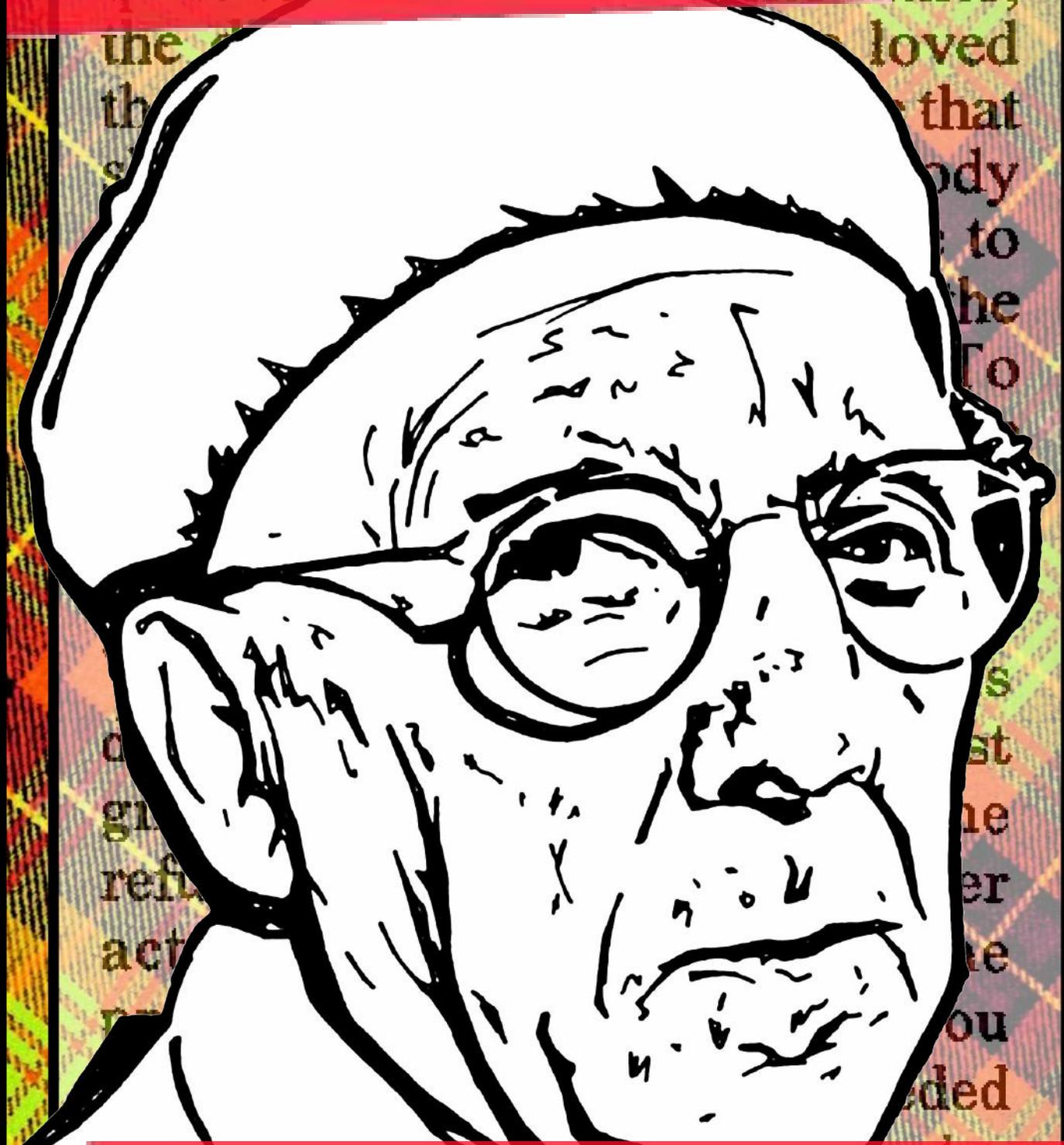


AUTITUDE!



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

WELCOME!

Welcome to the first issue of Autitude in 2023!

Do you have artwork, photography, poetry or stories you would like to share? Or perhaps you have a suggestion of who you would like to see as our future Spectrum Superstar?

Whether it's a thought, suggestion or submission, send it to us at autitude@scottishautism.org.

We look forward to seeing your fab content!

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Scottish
autism
WHERE AUTISTIC PEOPLE
ARE VALUED

Book your place for Click & Connect Block 8!

Click and Connect offers four free online groups including Art and Choir groups for those who enjoy being creative. A Mindfulness for Autism Group for those who are looking to reduce the impact of stress and an Autism Support Group for anyone who is looking for a safe space and community where participants are welcome to share and listen to other's thinking, stories and experiences.

The groups are a great way to come together and meet new and like-minded people in a safe and friendly environment. The groups are delivered online via Zoom and are open to the autistic community and their families across Scotland.

For more information and to book:
<https://www.scottishautism.org/click-and-connect>

Advice Line Q&A - Ask Us Anything!

Join us for an 'Ask Us Anything' Advice Line Live Q&A with Joanna Panese, Practice and Community Development Lead alongside Advice Line Community Advisors, Ross Parker and Sheila Addison, who will be live on our Facebook page on Wednesday 8th March at 12 noon to answer your questions, and to provide advice and signposting.

For more information and to submit a question:

<https://www.scottishautism.org/events/advice-line-qa/advice-line-qa-ask-us-anything-0>

It Takes All Kinds of Minds

Scottish Autism are delighted to be exhibiting at the upcoming ITAKOM Conference on 13th-14th March 2023 at the Edinburgh International Conference Centre. ITAKOM is an international conference entirely focused on the far-reaching concept of neurodiversity and it will bring together different perspectives, so we can better understand neurodiversity, and create a neurodiversity affirmative world.

If you would like to register for the conference as an attendee, book [here](#).

For more events information, please visit <https://www.scottishautism.org/events-training/events>

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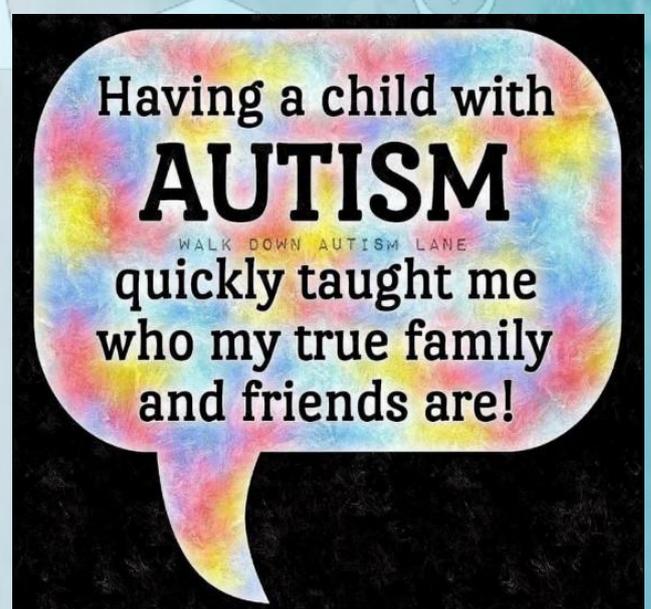
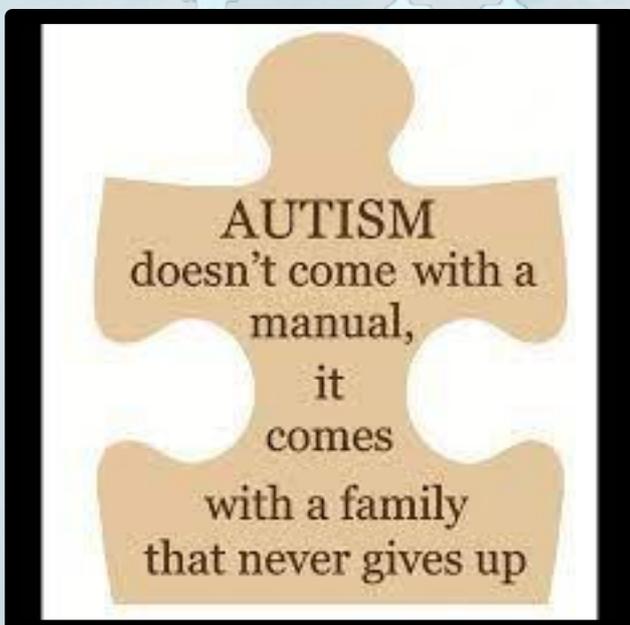
My Neurodiversity Journey Part 10

You may recall in my last article in Autitude Issue 20 December addition, the frustration, bewilderment and feelings of helplessness many parents, carers and significant others, including grandparents, have for an undiagnosed child. A child, slightly different.

The toddler / child too will subconsciously pick up how their interactions with others is different from the rest of the class.

I say undiagnosed, because many parents discussing their child's development at play group or primary one onwards, signs of not being within the 'norm' group become worrisome or evident.

Many well-intentioned peer friends and family members will all chip in with their own thoughts and recommendations. Some will be helpful, other comments may not be, due to their lack of knowledge or the myriad of myths surrounding Autism.



All of my previous neurodivergent journey articles commencing in Autitude issue No9 serve four purposes: -

1. Assisting in my own understanding, making sense of my own life by unpacking all events and seeing them through the optics of a very late diagnosed Autistic Savant.

2. Feeling all the frustrations, bewilderments my mother & father had, especially from 18 months onwards.

3. Ensuring present and future generations do not have to suffer in bewilderment, frustration and confusion as we did as a family unit when I was at preschool. Thankfully my mother said NO when special schools were put forward as an option.

4. To serve others in understanding our different minds, ensuring appropriate **accommodation** in an Autistic friendly **environment utilising** the social model.



Many parents, carers and teachers will have been heartened when the Princess of Wales launched her campaign on early years development as reported on BBC online 28th Jan 2023.

"The Princess of Wales is launching a campaign on one of her most personal causes - the "critical importance of our early childhood".

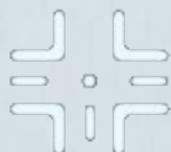
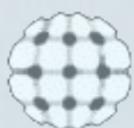
In an open letter, Catherine says not enough attention is paid to how children's first five years profoundly shape "the adults we become".

"I am absolutely determined that this long-term campaign is going to change that," the princess promises.

"They really are years like no other in our lives," she says.

Link to the full article here: -

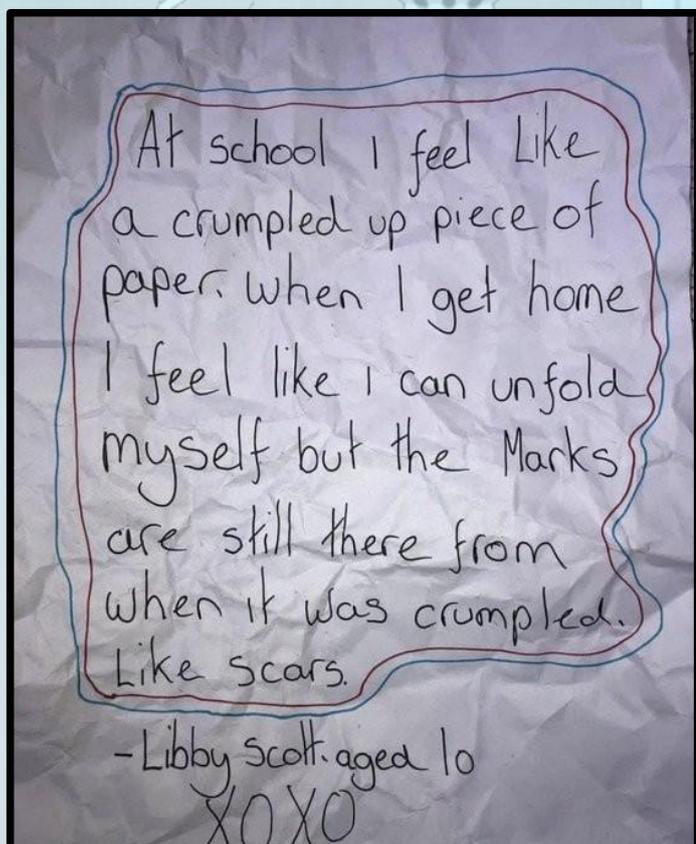
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-64430624>



The letter below is an example of the feelings of a young 10-year-old explaining how she feels on returning from school.

Most school **environments** are not Autistic friendly with little to no **accommodation** for many of our hourly, daily challenges with sensory issues such as lighting, humming fans, smells etc. Our brains fail to filter out such distractions. We see, hear and smell everything. The feelings can be unbearable. Included in unfriendly **environments**, Doctor and Dentist surgeries and hospitals to name but a few.

The child may just cope at school; however, when returning home, the parent has to deal with an exhausted child. The non-Autistic world or Neurotypical world is a minefield for us and energy sapping.



Social interaction feels like a game of chess. – When is it my turn to speak? How do I know when? Why are people laughing at me? Have I said the wrong thing?

Sadly, the two images below are an all too familiar pattern of involuntary behaviour from a child returning from school, college or University.

Remember: - Autistic children become Autistic teenagers, who become Autistic Adults, who become Autistic Pensioners.

Us Autistics are life long learners without a manual. We need support.

Parents, carers, grandparents, close family members and friends who care have a whole new language to learn and understanding what is normal for the Autistic child.

Most importantly at first base our processing speed is slower.

As a metaphor I would suggest the neurotypical world has a Microsoft software installed in contrast to us autistics who have an Apple Mac programme with a few default programmes missing. Namely speed of processing.

Understanding the actions and reactions to external stimuli and the affect it has on us can become overwhelming.

Coming to terms with the useful description such as Meltdown, Shutdown and Burnout is vitally important to parents and significant others.

Too often neurotypicals can JUDGE our reactions whatever the age as being rude or bad behaviour. Another myth buster and ill-informed judgements.

I repeat, no one gave the unexpected parent a manual; you learn by the minute, the hour the day. Each minute, hour and day can vary. Support from charities such as Scottish Autism are here to support and assist on this journey.



The Delayed After Effect!!



School

- Child accumulates stress chemicals throughout the day at school.
- Child holds it together while at school.



Home

- Parents experience the meltdown once child gets home.
- Teacher doesn't see the problem.

autistic meltdown

when our surroundings becoming too overwhelming, our sensory structure becomes triggered and we need to escape from the situation

autistic shutdown

when we have suppressed our natural reactions within environments or have been triggered by a situation and have yet to mentally deal with it

autistic burnout

when our brain shuts down because of continual stress which can last from days to years

The visual graphic below best describes each minute, hour and day with an autistic child.

People think Autism Spectrum is like this:



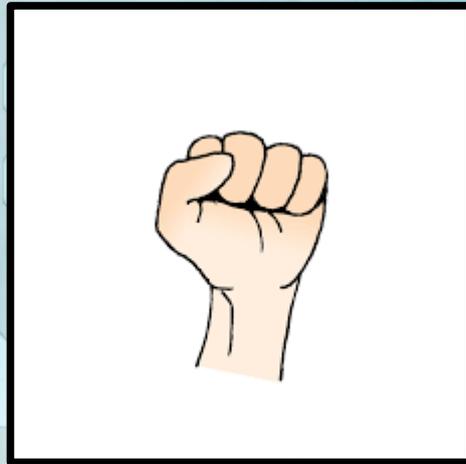
But it's NOT. It's more like this:



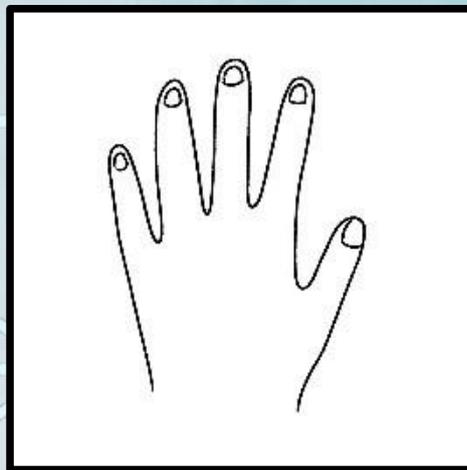
Only with LOTS more sliders. Each person with different settings. Some locked in, some variable, especially with stress. "Low Functioning" and "High Functioning" labels are actually pretty hurtful, and an incorrect way of looking at Autism. Remember the Graphic Equalizer Spectrum. What are your settings today?

Labels can be both helpful and unhelpful. We have to be aware labels can create realities that don't exist.

An example is if you were to clench your hand it becomes a fist.



Unclench your fist and it becomes a hand.



Where has your fist gone?

Some labels are very useful as they are the first step to an understanding of your true authentic neurobiological self.

Use the labels as a stepping stone to understanding; not a camping ground.

I can relate to the person in the image below as will most people after a diagnosis.

Personally, I have feelings of regret that my mother was no longer with us to have her own 'Ah Ha' moment. Years of frustration at the kitchen table attempting the simplest of homework tasks which was beyond me. No one knew I was born with little to no working or short-term memory for starters, along with other learning disabilities. All unknown at this time.

Autistic Identification Is Life Changing.

@littlepuddins.ie

Adult Amanda

- Understands herself
- Kind to herself
- Creates boundaries
- Learning her worth
- Part of a community
- Happy
- At peace
- Found



←
Young
Amanda

- Confused
- Unsure
- Trying so hard
- Outsider
- Lonely
- Lost

At the start of this blog, I mentioned Princess of Wales comments “critical importance of our early childhood”. In Autitude issue 19 (link below) I wrote about: -

“The Scottish Government has pledged to create a Learning Disability, Autism & Neurodiversity Commissioner in this Parliament”

https://www.scottishautism.org/sites/default/files/issue19_final_compressed.pdf

I profiled a draft JOB ADVERT of the type of individual who I feel would represent the marginalised neurominorities in Scotland.

Fingers crossed this necessity happens and hopefully the Princess of Wales will be proud of how progressive Scotland is in catering for Autistic children’s early development.

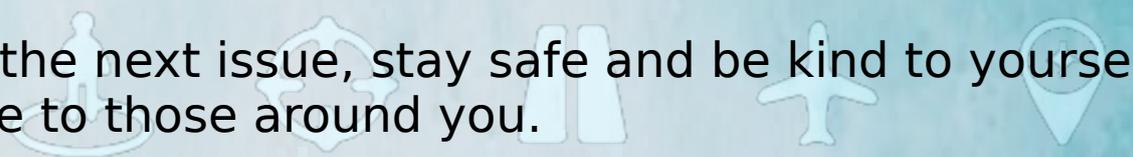
Many will have been touched on watching Chris Packham’s “Inside our Autistic Minds” on BBC Two on Feb 14th, with the next episode on Tuesday 21 Feb documentary.

If you missed this, I urge you to catch up and be totally overwhelmed with gratitude such a programme on Autistics and their families has been made. Filled with compassion, triumphs and love in this must watch programme.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p0bbnjvx>

I will finish off with one of my favourite definitions for Autism.

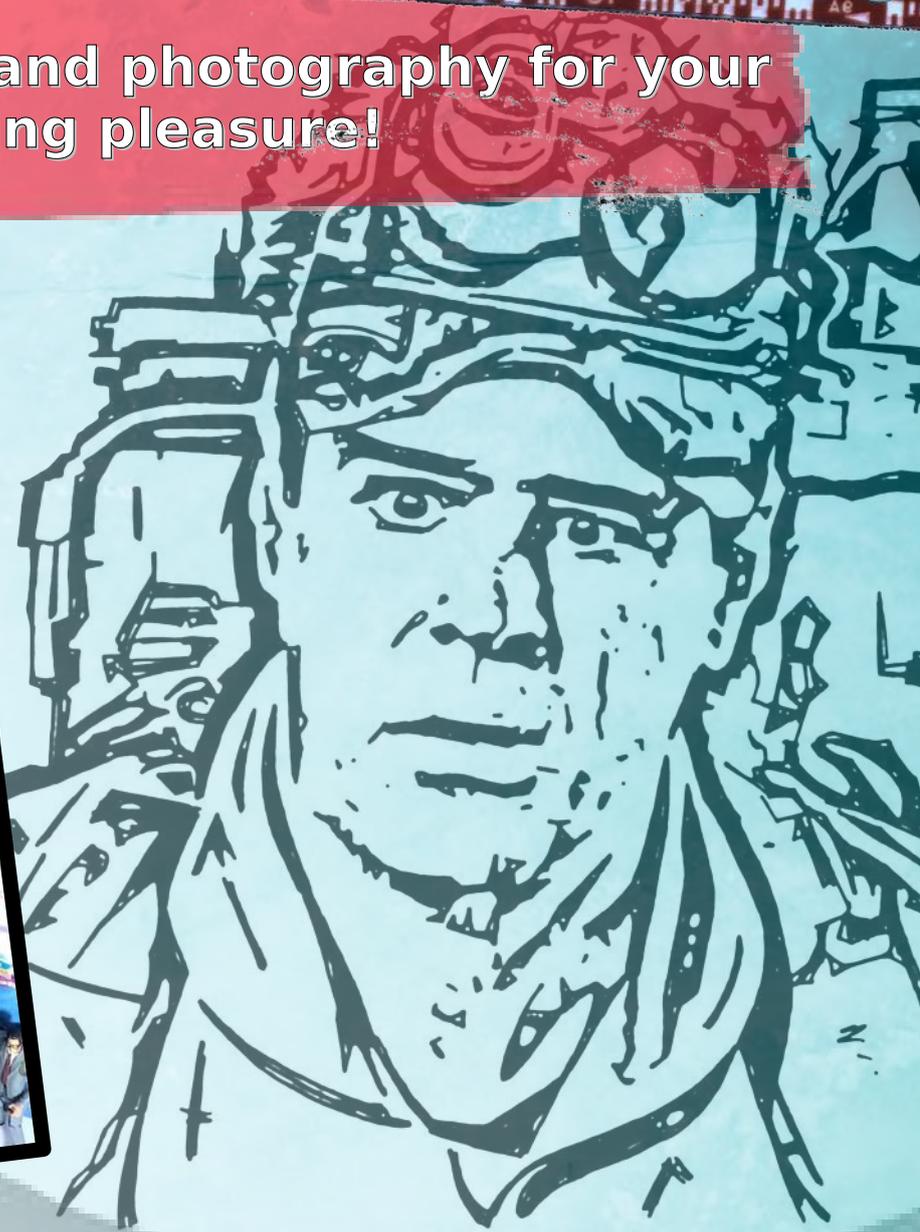


Until the next issue, stay safe and be kind to yourself and gentle to those around you. 

David Yeoman – Blogger, Contributor & Volunteer;
Scottish Autism Trustee, @ Autism Advisory Forum,
Consultant at Dyslexia Scotland. Advisor /
Consultant Autistic Knowledge Development

ARTITUDE!

More readers art and photography for your viewing pleasure!



Hi, my name is Dale. One of my favourite movies of all time is Ghostbusters. My house is filled with memorabilia from the franchise. In my spare time I like to make mini movies with the figures and cars in my collection. With the help of my team I have captured some of these images for you through photography. I hope you enjoy watching the latest release of Ghostbusters directed by Dale.



Ghostbusters was directed by Ivan Reitman. His son Jason Reitman directed Ghostbusters Afterlife.







Slimer was based on John Belushi.



The terror dogs are called Zuul and Vinz Clortho.
Gozer is a class 7 Metaspectre.

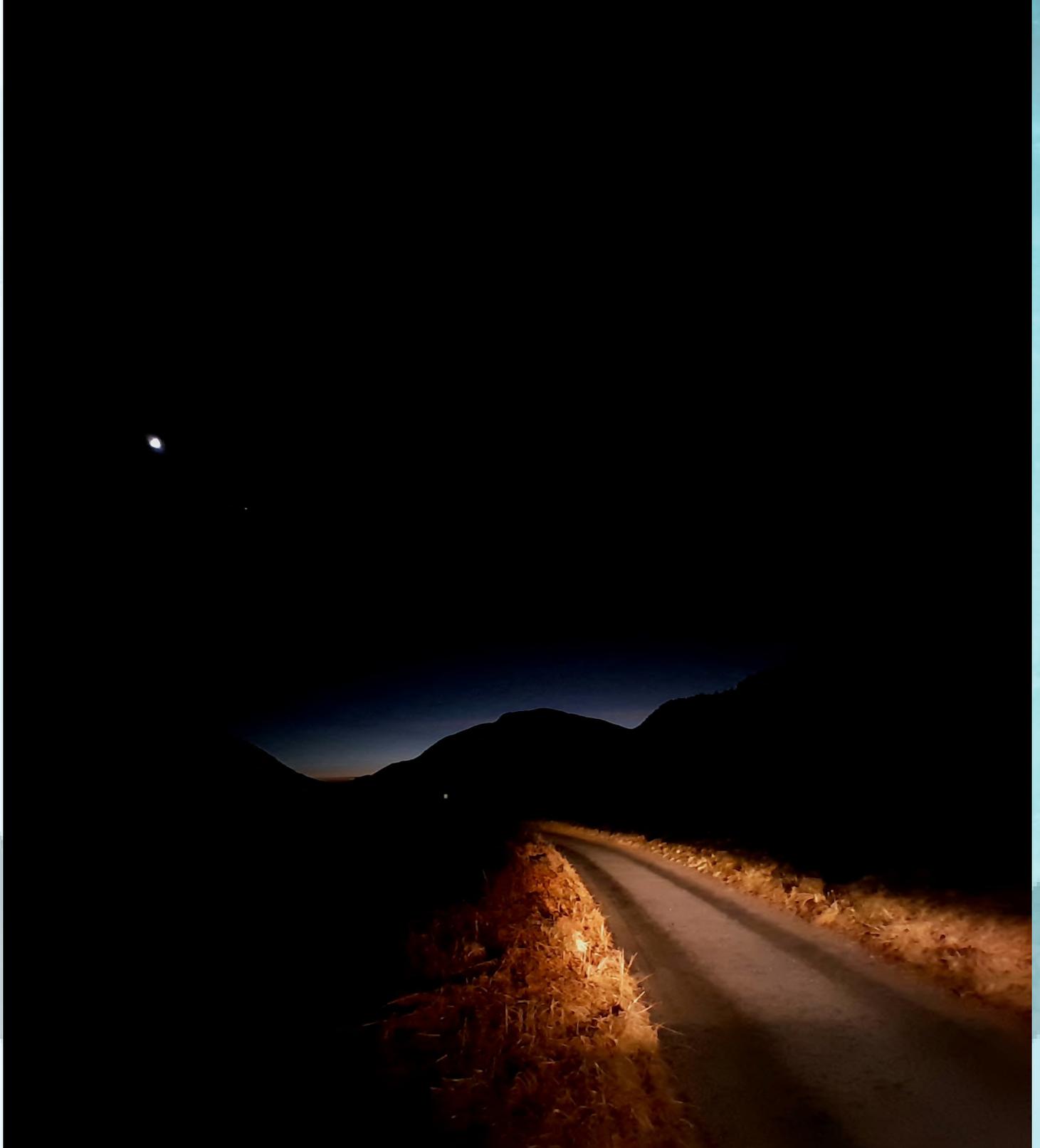


The Ghostbusters car is called Ecto 1.
The movie was originally called Ghost smashers.



**New photography from Sandra Smyth's travels around
Scotland...**

**"I love to travel and I'm truly amazed by our beautiful
scenery here..."**

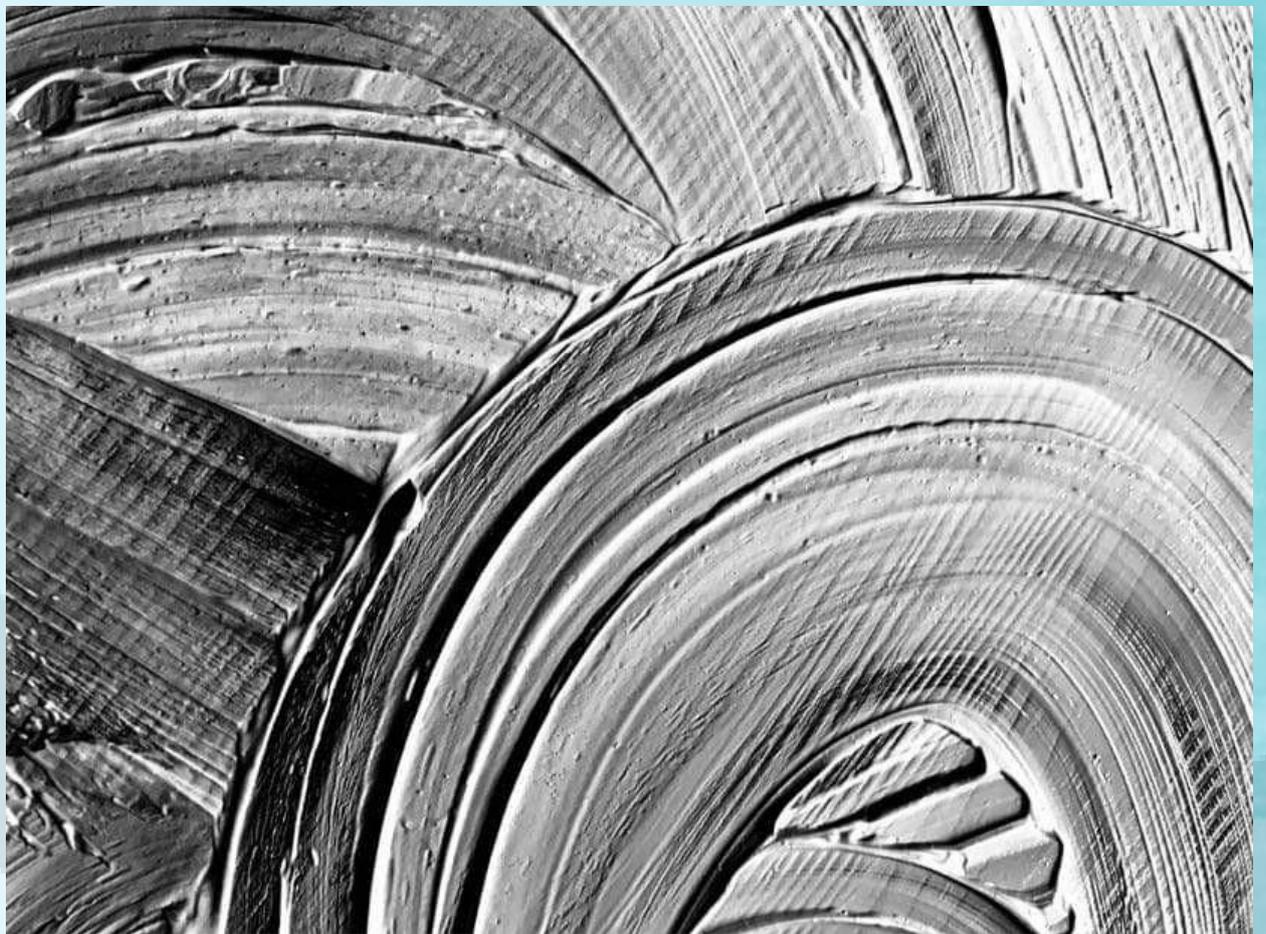




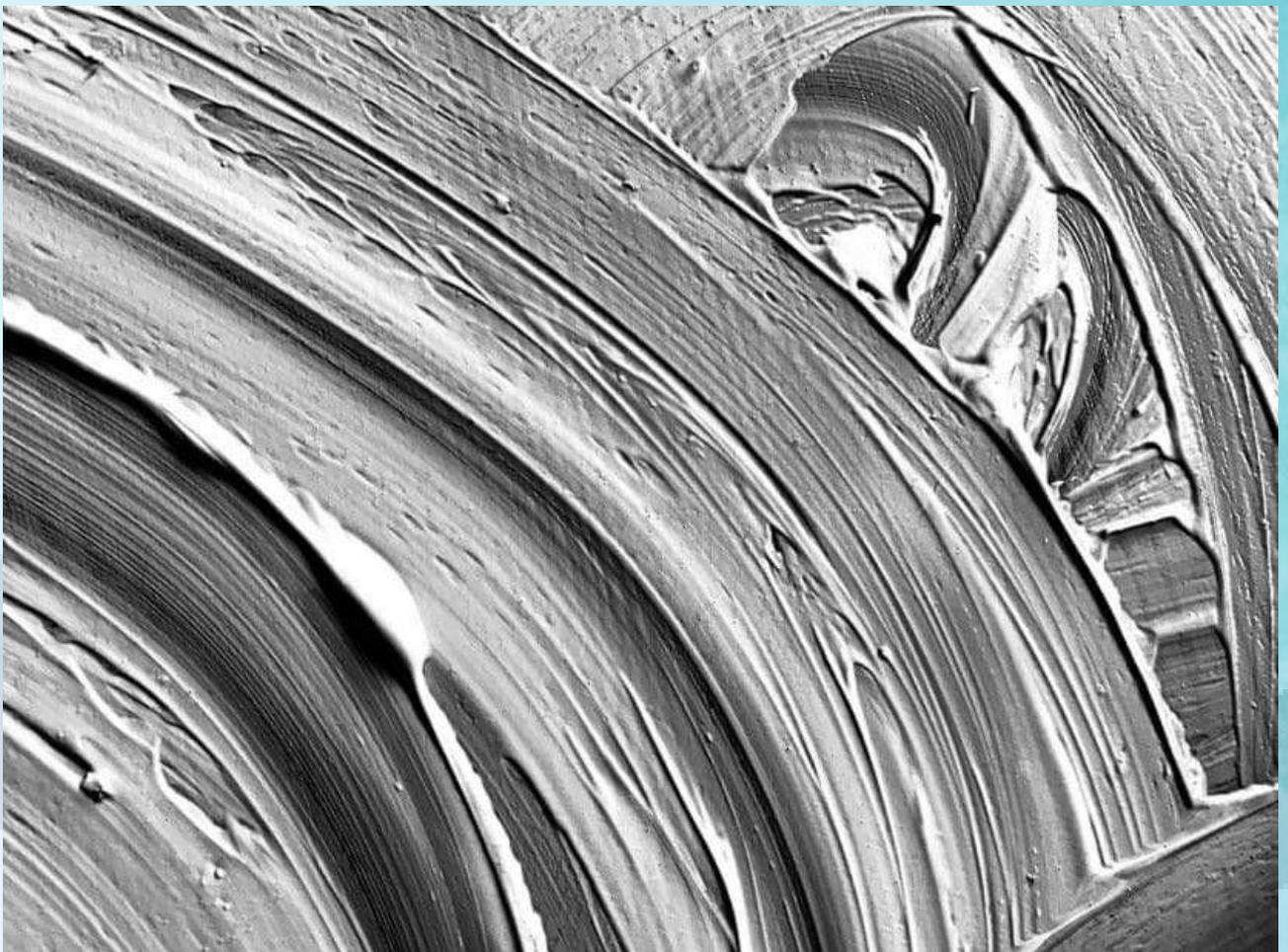
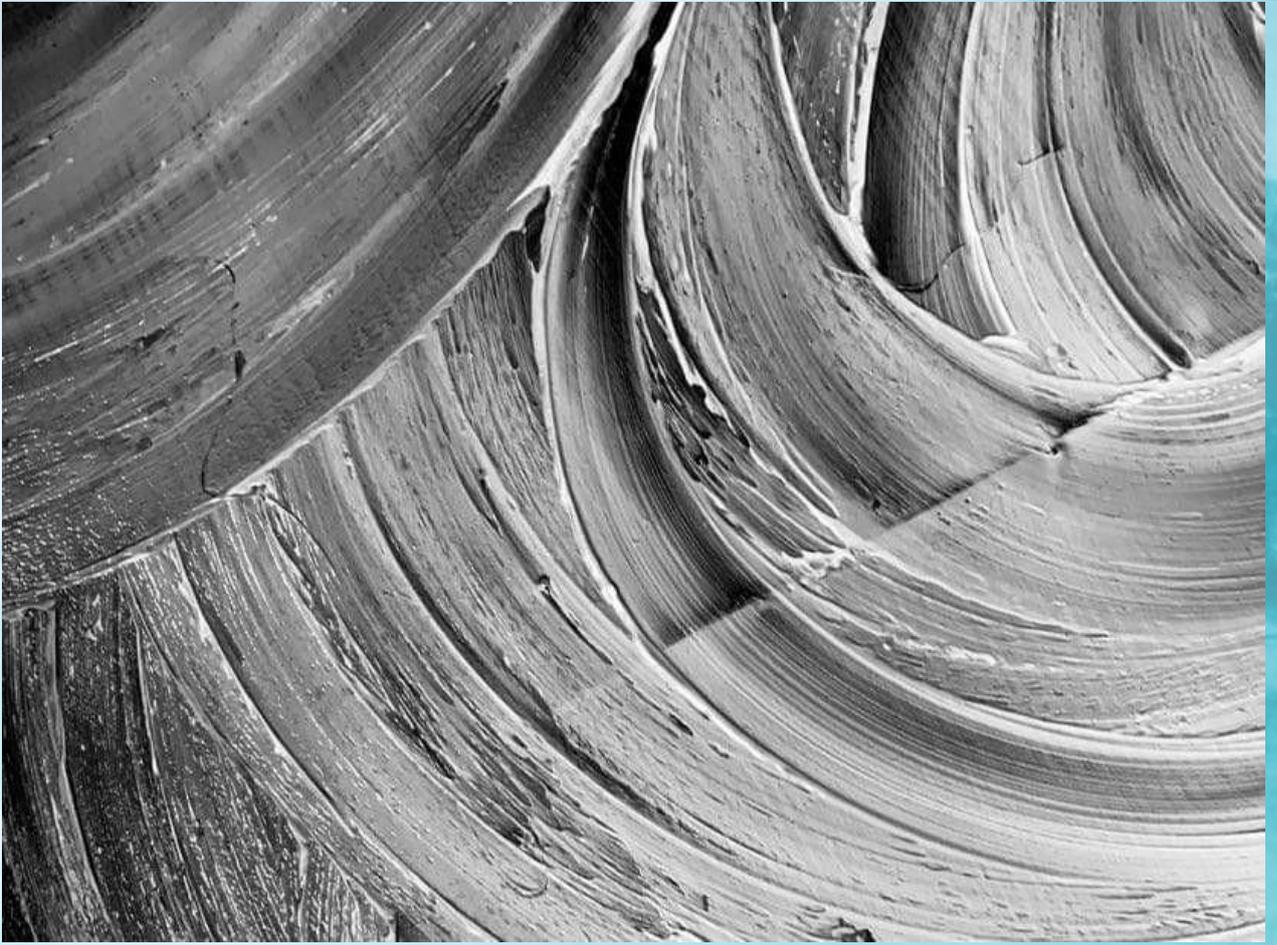




Hi, my name is Barry Haddow. One of my favourite activities is messy play. I have recently taken up creating art pieces as a fun project. My art takes a sensory and tactile approach. This one is called hand swirls in motion.





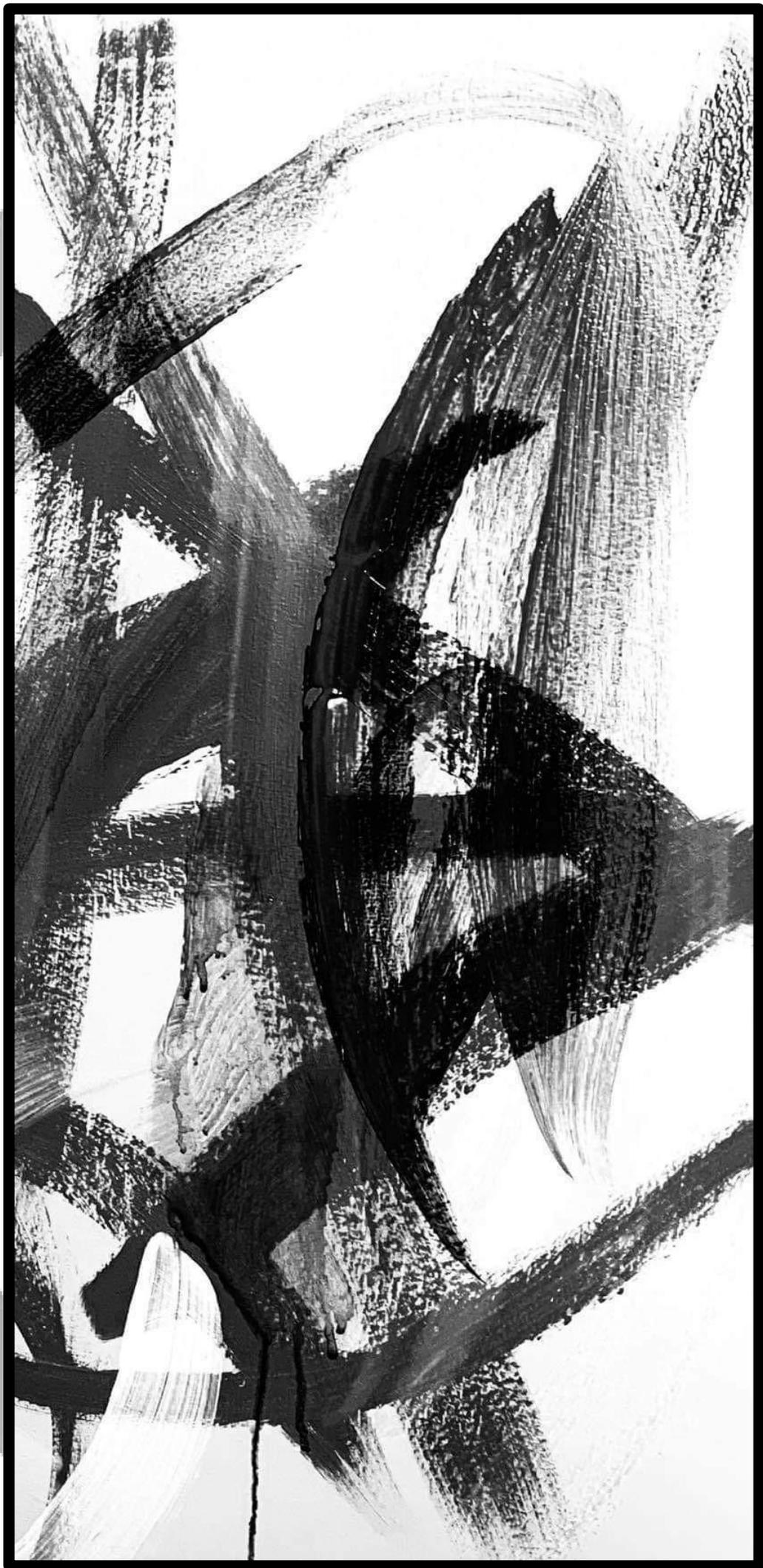






Lee Wilkinson art.

In my spare time I enjoy doing art pieces with my team. Please enjoy my latest piece. I use an abstract approach which focusses on paint brush strokes capturing the moment.



Trigger warning: some readers might find the content contained in this poem emotionally challenging. If you would like to speak with an autism advisor, please call our autism advice line on 01259 222022 or email advice@scottishautism.org

A DOGS LOVE

Dirty little secrets that make me want to cry

Dirty little secrets that make me want to die

You see the smiling faces but not the bad inside

The doors are always closed a secret kept to hide

She was a little child with laughter love and joy

Early on they broke her, discarded like a toy

The world around ignored her and treated her with hate

She endured this wicked torture and this was her cruel fate



She tried life long to make her way
To laugh and love and rescue strays
But every monster tracked her down
And dimmed her light and made her drown
Alas he came this furry knight
A great big fluff ball full of fight
And every day he made her laugh
And kept her on a living path
Any monster trying to take
This ball of power could smell a fake
He would growl and stand up high
For her she knew he'd surely die
Here he is her knight of fur
Her life long friend I can concur
He never judges, hits or harms
She loves this dog so full of charms

By Dorothy Welsh

“Points of View” by John McWhinnie

We all have one, convinced through life experience its
gospel

Others have them too, yet they often make us hostile

Polarisation is effecting the nation, no in fact the world!
Can we not connect like we did as boys and girls?

I suggest that we all take an oath
To come from a point of learning and growth

Let it all go, stripping back the ego
Realising 9/10 of us are just an average Joe

The 1/10 shown are effecting our self-worth
Remember it's all about the journey from birth!

I for one feel like an alien on earth,
Unheard and misunderstood,
Capability has proven to be my visible disability

An unrecognised strength that only few know,
I must accept this burden and help others grow

Victimhood is how this appears,
Perhaps it will be understood over the years...

Let's hope we can get back to basics and break the
2022 matrix!!

FROM THE FUTURE BACK TO THE START, HOW I'VE ENDED UP CALLING MYSELF AN ECCENTRIC AGAIN.

This August on the Edinburgh free festival I will yet again and now as usual, be occupying a space known as The Alcove in a venue called Bar 50. This is a large hostel/hotel situated on the so – called Cow Gate area, under the central bridges of the city.

At 1pm, I will try to join up my 59 years of life in the space of 45 minutes. Then I have to conduct a bucket collection, this being the Free Fringe, and pack all the equipment away that was involved in my one – man show. This is always the hardest part. Meeting the audience properly, negotiating questions and praise (hopefully) and then breaking away to 'talk to them in a minute' as I deactivate a computer, video projector, PA and then pack away badges and books.

Finally, I stumble into the foyer/bar area, sit down and finish off any conversations. The money counting is always fun. The card reader hopefully worked. I am left with the experience of the show. What I said, what I did and how it was received by the audiences. I have experienced groups of people who roared with reassuring laughter. I've often seen audiences sit there like a graveyard. Yet they liked it afterwards it seemed from the applause and comments. Many pass no judgement, merely leave. What have they taken from the experience? I will never know. Maybe the odd praise on the internet.

I could be in the Royal Albert Hall, or a tiny room like venue. It would I think be equally the same experience. You always perform as if this is it, the big one. You always seek to enjoy what you do and share it with the audience. I always hope people will talk to me during the shows and take it somewhere interesting. I call it audience participation. Many performers call such actions heckling.

Well, I started this business when I was terrified of most people and eighteen years of age, back in 1982. An undiagnosed autistic teenager in the city of Liverpool. I came from the middle of the tracks as it were, (there is a wrong and a right side as the metaphor goes). I was educated on the good side and then elected to use FE colleges in town. Which meant sitting with the really rough crew whom I adored being with. The Everyman Youth Theatre was at the top of a hill, on a road called Hope Street. On one end was the futuristic (a 70's term) cone like 'Paddies Wigwam' Catholic cathedral. The other contained the classically built Anglican cathedral, complete with its own huge quarry/cemetery. It was a good time in history to be there, ecumenically speaking.

It was during Tuesday nights in the Everyman Youth Theatre that I discovered my childhood ability to perform and improvise adventures could be a real world asset. I went on to leave my A levels and just do plays around Merseyside and then Manchester. In 1986 I landed in a major London drama school. I was not going to last long, being an undiagnosed autistic, speeding away on his ADHD. But I worked and was conscientious and sober, and it all led to a level of self – development that became a way of life. Pursuing the sober buzz through fitness and ultimately meditation. Peace of mind and healing through The Dharma, walking (urban rambling, a practice that mitigated my ADHD) and work outs in gyms and dojos.

Eccentricity

unexpected objects and behaviour

Science and Oxford are two...
Eccentric scientists are fam...
Oxford academics inhabit bo...
It has not been difficult to bu...
... theme.

There are two admission qualifi...
they might be something you wou...
science, or they might illustrate the...
behaviour was considered eccentric...
reserve collection, since, despite...
would not normally find a pla...



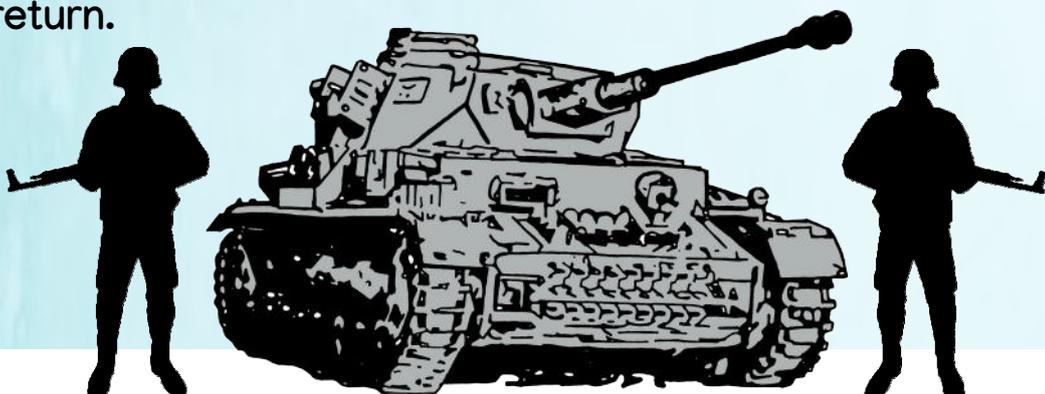


Cut to the present day, I face being sixty years of age in a matter of months. I get benefits but not the income due to me at the current retirement age of 66. (Bizarre fact: When I am 63 the age of retirement is due to start slipping further away past 66. Welcome to 21st century Britain). So what does Grandpa do? Oh, book a three-week run of my show on the Edinburgh Free Fringe. My idea of a holiday. Erm....isn't that a high impact, war zone like space for an autistic adult?

Yep, and lots of us are doing it too. I perform from the 3rd until the 27th with Sundays off. I love it. I've NO IDEA what is going to happen at this stage in time. Every morning there is the same - a process of rest, preparation through meditation and the odd floor exercise, flying (where you run around giving out A6 cards to interest people in your show) and finally setting up the venue.

But I digress so much. About 700 plus words so far. What about being ECCENTRIC? How does that link to being NeuroDiverse?

As a child, I knew I was magnificent. Brilliant. I loved playing with my toys on my own, creating adventures. Science fiction action series. My eyes and ears the camera gear to record them. I experienced a real thrill and euphoria from improvising as I went on. Ah, those poor Action Men figures (NEVER call them dolls. I caught an aunt doing that once and told her off. Dolls indeed...). They had names and identities. You can see them on my YouTube channel under the WarZoners heading as I animated a whole series during the 2020 lockdown. 2021 I completed the pilot episode for series 2 but left it at that. Still you never know as they may return.



It was my imagination coupled with my joyous OCD energy that led a man in his late 50's to be filming a Poundland plastic submarine in the Barbican centre London lake. This led to some spectacular underwater film involving algae and swirling shapes. Eccentric? You bet. (You should see the film though? I was amazed what scale of drama I could achieve in a shallow, uncleaned pool with a model on a stick).

In my 1970's school days I once saw a documentary on Salvador Dali on a Sunday afternoon. It made a big impression on me that I was not alone. Together with his equally bizarre wife Gaia, the Catalanian pranced about his home, festooned with his surreal paintings and sculptures, making bizarre proclamations that made him happy and the rest of the world wonder. He sat on his Lilo in his swimming pool with his flies half open!! My God.... This was 1976. Was this man insane? Who cared as he was so much fun and SO TYPIFIED MY OWN ENERGY AND PERSONAL URGES TO DO MY OWN THING, no matter how much the rest of the world did not relate.

I was obsessed with science, at least my version of it. Science fiction kept me going in the grey, grim world of 1970's Liverpool. Creating stories and inventing machines on paper. I still have a huge collection of schematics. Moon bases. Robots! Spaceships! A car that worked on water. Ah yes, the prototype had a cistern over the back of it raised high. You pulled a chain and the water flowed more, thus regulating speed. Or was it a valve...? Since a pump on the axel pushed the water back into the cistern - I had invented perpetual motion. I was certain of it. Damn you friction, damn you.

I stimmed making noises and gestures. Others reacted to myself focused nature, mocking, avoiding and worse. Or kind of got used to it. I had my own walk, my own body language and my love of greasy hair. Wash it once every 2 weeks - no problem. Some later life adventures with Brill cream put me off the slick look for life thankfully. Good job for the sake of everyone else too. On more than one occasion, I left the house, and even went to a party, with a head that looked like it was made of plastic. I mean I did not use this stuff lightly for hold...I used a ton of it like it was plaster. I still shudder thinking about hair gel.

It was 1980 when I saw The Naked Civil Servant TV show. Quentin Crisp represented for me an individual who faced the world bravely and to Hell with being different from it. I remain as then, utterly heterosexual. Yet his personality so impressed me that one day in 1980 I stole into the WH Smiths branch in Church street central Liverpool, and bought a copy of his autobiography. You had to be careful around displaying anything LGBTI in those days you know? A wonderful book full of bohemian advice. (His notes on avoiding housework a template for all men I'd say?). I went on to spend an entire day in the London drama school pretending to be him. Some said it was my finest hour of improvisation.

Then there was Spike Milligan, a man diagnosed by Professor Michael Fitzpatrick as half autistic and half bipolar. Dual diagnosis being a thing you know? Ah, Milligan, my great hero together with Tom Bakers take on being Doctor Who. The energy! The guile! The wit! The fact he too was a Scouser. These men were my heroes. I knew who Milligan was long before I ever heard a Goon Show script. Being an obsessive slave of the cathode ray tube from a very early age. (I remember when you had to come straight into the house from school and turn the black and white telly on, to give it time to warm up and work).

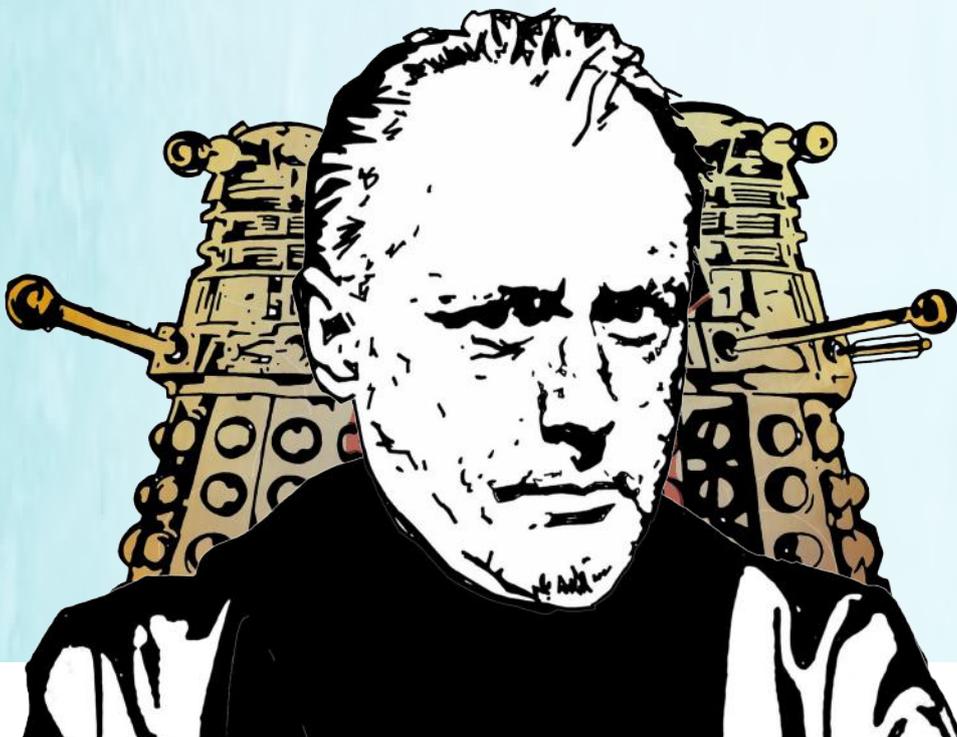
It was quite logical that I would come to the conclusion a few weeks ago that a show about eccentricity was required. So far I have five books on the subject and it's striking how much each page is packed with obsessional energised people who typify being on the spectrum. Yet many of the books refuse to even use the term Autism, let alone Neurodiverse. A 1995 book, Eccentrics by David Weeks and Jamie James, never refers to it in the appendix. Schizophrenia is mentioned and discounted in a specialist chapter. Bear in mind Mr Weeks professed to be a clinical neuropsychologist and therapist at the time? Yet it is comically obvious the work is jammed and jammed full of the personalities of neurodivergent people.

Tales of those who became fixated on things and would not give up on them. William McGonagall was a 19th century weaver from a very poor background who loved Shakespeare so much, he would recite from memory entire scenes whilst his colleagues listened on as they all worked. Then one day, this happened...

“I seemed to feel as it were a strange kind of feeling stealing over me, and remained so for about five minutes. A flame, as Lord Byron has said, seemed to kindle up my entire frame, along with a strong desire to write poetry; and I felt so happy, that I was inclined to dance, then I began to pace backwards and forwards in the room, trying to shake off all thought of writing poetry; but the more I tried, the more—strong the sensation became. It was so strong, I imagined that a pen was in my right hand, and a voice crying “Write! Write!””

His hilarious, doggerel poems survive to this day. His utterly disproportionate perception of his own works worth being the source of great mirth for others during his life. But not him. It is said audiences would throw rotten vegetables and fruit at him and that he was often hired for parties in order that the people get drunk and find him hilarious. He did well. It is this absolute conviction and inability to let go of ones love of something that I so related to. The overriding joy of doing what really makes you happy. Even if the thing being overridden is the rest of the world and its values, standards and societal ideas of what is valid adult behaviour.

Haven't we all been there? Obsessed with Fire Brigade Services, Lilly Hitchcock Coit, a San Francisco resident who lived around 1849 and was utterly obsessed with the local fire department to the point that she was made an honorary member of the Knickerbocker Fire Company No5, it's crew and fire tenders. She once peroxidized her hair bright yellow for the Hell of it and when challenged by her new husband, shaved the lot off and went on to wear red, black and blonde wigs instead.



From 1859 until his 1880 death, a man called Joshua Edward Norton decided that he reigned supreme as the self-proclaimed Emperor of the United States of America. When he died, 30,000 filed past his casket to pay their respects. It was an idea he got one day. The writer Emily Dickinson always wore white, never went out of her room and hid her poems in tiny boxes. The concert pianist Glenn Gould, immortalised in a fascinating film about his life, lived in mortal fear of draughts and usually lagged himself against any kind of deadly breeze no matter how tropical the weather. He was to be seen performing in places like Israel “doubly hatted, doubly mittened and endlessly muffled and mufflered”. It gets warm there you know.

In all these cases, hundreds of stories in the books, people are represented who lived relatively functional lives and even had families, jobs and maintained respectable positions in their societies. Many did not manage to maintain these things due to their intractable self-integrity being their downfalls. The former Labour MP Jared O Mara being a fine if not tragic example of a NeuroDivergent person, the first member of parliament to hold a formal diagnosis, who has gone horribly wrong due to their addictions and self-focused behaviour. However, one cannot help but get the impression he loved every minute of it?

The actor Klaus Kinski for all his hyperactive and bipolar style behaviour, left us a magnificent legacy of film performances. Steve Silberman's Neurotribes starts with a man he titles 'the Wizard of Clapham Common', the brilliant and innovative scientist and inventor Sir Henry Cavendish. A man of as many eccentricities as unique and valuable innovations in science.

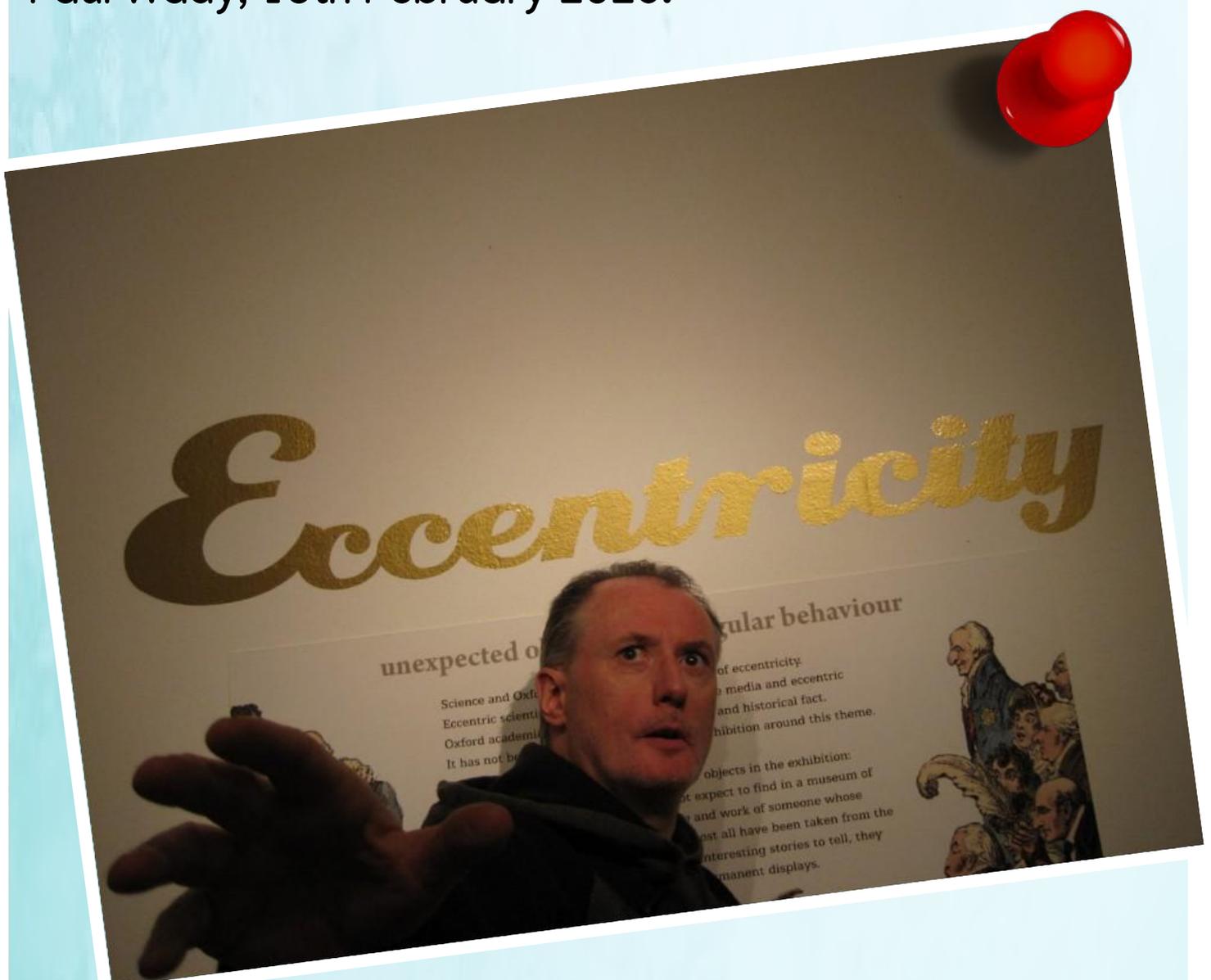
So it is that I find myself, after a lifetime of trying to kid the world I was as sane, competent and as NORMAL as everyone else around me that I can finally be free in front of an audience. I will indulge in my stim gestures and peccadilloes (obsessing about my old Poly, Science Fiction, synthesizers even if I am hardly a musician) bands, style and all things NeuroDivergent these days. As a very famous, indeed now immortal film star that I've known since I was a teenager once put it “I'm into everything”. Once he got interested in something he did nothing but deep dives into those subjects. He too reckoned he was one of us.

Binary emotions. Absolute attention and devotion to anything we remotely like. Well let's face it, we either love, hate or are indifferent to things. All that magnificent energy raging within our NeuroDivergent hearts. Direct it. Channel it. Use it to make you happy and please, please try to concede to the values and needs of the world around you enough to support others and show mutual caring and respect. Develop a self that satisfies your urges and needs whilst considering and loving others and the greater community. Then my NeuroKin, you won't go wrong.

You can get away with being you as well. You know, the real one.

;)

Paul Wady, 15th February 2023.



SPECTRUM SUPERSTARS!



Name: Terence Alan "Spike" Milligan KBE
Born: 16 April 1918 (died 27 February 2002)
Occupation: Actor, comedian, writer, musician, poet and playwright.

AUTITUDE NEEDS YOU!



Well that's it for issue 21!
Hope you've enjoyed it!
Don't forget to send your contributions to
autitude@scottishautism.org