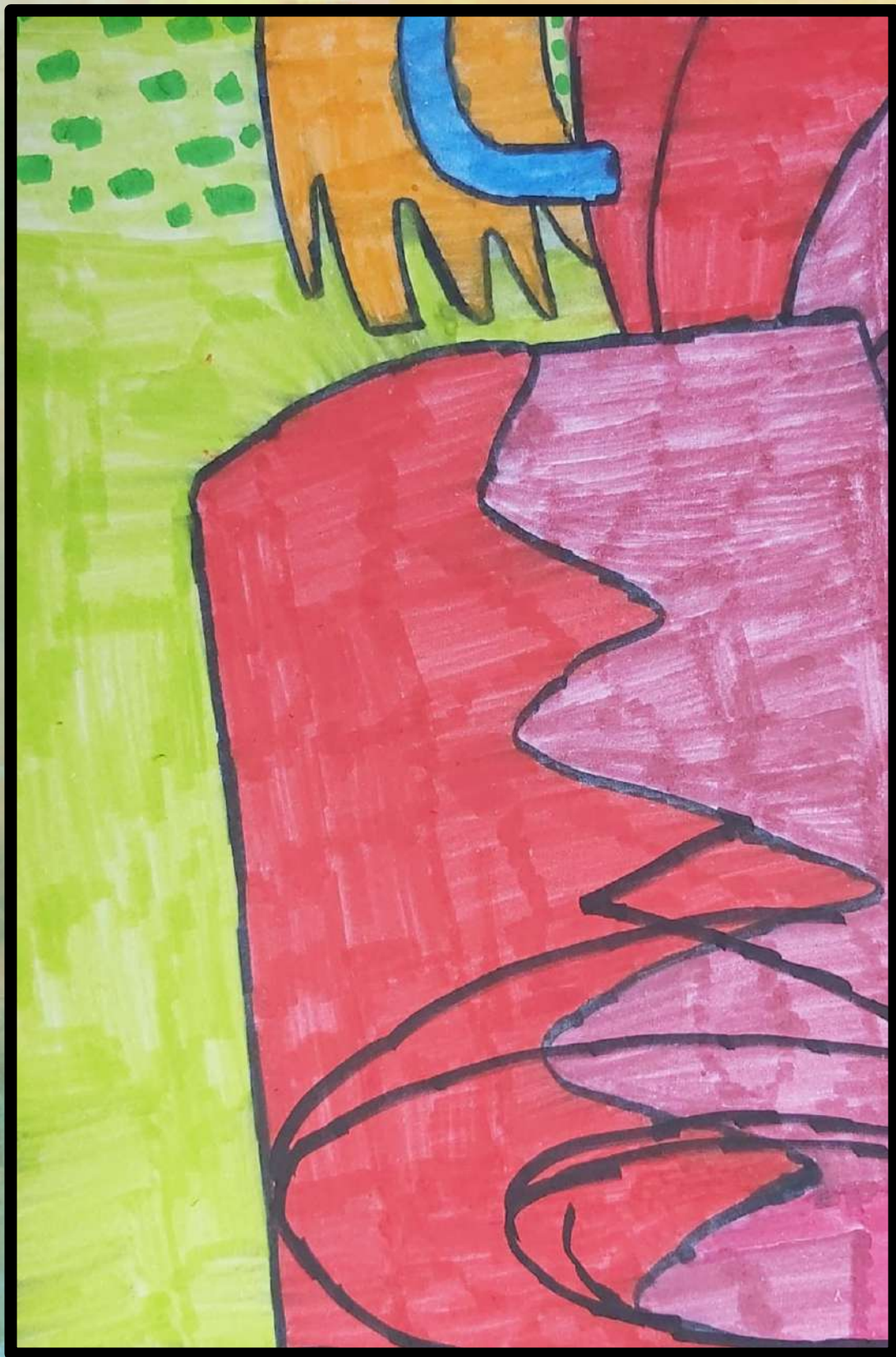


**Black tree and water
at Balloch.**



**Golden yellow and
purple tree.**

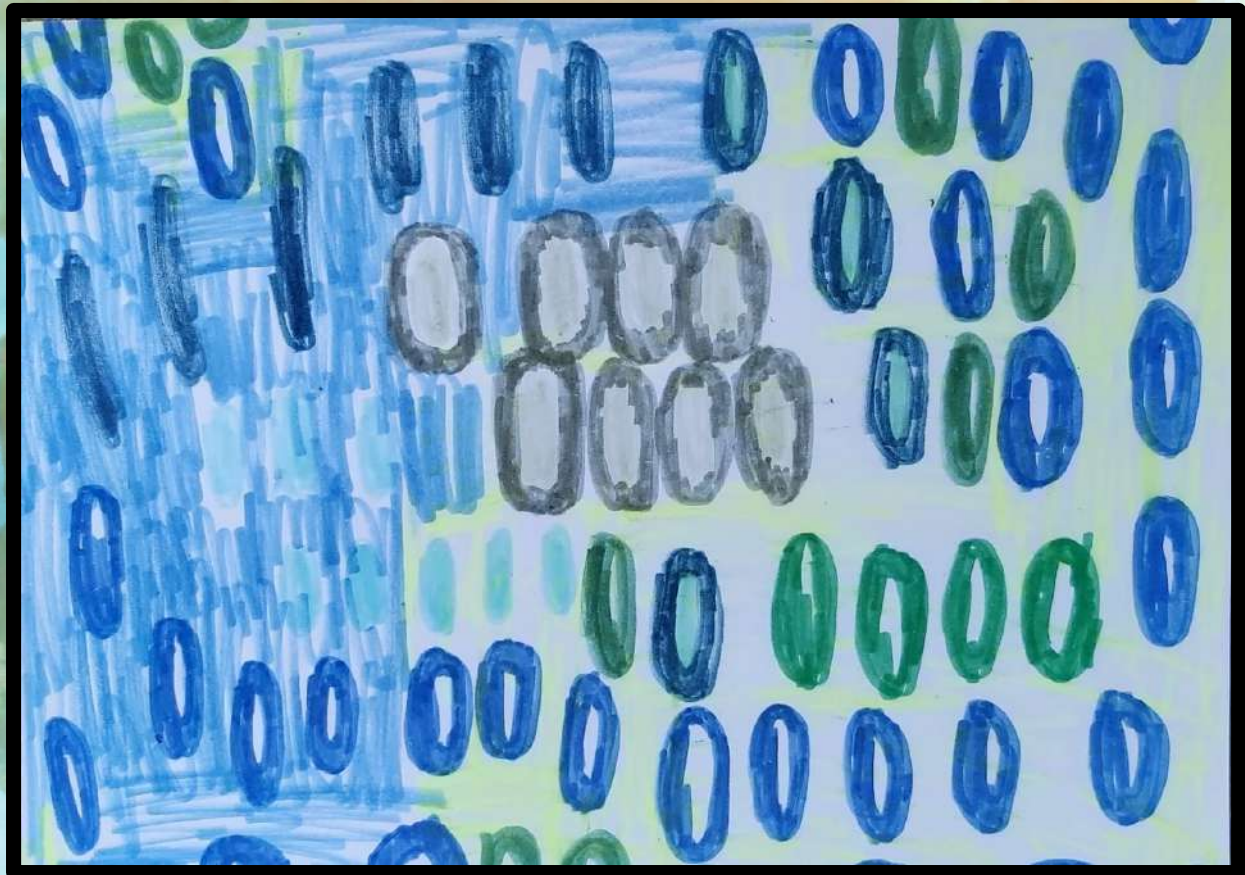




Robotnik from Sonic.



The roof of the house opposite to me.



The shower.



Trees.

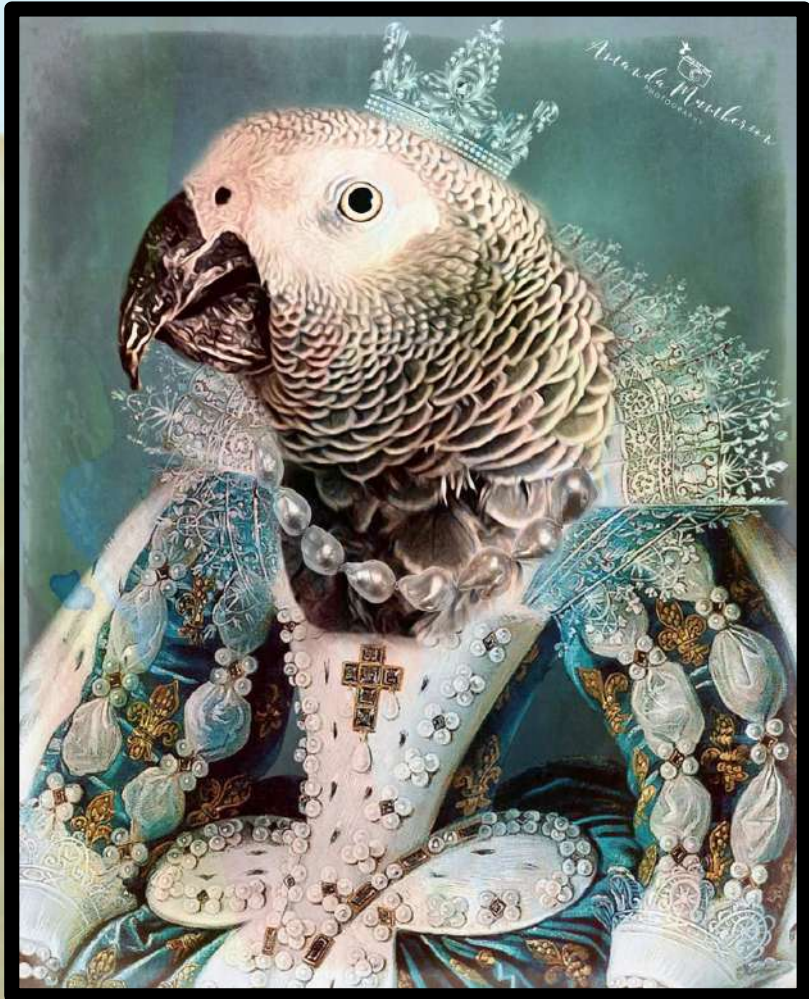


Yellow house in field.

Amanda Mumberson's photography.

"I find photography and being out in nature has done wonders for my confidence. It gives me a purpose to leave the house and feel at peace in my surroundings. I am crazy about birds especially and love to observe their behaviours. It is great to come home and manipulate an image to make it more creative and add moods to my images."








Amara Mumberson
PHOTOGRAPHY



The difficulty in sorting the good from the bad in friendships.

The unknown and unimaginable dangers in the teenage social scene.

The whole arena of friendships can be a tricky trodden path. The many pitfalls and potential pluses and minuses can be abstract. Intangible. And mind bogglingly elusive.

That concrete world of early years replaced by a social world full of subtext and subtlety. Ambiguity and complexity. Double speak and hidden meaning. Concrete, literal, childish whispered words replaced by the subtler, sly snigger, smirk and adult eye roll.

Straight out, clear cut rejection replaced by the pretence of friendship with the presence of agenda. Shifting body language and changing voice tone – together – convey a meaning and an intention that neither alone ever really could, transcending the literal obviousness of words.

A sudden change in conversational topic indicating an uncomfortableness that surrounds it. All mark the transition from a less concrete to a more abstract, complicated social playing field where shared understanding of social convention rules.



FRIENDS

Transitioning to this more complex social playing field can be an especially challenging journey when you have Asperger's or autism.

Common social convention can be double dutch. There can be social blind spots. People say one thing while meaning another. People can be put up to engage in risky behaviour where others would run the other way.

Sidestepping this social trapdoor is vital. The key to this is to sort the good from the bad characters. People behave in roundabout ways. True intentions can be masked by seemingly civil surface behaviour. That seemingly outwardly friendly demeanour can be contradicted by conflicting inner attitudes and thoughts that are less concerned with your welfare. The trick is perhaps to scratch beneath the surface...

Gordon Barlow.



We are delighted to welcome Tom Stoltman to this edition of Autitude Magazine. Tom is an inspirational sportsman, World's Strongest Man competitor, successful businessman and all round nice guy!

MR. STRONG!

You have two nicknames; King of the Stones and Albatross – can you explain how you got these?

So, the Albatross one is because when I am in the gym, stretching my arms out I have a big wingspan like the Albatross. The Albatross has the biggest wingspan in the world.

The King of the Stones nickname is because I've not been beaten in two years. I've got the heaviest stone record and also the fastest time to complete all five and ten stones in the Strongman event. So yeah, the event organisers gave me the nickname, 'King of the Stones'.

Being a Strongman competitor seems to run in your family (your brother Luke is also very successful in this pursuit). How important is the relationship you have with Luke? Did he inspire you to compete in Strongman events?

Luke is top 10 in the world. Luke is 10 years older than me and since we have had gym time together, he is my best mate. He helped me get into the gym and helped me change my life, from a downward spiral. With my autism I struggled with my life. He got me out into that gym world. I used to quit when things would get hard, but Luke never let me do that. He would push me past hurdles, with help. As I became stronger mentally, I could get over hurdles. He is a massive part of my life. He motivates me when I have down days and helps me believe I am one of the best Strongmen in the world. Luke is my biggest cheerleader.

You have competed all over the world in a range of different events – which country have you most enjoyed visiting and which competition is top of your list to win?

The competition is the World's Strongest Man, that is the pinnacle event, no other competition can beat that. It is an amazing title to get... you are basically King of the World! My favourite country, I like America but I love Dubai. I would move there, but my wife wouldn't want to. I have lived out there for a month and a half. What they do to support athletes is unbelievable, the technology is great. It's an incredible place.

Tell me about what a typical day of training is like?

I typically start to train at 1-2pm, so I wake up and typically breakfast is ten eggs and cereal and then I will have a mid-morning snack that is a protein shake or yoghurt and fruit. I will then have lunch that is normally any kind of meat with rice and veg. My dirtiest meal, is like a cheat meal before the gym, which is greasy and carby to help fuel me before my workout. I'll train for a few hours then for dinner, it's same as lunch and before bed I will have some shake and fruit.

What motivates you most?

I think it is trying to better myself. I used to struggle with motivation, I used to say I wanted to do it for my wife or my brother, but Strongman is an individual sport and I just want to be the best version of myself. If I can go to the gym and do better than I did last week, then that is good enough for me!



Can we talk about autism? Do you feel being autistic plays any role in your success in competing?

I think there are positives around the routine of Strongman, being autistic you need a routine. Keeping routine and knowing I am eating and training at the same time of the day is easy for me. I think that is an advantage. I think I am good at the Stones events because its lifting it up, doing A to B and it's a concrete way of thinking. It's like lifting a bar, simple instructions. I like to be given an instruction and I do it.

I can struggle bigtime with the lights and big crowds when competing and I need to psyche myself up for that. Yesterday I was in the gym and in my comfort zone but I broke down in the gym, as I was getting frustrated with what I was doing, but I managed to take myself away from the situation.

Is there a wider message you would wish to share with other autistic people about pursuing their ambitions?

Basically I would say I am a massive believer in positivity. I say this daily to autistic people, positivity is key. If people are stopping you, if you want to move out of your parents or get a job, turn your back to them. If there are small hurdles, go on a journey with someone who can support you. It has taken years to get to the man I wanted to be. I still struggle, as long as you have a support base that helps, you will get there. Never doubt a goal is too big, you can get there with the right people in your life.

What is your ultimate goal?

Win the World's Strongest Man title. Strongman can be a selfish sport so I don't want to sacrifice all this time and not achieve that. I also want to grow the business and gym I have with my brother and be a successful business man. I want to be able to tell my children that I have been successful. Strongman won't be forever, so I want to grow my business with Luke and make it worldwide.

SPECTRUM SUPERSTARS!



Name: Ria Lina

**Occupation: Comedian, actress, writer,
virologist, ex- IT forensic investigator
and ukulele player.**

Autism Appreciation Week (6 – 10 September 2021)

Scottish Autism is hoping to pilot an Autism Appreciation Week in September (6th-10th).

April has been established as Autism Awareness Month, with the 2nd April being internationally recognised as Autism Awareness Day. We acknowledge that, for many autistic people, promoting awareness is not enough and that the message of acceptance is preferred.

We feel that an important aspect of acceptance is appreciation for what autistic people bring to society. We would like to highlight this by an Autism Appreciation Week organised by Scottish Autism. As this has been an incredibly challenging year for many, we want to show our appreciation of those we support in our services, those individuals we have worked with and show our appreciation for autistic people and their families in our wider communities.

As ever, we want to hear what you think about this approach. Would you welcome an Autism Appreciation Week? Please email us your thoughts at marketing@scottishautism.org.

AUTITUDE NEEDS YOU!



Well that's it for issue 5!
Hope you've enjoyed it!
Don't forget to send your contributions to
autitude@scottishautism.org