

In my most ambitious piece to date at the Old Market Gallery, Rotherham in September of 2015, with the help of the Arts Council and a London Patron, I exhibited "Exposure - The Broken Reality Tunnel of BDD".

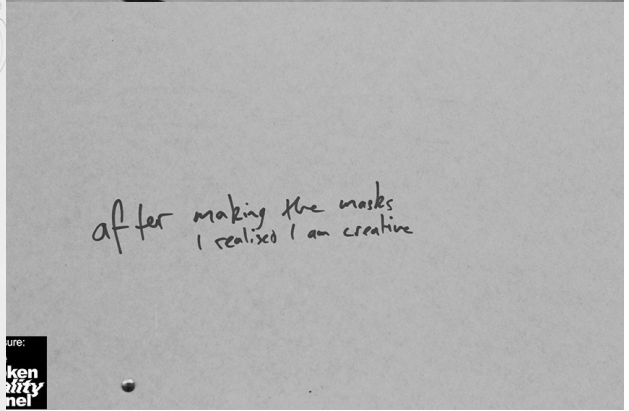
An immersive installation consisting of two video viewing rooms conjoined by dark maze like passages providing visitors with a multi-sensory experience to create something original and unexpected.

The project is complete and achieved the following highlights:

- The youth engagement campaign involved 7 separate groups of 110 young people with over 80 hours of engagement.
- Reached Audience (broadcast, online, in writing) is currently up to +/- 11,092,741

\* This number is taken from the various websites statistics 'daily average visits'. I only counted the one day as this was the day my story was the most visible either on their homepage or live on their radio show. I have not calculated the monthly reach which would obviously increase the number remarkably.

- Publications include Dazed & Confused Online, The Daily Mail Online, The Metro Online, The Sun Online, Foxnews.com, Redbookmag.com, BBC Radio Sheffield and the official website mybrokenreality.com
- Official project trailer on Youtube received 73 500 views and counting
- The story has been translated and broadcast by news websites in France, Portugal, Germany, Iceland, Israel, Greece, Turkey, Serbia, Vietnam, Indonesia, Japan, Russia, Ukraine, Latvia, Unites States, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Armenia, Lithuania, Belarus, Moldova, Canada, Finland, Poland, Italy, Switzerland, Netherlands, Australia, Austria, Chile, Ireland and counting...
- Further online engagement included 1029 story shares / 90 story comments / 1000 comment likes



exposure:  
the broken  
reality  
tunnel

ure:  
ken  
ity  
nel

# **PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT**

## **YOUTH ENGAGEMENT CAMPAIGN**

*"There are no viewers - only participants" Allan Kaprow.*

The success of the delivery of the piece was centred around the public engagement and youth outreach program and this was developed and delivered through participation, dialogue, provocation and the immersive experience.

As a pre-emptive to the youth outreach program and the workshops, in order to introduce myself and the subject matter, I performed introductory sessions in the community working with Dangerous Art School, Thurcroft Youth Club and R.U.S.H House Rotherham.

From 21st-25th September, the installation was open to invited groups of young people from Rotherham. The campaign involved 6 separate groups comprising of 110 young people with over 80 hours worth of engagement.

Youth Groups included: Thurcroft Youth Centre, R.C.A.T Rotherham, Myplace Rotherham, Youth Services Rotherham, R.U.S.H House Rotherham (Homeless Rotherham Youth).

Besides the R.C.A.T group most of the young people had very little exposure to artists, art and or a high quality art exhibitions within a gallery. The experience created a bridge for a closer relationship with the arts, creating new ways for them to take part and making a high- quality experience more likely in the future.

Upon arriving at the gallery I would start the session off with a brief education around BDD, a discussions around my art practise and the background of how and why I had created the material and then open dialogue around the subject matter of "self image, self worth, body image and awareness of these subjects".

The groups were then navigated around the installation after which I opened up the dialogue again with a Q&A.

This involved thinking about and discussing the installation, their feeling and thoughts around the piece, their perceptions and image they had of themselves, the amount of time they spent thinking about their appearance and their general emotions. This created an arena of open curiosity and reflective self-questioning.

It also opened up discussions around people with actual abnormalities / deformities, how in our society we are not given any guidance on how to deal with difference, how acceptance of difference is so marginalised they were confronted with the recognition of the existence of such behaviour in our society.

It was striking that while the piece reflected (and reproduced) different fields of emotion and tensions, it did so in most instances with an exceptional spirit of empathy, generosity, measurable in terms of an open curiosity and reflective self- questioning. Quite a number of young people came out of the piece crying.

It enabled them to envisage how things might be different in their own lives and to see things from a new perspective. The idea being that we need to imagine things differently in order to break the established order and to allow the possibility of new connections and ideas.

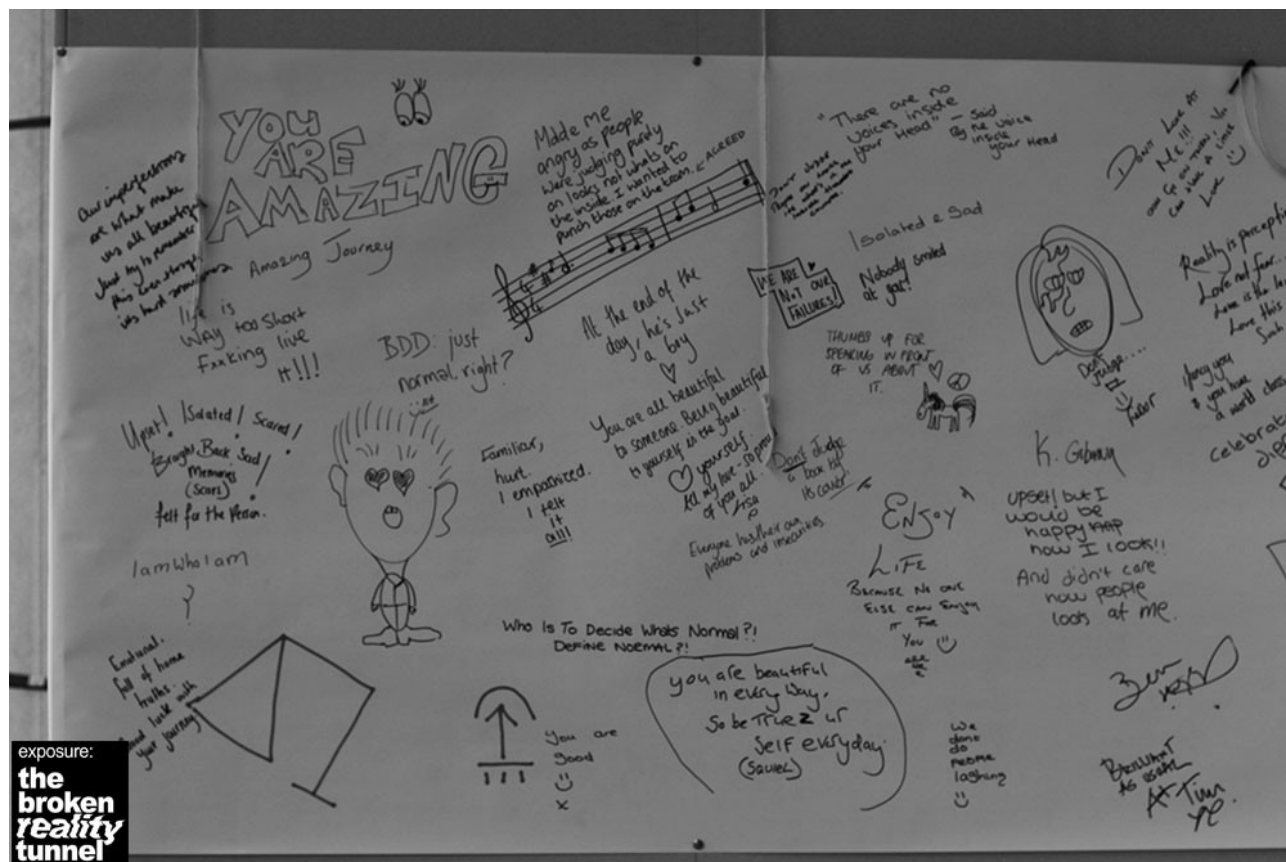
There is something inherently 'reparative' in such a stance in the sense that it tends to repair or heal. Its suggestion of concern in allowing others to reveal themselves, rather than imposing views of how they should be, can go a long way to offset the friction involved in any confrontation.

The Q&A was followed by a workshop where each individual was given the opportunity, using simple and safe materials, to design and create their own mask. They were symbolic of their own struggles - the masks they might wear in everyday life engaging them in a creative and meaningful way. The mask were then hung on the wall and became part of the installation.





On exiting the gallery the young people were encouraged to write their thoughts and feelings on the exterior walls of the installation creating a performative and dialogic situation between the viewer and art works, by requiring input from them and involving them in this way they become an integral part of the piece.



after making the masks  
i realised i am creative

Follow links for full images of each groups visit

- [ <http://mybrokenreality.com/news/2015/9/29/youth-outreach-campaign-rush-house-rotherham>
- [ <http://mybrokenreality.com/news/2015/9/29/youth-outreach-campaign-myplace-rotherham>
- [ <http://mybrokenreality.com/news/2015/9/24/youth-outreach-campaign-rca-rotherham-group-2>
- [ <http://mybrokenreality.com/news/2015/9/24/youth-outreach-campaign-rca-rotherham-group-1>
- [ <http://mybrokenreality.com/news/2015/9/24/youth-outreach-program-thurcroft-youth-group>

## CASE STUDY

I met James (18) at the Thurcroft Youth Centre, on my 1st encounter with him he didn't show any interest in the session, obviously very aware of his peer group. After going through the installation and doing the workshop he was at ease and opened up to me about the profound impact the piece had had on him. He told me how he had been hanging around with boys that bully people that are different and after seeing the piece he had decided not to spend time with them anymore.

Hi Matt,

Rush House staff and IYSS worker Marcus Hurcombe proudly supported a group of 12 young people to attend the preview of Leigh De Vries work My Broken Reality – The Broken Reality Tunnel. This has come off the back of some intense liaison with Leigh and has seen her visit Rush House and engage young people in discussion around the issue of Body Dysmorphic Disorder. The young people experienced the broken reality tunnel before taking some time to create a mask to represent themselves, their struggles or how they feel they are perceived by others. We were incredibly proud of all who attended and they represented Rush House with great aplomb. We hope this will be the start of a great working partnership with Leigh and are thrilled to have her on board.

Lisa

***Lisa Rachieru – Service Manager***

**Rush House Ltd**

18 19 Lindum Terrace

Doncaster Road

Rotherham S65 1NJ

## THE EXHIBITION

On Saturday the 26th September the installation was open to the public. The audience were a genuine mix of people, a group of my audience from London that I have built up over the years travelled to Rotherham for the day to view the piece, plus a generous turn out from the local Rotherham art scene and a group of random people off the street - making a good crowd many of whom had never seen an installation before.

The audience read the information boards on the outside, walked through the installation and then engaged with the piece by reading the dialogue that had been captured by the youth engagement campaign. They were then encouraged to add their own thoughts, feelings or drawings on the exterior of the build.

I was available for any questions, real-time person-to-person exchange as part of the experience. This created the opportunity for local Rotherham people to participate in high quality, exciting art and experience its excellence bringing them into a closer relationship with the arts and creating new ways for them to take part.

It was astonishing the immense amount of emotion and empathy that was experienced by the audience. The innovative use of sensory deprivation in the blacked out passages and the emotive film played a powerful role in evoking, shaping, and modifying their feelings. Art is a great leveller and an artistic process seems to offer people ways into relating ideas that other modes of engagement don't do so well.

## **ARTISTIC QUALITY**

With the use of sensory deprivation in the darkened out maze like passages, married with the stark black and white video footage and enveloping soundscape, the installation simultaneously deprived and overloaded the audiences senses. Inviting reflection and serving as a sort of right of passage for many of the audience allowing them an opportunity to transcend their identities and experience themselves differently, amplifying their own situation and experiences back to them.

It elicited a very strong emotional response from the audience, it engaged and provoked and above all, it reflected and shaped a sense of participation, social inclusion and awareness creating a ripple effect of benefits felt throughout the community in Rotherham.

A key driver to the success of the project was that it was driven by the youth outreach program which involved 7 separate groups of 110 young people with over 80 hours of engagement.

The piece provided an environment where young people felt free to share their experiences, confident that other participants will be able to empathise and relate to the challenges they face.

Benefits reported from the project included:

“provided art as a healer, increased people’s self-awareness and the awareness of others, contributed to the education around the disorder BDD, increased people’s awareness around what it is like to live with a disfigurement, exposed people to high quality art experiences and allowed people to open up communication around self-image, self-worth and body-image”

The website for the project was very successful and became the main channel broadcasting out to the world on a daily basis with images, news stories, quotes, posters and commentary from the installation. The posts were then uploaded to the various social media channels. The website received over 2,686 avg visits and 6,791 avg page views in the last 2 months.

See website here -

<http://mybrokenreality.com>

I worked with Falk Klemm on the graphic design & online aesthetic development with some hard hitting posters and social media posts. Which again were incredibly successful. I received favourable comments from brand designers as far as Los Angeles, USA praising the campaigns.

See Posters here -

<http://mybrokenreality.com/s/mybrokenreality-artwork.zip>

We invited several key people from London to Rotherham one of whom was a contributing editor for the magazine Dazed & Confused. It was this article that then sparked the tabloid online news channels to jump on the story which resulted in the audience (online) reaching +/- 11,092,741

\* This number is taken from the various websites statistics 'daily average visits'. I only counted the one day as this was the day my story was the most visible either on their homepage or live on their radio show. I have not calculated the monthly reach which would obviously increase the number remarkably.

## **CASE STUDY**

A young Rotherham family consisting of a father his young son and daughter randomly came into the gallery off the street. After going through the piece the young boy opened up to his dad about his own anger issues. He returned the next morning at 8am with his little brother to show him the piece.

### **Youth Program Comment:**

*“Going through the installation and doing the workshop made me realise that I am creative and able to express myself through art. It has expanded my appreciation of the art world and made me feel freer to express myself without judging myself.”* (Exposure Workshop Participant)

## PUBLICITY



Dazed & Confused sent a journalist from London to cover the piece, this was published on their site Dazed Digital on the 2nd of October.

This led to mainstream tabloid outlets jumping on the piece and broadcasting it on their channels on the 6th October.

Publications include Dazed & Confused Online, Vice Online, The Daily Mail Online, The Metro Online, The Sun Online, Foxnews.com, Redbookmag.com, BBC Radio Sheffield and the official website mybrokenreality.com

Press: Dazed & Confused

<http://www.dazeddigital.com/artsandculture/article/26772/1/what-s-it-really-like-living-with-body-dysmorphic-disorder>

Press: Daily Mail

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/femail/article-3261619/Woman-convicted-facial-tumour-doesn-t-exist-creates-prosthetic-thinks-looks-films-public-s-reaction-wears-it.html>

Press: Metro

<http://metro.co.uk/2015/10/05/artist-with-body-dysmorphic-disorder-sees-herself-with-a-face-tumour-that-doesnt-exist-5422027/>

Press: The Sun

<http://www.thesun.co.uk/sol/homepage/features/6677761/Woman-with-body-dysmorphia-sees-tumour-on-face-that-isnt-there.html>

Press: Foxnews

<http://www.foxnews.com/health/2015/10/06/disorder-causes-woman-to-perceive-facial-tumor-that-isnt-really-there/>

This increased my projected online reach of 2000 to +/- 11,092,741

\* This number is taken from the various websites statistics 'daily average visits'. I only counted the one day as this was the day my story was the most visible either on their homepage or live on their radio show. I have not calculated the monthly reach which would obviously increase the number remarkably. √  
Official project trailer on Youtube received 73 500 views



As a result of this mainstream press online news channels in several different countries have run the story including France, Portugal, Germany, Iceland, Israel, Greece, Turkey, Serbia, Vietnam, Indonesia, Japan, Russia, Ukraine, Latvia, Unites States, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Armenia, Lithuania, Belarus, Moldova, Canada, Finland, Poland, Italy, Switzerland, Netherlands, Australia, Austria, Chile, Ireland and counting...

Further online engagement included 1029 story shares / 90 story comments / 1000 comment likes

Official project trailer on Youtube has currently received 73 500 views

On the 18th September I was interviewed by BBC Radio Sheffield's Paulette Edwards.

Listen here -

<http://mybrokenreality.com/news/2015/9/18/bbc-radio-sheffield-interview>

Paulette requested I did a follow up interview with was conducted on the 29th October.

Listen here

<http://mybrokenreality.com/news/2015/10/29/bbc-radio-sheffield-interview>

I received an invitation from CBS to fly out to Los Angeles, USA to appear on an Emmy award winning US medical daytime talk show 'The Doctors' ([www.thedoctorstv.com](http://www.thedoctorstv.com)) to talk about the project. These discussions are ongoing.

Name: Marissa Rodriguez

Email Address: [marissa.rodriguez@cbs.com](mailto:marissa.rodriguez@cbs.com)

Subject: CBS- The Doctors TV Show

Message: Hello,

My name is Marissa and I am a producer over at the Emmy winning US medical daytime talk show The Doctors ([www.thedoctorstv.com](http://www.thedoctorstv.com)). We are interested in featuring your campaign on an upcoming show taping NEXT Thursday October 15th. Please contact me at (323) 956-8290 or via email.

Best,  
Marissa

Through the website i have received a number of correspondence from the general public telling me their stories and requesting if the piece will be exhibited in the cities and thanking me for the work I am doing.

New comment from **Cristina Schulz** on **My Broken Reality**:

My 21 year old son suffers of BDD for years now. He is medicated with antidepressants and he suffers of social phobia. He's locked in his bedroom with his computer. Only this year he has been able to go to college twice a week but sometimes he comes back very anguished with a lot of anxiety. He is very handsome as you are beautiful and when I tell him so he says, you and everybody else say that because you feel sorry for me. Thanks for putting up this site. I live in Buenos Aires, Argentina and we do not have a lot of info here. God bless you. I will be following you.

Sent via *Exposure: The Broken Reality Tunnel - Body Dysmorphic Disorder - BDD - Leigh de Vries*