

**The Whitworth, The University of Manchester**

**Press Release:**

13 February 2019

**Facing Out: Life after treatment for facial cancer**

**Exhibition dates:**

22 February – 2 June 2019 (7 days a week)

**Opening event Thursday 21 February 6-9pm:** with musical guests; Manchester-based singer Monica Ward with backing from the Chemo-thumpers.

*Facing Out* is an exhibition of portraits by Lucy Burscough of people who have experienced facial cancers together with their choice of artworks from the Whitworth's collections. In the exhibition, the participants' voices, experience and expertise are front and centre. The associated programme of musical performances, film screenings, workshops and talks, has been co-curated by the *Facing Out* participants with support from gallery staff.

The portraits have been painted by award-winning artist Lucy Burscough during her residency at Maggie's Cancer Support Centre, in the grounds of The Christie Hospital in Manchester (2018). The exhibition at the Whitworth, part of The University of Manchester, will be the first time the portrait series has been shown in its entirety.

As someone whose art practice focuses on the human face, Burscough is interested in what happens when someone experiences cancer and surgery that alters his or her appearance. If the face changes, how does that affect one's sense of self? Her subjects speak of being acutely aware of the gaze of others, in the street or at their work, and they recognise that people's eyes can naturally be drawn to people whose faces are unusual. Becoming the subject of a portrait under these circumstances is an empowering act of defiance, and welcoming people to look at one's face, scars and all, is an invitation to acknowledge a shared humanity and triumph over this indiscriminate illness.

When one takes on the role of 'patient' or 'cancer survivor', and facets of our identity that we hold dear: jobs, hobbies or social activities, may fade into the background, our sense of who we are can take a knock. The artworks chosen from the Whitworth's collection by the subjects to be displayed alongside their portraits, have been selected to reflect their wider identities and illustrate cherished aspects of who they are.

The selection of artworks from the Whitworth's collections of fine art, textiles and wallpapers, reveal the eclectic tastes and multi-faceted personalities of the *Facing Out* participants. From a highly collectable wallpaper showing the fab four, to dramatic mountainous landscapes by JMW Turner and tranquil Japanese woodcuts by Uttagawa Hiroshige. Other pieces have been chosen for deeply personal and poignant reasons, for

example, a fabric piece by artist Matthew Harris, that draws on the traditional Japanese aesthetic of *wabi-sabi* (a worldview centred on in the imperfect, the asymmetrical and the transient). Chosen by Nigel Caldwell, this work with its stitches and sutures- was a reminder for him of the scars left by reconstructive surgery. For Nigel, there is a certain grace in accepting the *wabi-sabi* philosophy of finding beauty in imperfection. A work by Belgian artist Martha Grunenwaldt, an artist who captured music she was forbidden from playing as a household servant into vibrant swirling paintings, has been chosen by Bernard Corri, who lost his sight following cancer treatment. For Bernard, this painting expressed how he now experiences hyper-vivid dreams or, as he calls it, ‘an IMAX cinema in my head.’

An audio guide with contributions from the *Facing Out* participants talking about their experiences and reasons behind their selection from the collection will be made available within the exhibition. It can also be downloaded from the gallery’s soundcloud (follow link on the exhibition’s webpage).

### **Further information**

Head and neck cancer is the eighth most common cancer in the UK, and accounts for approximately 3% of all new cases of cancer. There are approximately 12,000 new cases annually. There is a gender difference: in men, it is the fourth most common cancer in the UK, while in women it is the thirteenth most common cancer in the UK.

Head and neck cancers include cancers of the mouth and the throat, as well as some rarer cancers. These include cancer of the sinuses (air spaces in the bones of the face), the salivary glands, or the nose or middle ear. Mouth cancer can develop on the lip, tongue, or anywhere inside the mouth. The most common places are the side of the tongue or floor of the mouth.<sup>1</sup>

As the Head and Neck Cancer Foundation states – “Treatment for head and neck cancers is still largely based on invasive surgery. What makes head and neck cancers different are the facial scars and life-changing impact surgery can have on the vital functions of breathing, swallowing and speech. Current standard surgical procedures also impact the senses of sight, hearing, taste and smell.”

The face is the only part of our body we cannot hide. Famously described as the ‘mirror of the mind’, the face is believed to convey our innermost feelings and thoughts. People are often judged on the basis of facial appearance; with others making assumptions on a whole range of visual signifiers and facial cues as to a person’s mood or character. Not only do we use our face to look out at the world, but we are also perceived through it. That is why disfigurement to this area of the body can be disruptive to our sense of self and to how others perceive us.

---

<sup>1</sup> Macmillan Cancer. *Types of head and neck cancer*. [www.macmillan.org.uk/information-and-support/head-and-neck-cancers/understanding-cancer/types-head-neck-cancer.html](http://www.macmillan.org.uk/information-and-support/head-and-neck-cancers/understanding-cancer/types-head-neck-cancer.html) (accessed 28 February 2018).

Recent years have seen increased campaigning and lobbying to change prejudiced attitudes and unjust treatment of people with disfigurements or visible differences. In 2017, the charity *Changing Faces* published a damning report called *Disfigurement in the UK*, which highlighted the way in which British society needs to urgently address the way in which it treats people who look different; many of whom experience inequality and discrimination. Their findings showed that 67% of adults in the UK attach less positive attributes and characteristics to people who have a disfigurement, showing that disfigurement prejudice is still far higher than prejudice based on ethnicity or gender (*Disfigurement in the UK*, 2017, p9).

The Whitworth believes that museums and galleries can, and should, play a role in shaping and framing wider societal conversations about disability and difference. There has historically been limited representation of visible difference, especially disability and disfigurement, in art shown in museums and galleries. Reasons for this include the frequent emphasis in art on beauty, symmetry and proportion. *Facing Out* seeks to address the cultural invisibility of people with facial disfigurement in the canon of art history, which is played out in our public museum collections and on our gallery walls. The sitters in the *Facing Out* portraits defiantly return the gaze, promoting acceptance of diversity of appearance, and encouraging exhibition visitors to consider their appearance-related stereotypes.

### Notes for editors

**Preferred terminology (disfigurement and visible difference):** In this exhibition, we have used the terms disfigurement and visible difference interchangeably. The term 'disfigurement' has been chosen after consultation with the participants and staff working for our charity partner -the Maggie's Cancer Centre. While we recognise that some visitors may dislike the use of the word 'disfigurement' to describe a condition, mark or scar that affects someone's appearance, we have decided to use this term because it is preferred by the *Facing Out* participants. In addition, the term is one used in the Equality Act 2010, the key legislation that protects people from discrimination. The charity Changing Faces uses the word primarily as a noun but avoids it as an adjective (i.e. a 'person with/who has a disfigurement' rather than 'a disfigured person'). The term 'visible difference' has also been used as synonymous with the term disfigurement in some cases.

**About the Maggie's Centre:** Maggie's provides free practical, emotional and social support to people with cancer and their family and friends, following the ideas about cancer care originally laid out by Maggie Keswick Jencks. Built in the grounds of NHS cancer hospitals, Maggie's Centres are places with professional staff on hand to offer the support people need. The centres are places to find practical advice about benefits and eating well, places to access qualified experts who can provide emotional support, places to meet other people, and places where you can simply sit quietly with a cup of tea.

Maggie's Manchester, which opened in April 2016, was designed by Norman Foster, one of Britain's most respected architects. It is just a short stroll from The Christie NHS Hospital, and offers a 'home from home' in a therapeutic space flooded with natural light and surrounded by beautiful and peaceful gardens designed by award-winning landscape designer Dan Pearson.

Anyone with experience of cancer or caring for someone with a cancer diagnosis can drop into Maggie's for practical, emotional and social support from professional staff at any time from 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday.

### **Address and contact details**

Maggie's Manchester  
The Robert Parfett Building  
15 Kinnaird Road  
Manchester  
M20 4QL

Tel: 0161 641 4848

[manchester@maggiescentres.org](mailto:manchester@maggiescentres.org)

### **About the Whitworth**

The Whitworth is part of The University of Manchester. It is home to internationally renowned collections of modern art, wallpaper, textiles, watercolours, prints, drawings and sculpture. Created in 1889 as the first English gallery in a park, the Whitworth has developed a new vision for the role of a university gallery. A creative laboratory within an ambitious university, the Whitworth is a place where good, unusual things happen. The Whitworth re-opened to the public on 14 February 2015 after a major £17 million redevelopment by architects MUMA. The Whitworth has welcomed over one million visitors since re-opening, and more than doubled its previous annual records. The redevelopment has doubled public space and created state-of-the-art new facilities including expanded gallery spaces, a study centre, learning studio, and a collections centre. The gallery was crowned Art Fund Museum of Year 2015, nominated for the prestigious Stirling Prize and named Best Emerging Cultural Destination in Europe.

[www.manchester.ac.uk/whitworth](http://www.manchester.ac.uk/whitworth)

### **Highlights from the public programme include:**

All events are free. Booking essential: <https://tinyurl.com/facingoutevents>

### **Workshops**

Printmaking

Tuesday 26 February, 2-4pm Tuesday 21 May, 2-4pm

Meet the artist Lucy Burscough for a tour of the exhibition and printmaking workshop.

Mindfulness

Tuesday 23 April, 2.15–3.15pm

For people who have experienced cancer, and/or their families in our Art Garden.

Creative writing  
Thursday 9 May, 3-5pm  
For people who have experienced cancer, and/or their families.

### Performances

Writing for healing  
Thursday 9 May, 6-7pm  
A night of readings and poetry from Maggies Manchester poets, Graeme Heward and special guest.

### Talks and Tours

Facing Out panel discussion  
Thursday 18 April, 7-8.30pm  
Gallery 5  
Explore facial cancers and disfigurement from the point of view of patient, surgeon, social scientist, cancer support specialist and artist.

Audio described exhibition tours  
Tuesday 12 March, 10.30-11.30am Tuesday 14 May, 10.30-11.30am  
For blind and sight impaired visitors and their families.

### Film Screenings

WONDER (2017) Wednesday 10 April, 2-4pm Meeting room one, drop in.  
Based on the New York Times bestseller, WONDER tells the inspiring and heart- warming story of August Pullman, a boy with facial differences. This film screening is aimed at families.  
Courtesy Lionsgate Films.

Loving Vincent (2017) Thursday 14 March, 6-8.30pm Study Centre  
An animated homage to Van Gogh, created from 65,000 oil paintings. With special Q&A with film artists. Film chosen by *Facing Out* participant Bernard Corri.  
Courtesy BreakThru Films

**For further information:** please contact: Joanne Hitchen, Cultural Communications Coordinator. The Whitworth, The University of Manchester.

Email: [joanne.hitchen@manchester.ac.uk](mailto:joanne.hitchen@manchester.ac.uk)

Phone: 0161 275 7472

In partnership with Maggie's Centre, Manchester. Funded by Arts Council England



Supported using public funding by  
**ARTS COUNCIL ENGLAND**

