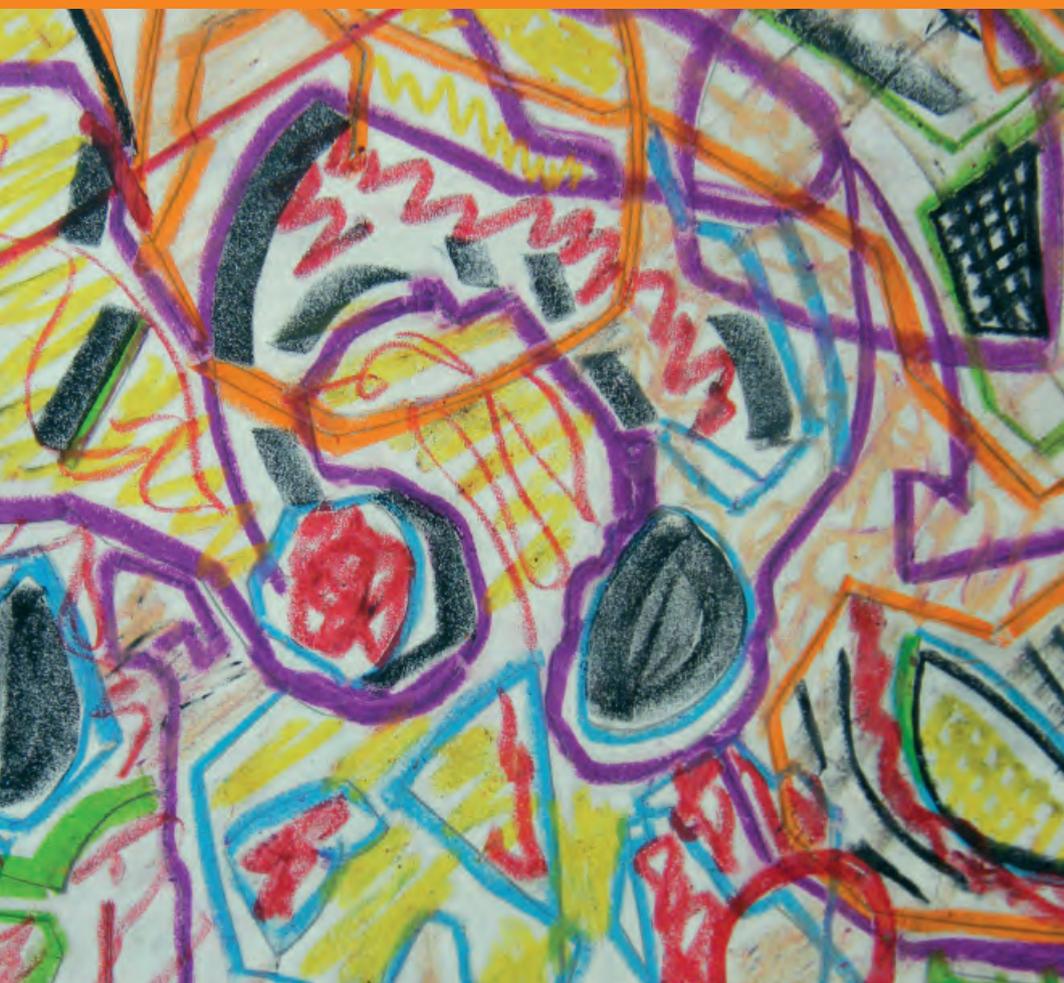


Connect

News for our Tenants and Service Users

AUGUST 2010



Features:

Wilton Villas - An Artist in Residence

Robert Omer 1971 - 2010

Gary Ryan - My Life since St Martins

Welcome

Welcome to the Summer edition of Connect and I hope you have been enjoying the fabulous summer.



I have been re-reading the last three issues of Connect covering the past year and have been struck by the quality and breadth of contributions from residents.

Robert Hutton's review of a Neil Young concert, Rocky Blackwood's review of the British Music Experience at the O2 centre and Angela Rickwood's poems have been particular favourites. Please keep your contributions coming; they give Connect an added dimension and other residents and staff want to hear about your experiences and what you have been doing.

Our AGM will be held this year on 30th September in the Crescent Suite on Ronalds Rd, N5. Acting on your feedback from last year, we have decided to completely change the format of the AGM and make it more accessible and relevant. It will be a more interactive event and I promise, no long speeches from the podium. Instead residents will be putting on a fashion show, playing music and reading poetry. Residents will be at the centre of the AGM, so please show your support and come along on the 30th. If you would like to perform at the AGM please contact Simon Julien.

John Thompson Chief Executive

Tel: 020 7704 3820 Email: JohnT@stmartinoftours.org.uk

Any Budding Gardeners?

For some time residents have been volunteering to improve the gardens at Davenant Road and in Wilton Square.

Anyone who is interested in developing their participation in this can now enrol on a free NVQ in amenity horticulture – the technical term for the care and planting of flowerbeds, trees, shrubs, lawns etc. You never know – it could lead to a new career!

If you want to find out more just talk to your keyworker or Simon Julien, the Activities Co-ordinator.



Hello People!



I'm Simon Julien, St Martins' Activities Co-ordinator; some people also call me the Social Inclusion Officer and last week I was called The Events Officer! I don't really mind what you call me so long as you all know who I am and that I can help you develop your hobbies and interests, visit interesting places, learn new things and even get a job!

I believe life should be fun, and never take it too seriously; after all, life is for living. I also believe I have the best job in the world so I will share with you what I do and hope I can persuade you to come and join me.

On a more serious note my role is all about providing you with opportunities to get out there and take advantage of everything that London has to offer. Recent things I have done with residents include attending Sadler's Wells Theatre to see some really great dance, visiting the Hindu Temple in Neasden, going on a narrowboat trip along London's canal network, gardening, going go-carting and taking a clipper ride on the Thames. We have been on numerous trips over the past year including to museums, galleries, seaside resorts and zoos; the list is huge!

I also focus on helping residents get access to work, education and training. A number of residents have undertaken training for work and gained contracts in things like building. I have built up a lot of local knowledge and local contacts, so whatever you want to do, I'm your man, and if I don't know I am sure I know a man or woman who does.

New activities coming up include a camping expedition. You might have ideas of your own for activities or visits - just let me know and we can try to make it happen!

Feel free to grab me when you see me where you live, or just ask your key worker to get in touch!



Art in the Community

- a resident artist at Wilton Villas

During May and June, St Martins commissioned the artist Dan Locke to work with residents of Wilton Villas and New North Road in the creation of a very special piece of art.

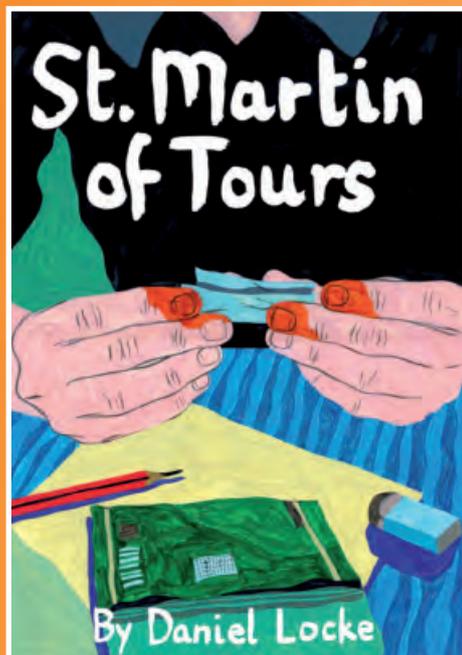
This work, part of the Islington Exhibits project, was completed with the participation of several Wilton Villas residents including Isaac Batchelor, Abdi Jamac and Robert Hutton. It was published as a comic book-style newspaper and given away free to the general public in Islington.

Dan's aim in producing his work was to provide art workshops for residents and, over the course of his residency at Wilton Villas, to develop a graphic "story", taking as material the contributions of the residents he was working with.

Everyone has been very pleased with the results of Dan's work and Dan himself really enjoyed the experience of working with residents;

"the guys were a little shy at first but eventually everyone was contributing and I hope they are now encouraged to carry on expressing themselves through art in the future. I certainly got some fantastic insights into their lives and their hopes and fears and feel very privileged to have been given the opportunity to undertake this residency."

Copies of Dan's published work are still available in projects and from St Martins Head Office for anyone who would like a copy. Also, extracts from the work, along with some extra drawings Dan has done, will feature in this year's annual report as well as being exhibited at the AGM in September.



Robert Omer 1971 - 2010



At the end of July Robert, who was a resident at Davenant Road, died very suddenly. Robert had been keen to have his artwork seen by other people and had worked hard developing an article for Connect.

In tribute to Robert, the article and artwork is published here exactly as he had planned it.



Robert Omer, in talking about his art and his mental health, is very open about his schizophrenia. Initially, he says, he did not feel ill and so had a difficult time accepting the diagnosis. It was during this period that he discovered art;

"I found it had a calming influence on me and helped me to clear my mind," says Robert, "I first started drawing in hospital almost 15 years ago and at that time had fairly limited resources; mainly red, black and blue ball point pens!"

Robert's work has developed over the years, incorporating different media and certainly growing in size. Some of Robert's intricate abstract expressionist pieces, most often created using coloured pencils and crayons, are A3 size.

Over the years, Robert has accepted his schizophrenia and recognises that there is a lot of help available; "if people are in the same situation as I was and have taken the wrong road in different areas of their lives then there is help out there".

Robert's artwork is often inspired by his own experience of mental illness;

"I started to see my diagnosis in some ways as a gift - many of my drawings are inspired by visions and thoughts I have had that I know were part of my illness. The mental images which inspire my drawings are very clear and so, despite their complexity, I can produce work quite quickly. The drawings I create are uniquely mine as a result - no-one else does it like me. I like to incorporate a kind of Egyptian geometric style into my work - but obviously, as interpreted by an Englishman.

I do find that art is a very positive influence in my life and I like to give my pieces as presents to family and friends. One day I would like to exhibit in a gallery."

Some prints of Robert Omer's drawings will be on display at this year's St Martins Annual General Meeting (AGM) on 30th September. Further details of the AGM can be found elsewhere in this edition of Connect.

"I feel good - mentally, spiritually and physically: my life since St Martins"



Gary Ryan

"My name is Gary Ryan and this is my recent story - for those of you interested in what happens when people move on!

Having been at Chase Farm Hospital for 18 months I moved into Wilton Villas. St Martins was able to help me focus on my singing and on moving on in my life; my keyworker helped me to stay focused on my goals.

Whilst living at Wilton Villas I was able to attend both Hanley Road Education Centre and the Lambo Centre. At Hanley Road I gained my Certificate in Attendance in Gardening and Maintenance and did a basic IT course. Whilst at the Lambo Centre I was lead vocalist for the band and this was where I started to see my long term future as being in the music industry.



I've been out of Wilton Villas and in my own flat for 18 months now and continue to be active in my life. I work at the Clerkwell Project and St George's House where I maintain the gardens. I still attend Hanley Road where I am now doing an unpaid work placement helping other residents. I also work as a lecturer, teaching nurses from Middlesex Hospital restraining techniques. I do this every 3 months or so and now travel county-wide.

I feel good, mentally, spiritually and physically. I feel that my mental state is much improved now and this has allowed me to feel confident enough to go on holiday to Jamaica and Ethiopia in the last 12 months."

Gary's enthusiasm to help himself, and pass his knowledge and skills on to others, led him to be nominated in 2009 for the Linda Polan Memorial Award for outstanding contribution by a service user. Gary won and has put the £250 prize money to good use by buying some studio time for his new record.