

AUTITUDE!



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

WELCOME!

Welcome to the third issue of Autitude in 2022!

Do you have artwork, photography, poetry or stories you would like to share? Or perhaps you have an autistic idol that you think should feature as our Spectrum Superstar?

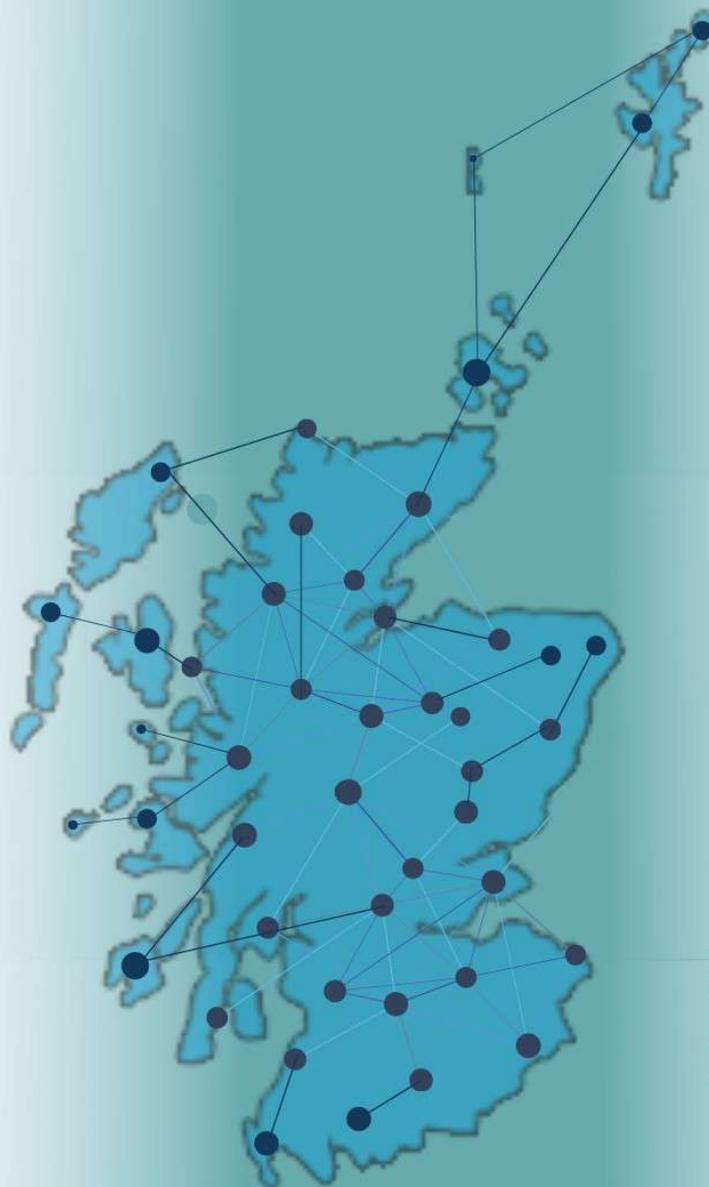
Whether it's a thought, suggestion or submission, send it to us at autitude@scottishautism.org.

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

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Scottish
autism
WHERE AUTISTIC PEOPLE
ARE VALUED

Book your place for Click & Connect Block 5 taking place from April to June!

These online events aim to help the autistic community and families in Scotland to stay connected. All group sessions run via Zoom and are free to join.

Mindfulness Community Programme

**Following the successful Mindfulness programme in 2020, Jonny Drury will deliver Dialogica's new 10-week programme and will take Mindfulness activities to the next level. The programme will place more emphasis on practice and support the creation of a community of mostly autistic mindfulness practitioners. The group will take place every Tuesday morning* from 19th April until 21st June, 10am - 11am.
*excluding 17th May.**

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WHERE AUTISTIC PEOPLE
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Online Art Group

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.

Join our online Art Group taking place every Wednesday from 20th April until 22nd June, 5pm - 6.30pm.

Virtual Choir Group

If you're a music lover who enjoys singing, come along & share music with others in a fun, no pressure environment. This group is for autistic people and their families in Scotland, and all ages and abilities are welcome!

Join our Virtual Choir group taking place every Thursday evening from 21st April until 9th June, 5pm - 6pm.

Autism Support Group

Come along to our 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* 21st April until 23rd June, 1pm - 2.30pm.

***excluding 12th May.**

**Don't miss out, find out more and book your place now:
www.scottishautism.org/click-and-connect**

We are delighted to announce that bookings are now open for our Online Conference, 'Behind the Mask', on 12th May!

Scottish
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WHERE AUTISTIC PEOPLE
ARE VALUED

Scottish Autism
Online Conference
Thursday 12th May 2022



This virtual conference aims to understand the pressures, stresses and consequences that autistic people feel “fitting in”, and in accessing support. We will explore the ways that professionals can recognise the lived experience of autistic people; change practitioner behaviour to better accommodate autistic needs; and create safe spaces where autistic people can be themselves.

We will ask how professionals and those they support can exchange perspectives through meaningful dialogue, promote respectful interactions and relations, and create a more positive experience of services and society more widely.

Pay What You Can Scheme

Open to autistic people and their families*

*Spaces are limited



We are striving to make our conference as accessible and inclusive as possible.

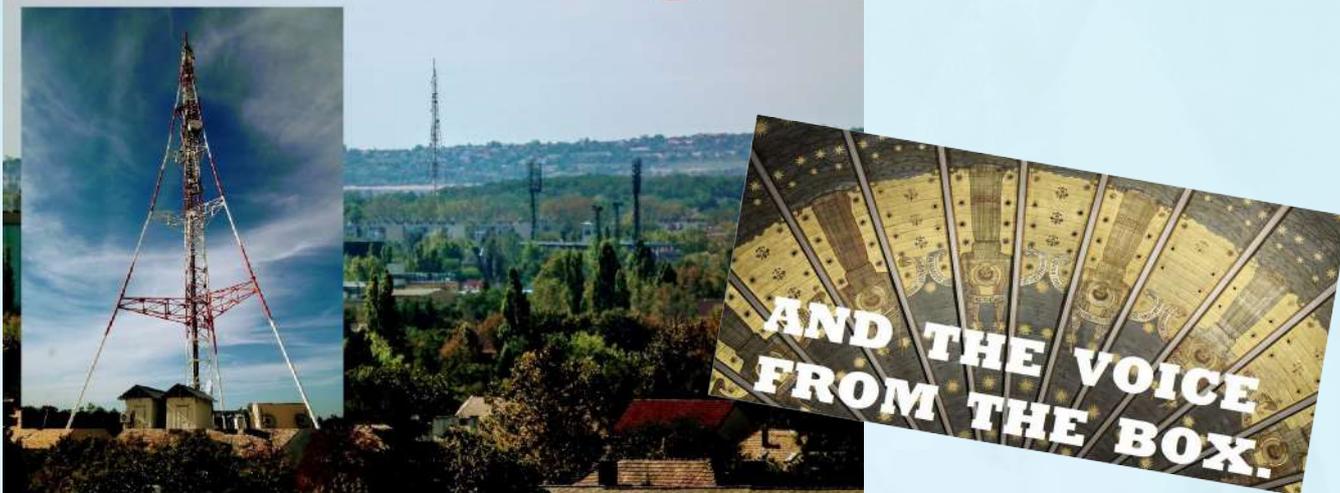
Our Pay What You Can is a pilot scheme open to autistic people and their families to access the conference.

Please note, places are limited.

To find out more and book, please visit

www.scottishautismconference.org

Letters to Angels



This is what the red and white radio tower of Maroshegy ('Maros Hill') looked like in the 1990s and very early 2000s, on the outskirts of Székesfehérvár, Hungary. This little former-village, where I spent my first years of working in community development after college, was full of trees, football pitches - and a real pride in broadcasting. The two radio towers were such a part of those epic pink, blue and orange sunsets over the plains... And of our collective imagination about times past.

Dear Stepdad Misi,

How Tim Marshall writes in his 2015 book *Prisoners of Geography*: "The landscape imprisons their leaders" - these days I often wonder myself, how much I may happen to be imprisoned, mentally speaking, by the cultural texture of my upbringing, or worse: by too much change. I remember how you always insisted that I take my English classes and homework seriously. Well, here is to you! I enjoy every minute of it, and the gift of a second language that doesn't frighten me with fifteen variants for the same word, having to quickly choose the one that fits the social situation the most. Phew! On the other hand, there is no day passing by without me feeling this intense joy within, about holding my mother-tongue close, well under my skin (in your opinion, is that a weird anatomical scenario?) and enjoying its richness without consequences. Playing with words. Forming sentences of love and endearment in Hungarian, in my head, gently speaking it when I'm alone. Or to the dog who looks at me like he had just the right dictionary in paw... What a strange island I am.

A mostly content and always grateful one, though. When your memory floats near me in a boat of recalling old afternoons... you phoning me from the hospital in your break to ask me about my day... my semi-busy island fills with warmth and with knowing Us. I always wondered, with my battered child's heart, what you, the Europe-wide appreciated medical professor saw in me at all. But you always let me know that you saw everything in me, and the future. My English is more than fluent now; I speak, speculate, work, learn, I long and dream in that way. Am I imprisoned in it or am I breaking free from anything that used to hold me back?... This I wonder often, now that war is just one border away from Hungary and as the continent under my feet sends soldiers to the same area. Where am I, actually? Whose am I more? Scotland has become part of my blood cells. But the life-sustaining blood itself; does that need a home, or a label too? As it flows from organ to organ, country to country...

I know I was and am a part of you, just as you are a main story in that book of Me. I'm sorry mother kicked you out and that by the time I was liberated enough to seek you out on my own - you were gone in the most painful way from all the rest of my chapters. So typical of you, that you spoke at a conference just weeks before you died. Have I ever told you that I did not perceive you as old as you were? You were *timeless* to me, Misi. Just as my roots are shaping up to become timeless, gradually. One day, I will be only a line people can click on in a directory of immigration records prior to 2050. Yet, hopefully one with a legacy. What you told me about using my voice with confidence, once my knowledge about the world solidified is my reality these days. I can write and record to my heart's content, how wonderful. That dream of speaking to the many is still my own and periodically it does erupt, becoming sound waves, videos, electronic penning, a journal, bird song. Like a student, working its way towards print-on-paper, fully aware that good paper and printing belong to times of peace. I've come a long way but, I'm telling you, I still have a lot to say.



Well, this is me, when I was around four or five. With that typical haircut that could have been made with any of the bowls from the kitchen placed on my head and the scissors moving around the edges. But, of course, it wasn't so. Behind me, my favourite object from the whole flat where I grew up: the shiny brown 8-channel television set! (Right under the cassette player with the radio.) Because the telly-people, holding the sheets and reading the news, looked and spoke and nodded very smartly, I decided that one day I JUST HAVE TO be one of them.

I also remember, when I was little, I asked you whether you found having to perform autopsies gross. I think you kinda anticipated that question, didn't you? I will never forget your answer, after looking at me so seriously that for a second I thought you were another person. But no, you were the same, with full integrity down to your core, and you said to me: "In my opinion, nothing that belongs to a human's physical body is gross. Do you want to know what I find gross?" and then you referred to some rather barbaric mistreatment of elevator walls in Budapest that was common at that time, involving used hankies. Ugh. What made me giggle back then, your corky surprise-response - it makes complete sense to me now. It is not just elevator walls, right? It is also the environment, animals, plants, the climate, food distribution, each other's lives. Yeah, we humans can behave real nasty.

Talking about elevators, you will be relieved to hear about one of my more recent discoveries: no matter how painful a heartache is, there is always at least one element you won't miss, not for one hour. To me, that was a female colleague who constantly voiced negative comments about my (our/somebody else's/everybody's?) Handsome Henrik and - The Elevator... My original plan was that before I leave my previous job, I would finally, FINALLY, take my revenge on that metal-monster, for its infinite audio announcements about a very limited range of door movements possible in Earth's gravity. I had to endure that while trying to be a good PR staff and dutifully compose my promo materials and reports for a manage(st)er who was even worse than said machinery. But then, I remembered Henrik's back and instead developed a completely harmless 'top-hit' mental movie. In that, I walk over to Darth Lift and say, in my most devilish tone e-ver: *Hogy az a kénköves mennykő csapna beléd!* which, in raw Hungarian, means something like *Awa' an bile yer heid!* and *Dinnae teach yer Granny tae suck eggs!* Then execute the punishment for the beastly child of the industrial era, precious ageing spines or not. (Needless to say, this movie was a rerun for weeks on my mind, in the name of anger management, after I handed in my resignation, bless human imagination.)

And as for the good things, the ones you always want to remember: those are yours to keep, without disruption. The other day I deep dived, through the Internet, into photos and short stories about the village-like suburb where I worked after my graduation and before Scotland - Maroshegy. For the first time in weeks, I managed to completely disconnect from the notion of armies, bomb shelters and refugees for a bit. It was needed. (Watching highly professional journalist covers from a war zone can still be overwhelming, as it turns out.) I was a librarian and a community development worker again. My feet were casually resting under my work-desk, surrounded by the smell of carpets too old and gas-radiators attached to the central heating system, too much in need of a repair. My legs knew we would pedal my bike again later, take out flyers or talk to locals, our smiles eternal, like the smiles of only those people who live in small places and tend to the cemetery each week. Everything is out in the open here, life, death and in between.

My eyes and I would see one or two trains passing by towards Lake Balaton - a memory in a memory - and at home, later, in the former Soviet army blocks converted into private tenements, my brain and I would be hooked on to another episode of Murdoch Mysteries dubbed to Hungarian in convincing ways. Our meal would be full of additives but filling enough, for stomach and me. Only the freedom rights would be waning, the outspoken station on-air, Sláger Rádió, shut down by the government again and again... Then, we would just go to the near forest, when the good weather came, straight after work, my heart and I. I tilt my bike against a bush and sit very very still, quiet, wait for a fox or a deer to walk nearby, and ask them about my next year. 'Immigration' would become a word terrifying and exalted, both, with perspectives narrowing down to greys and black for young adults like myself...

Temperate forest in Maroshegy, Székesfehérvár (Hungary). The loose, sandy hiking paths often cheerfully revealed that one was still heading the right way, by these red-on-white little flags, painted on the side of trees, suddenly peeking from behind the curve of the road. The bark could carry the sign for decades. A most friendly surety.



That I am not any more. I'm still getting used to settling into the blurry category of 'over forties'. I am back to my laptop, very Western, and wondering about what you would ask from me these days, if you would call me again during your lunch time. I hate to break this to you, but it would have to be mobile phones now, Stepdaddy. Unless you would stick to your hospital landline. I am scared sometimes that in another two decades perhaps I won't be able to remember your face or your voice. So do call again. I couldn't report to you about completing my homework for school but I could spill some about editorial deadlines - in English. Speaking about just that, I better finish this letter.

But before I do: do you remember these words by Radnóti?

*“ You see, now fear often fingers your heart,
and at times the world seems only distant news;
the old trees guard your childhood for you
as an ever more ancient memory.”*

translated lines from 'Monday Evening - War Diary'.

Miklós Radnóti, Hungarian poet (1909-1944).

Effervescently yours,
the daughter you once wanted to have.
Love You, from the old country and the new,

Lea

[Contact: leapublish@gmail.com]

March...



'Learn to walk on your Own Path.

Others' are already taken.'

Picture with the March title: my support dog Baxter and I on the beach, near Dalmeny Estate, Scotland, summer of 2021. Our mixed footprints in the sand were fun to observe, ornate with little seashells and driftwood, like a drawing that will be washed away in just hours. Text in image: 'Learn to walk on your Own Path. Others' are already taken.'

Are you that someone?

By Andrew Marsh.

What do I have to do to make them believe?
I'm not playing up or trying to deceive.
All I want is for my voice to be heard
A confused little boy with only his word.

I've had pains and problems most of my life
Living in that house was just such a strife.
No one believed when I said I'm not fine
"Oh, just shut up boy and please toe the line."

In our family they always would say
When we were together and I was at play.
They said, "Sit, down, shut up and be quiet, boy"
"Why don't you just go and play with your toy."

Imaging the pain and hurt that they caused
Year after year it was just reinforced.
With everyone around I was alone in the house
Trying to be as quiet as a mouse.

Now I know why I behaved as I did
And not just because I was the last little kid.
I have Asperger's Syndrome and all it entails
The tears, the pain and sometimes the wails.

So next time you see a kid playing up
Don't just assume he's a bad little pup.
It may just be he's not like the rest
And really trying not to be such a pest.

He may be different and need someone to care
For someone to listen and try to be there.
He has so much to give, so much to become
Go on, tell me, "Are you that someone?"

Autism through many eyes: diverse perspectives enrich our understanding of the condition.

Autism – as mixed and varied as humanity itself – can present a distinct mix of strengths and weaknesses that are rarely in equal proportion to one another.

People have many differing viewpoints on it. Often, phrases such like high functioning autism and mild and severe although well intentioned, has let a false dichotomy take hold. People are complex by nature. That complexity, largely from us all being a product of many diverse influences means disability and strengths coexist and cut both ways. For these reasons it can be thought of as being a controversial area.

Controversial in that people have come to make sense of the condition in varied ways, behaviours can be interpreted through different lenses, and for those whose lives are touched by the condition – the repercussions can be life changing. However, its core features – referred to as the “triad of impairments” – can be useful in that it delineates the key aspects of the condition. It demystifies them, and from this standpoint, at least, it can be a starting point where people are empowered to make sense of the difficulties, at times great difficulty, that can be a feature of their daily life.

Being neurodiverse in a world largely governed by neurotypical ways of thinking, doing and being is disabling. Conversely, being neurodiverse affords us powers of intellect, and ways of perception, that enrich the world. Disability and neurodiversity, together; one does not preclude the other. For instance, a terrific capacity for single minded devotion to task affords a way out of the maze of thoughts, mostly negative, with no seeming exit. Perversely, they are two sides of the same coin; so, choose to spend your thinking time wisely.

Conflict, perceived or otherwise, arises in complex arenas where there are competing interpretations, viewpoints and experiences among groups of people. Perhaps the simplest, easiest most basic example could be humanity. We are, each of us, different: possessing unique characteristics; with differing views on the same subjects; and seeing the same matters from different angles. Diversity of opinion, and respectfully disagreeing with one another, makes us no poorer for it.

‘High functioning’ autism, taken to mean people without intellectual disability, could scarcely be more misplaced. Forms of autism, all of them in their own ways, are disabling. When people have more difficulty than most functioning in society, difficulty with holding down a job, such difficulty mixing with people that it causes distress, and difficulty even leaving their own home without feeling overwhelmed – the difficulty with this misnomer becomes clear.

When you are at the top of the Swiss Alps, you will get that highest level broadest view of the surroundings – as if all your senses were momentarily hijacked by its striking complexity. Yet as you progress downwards you come down to a level where it can be appreciated. So too with Autism.

Gordon Barlow.

ARTITUDE!



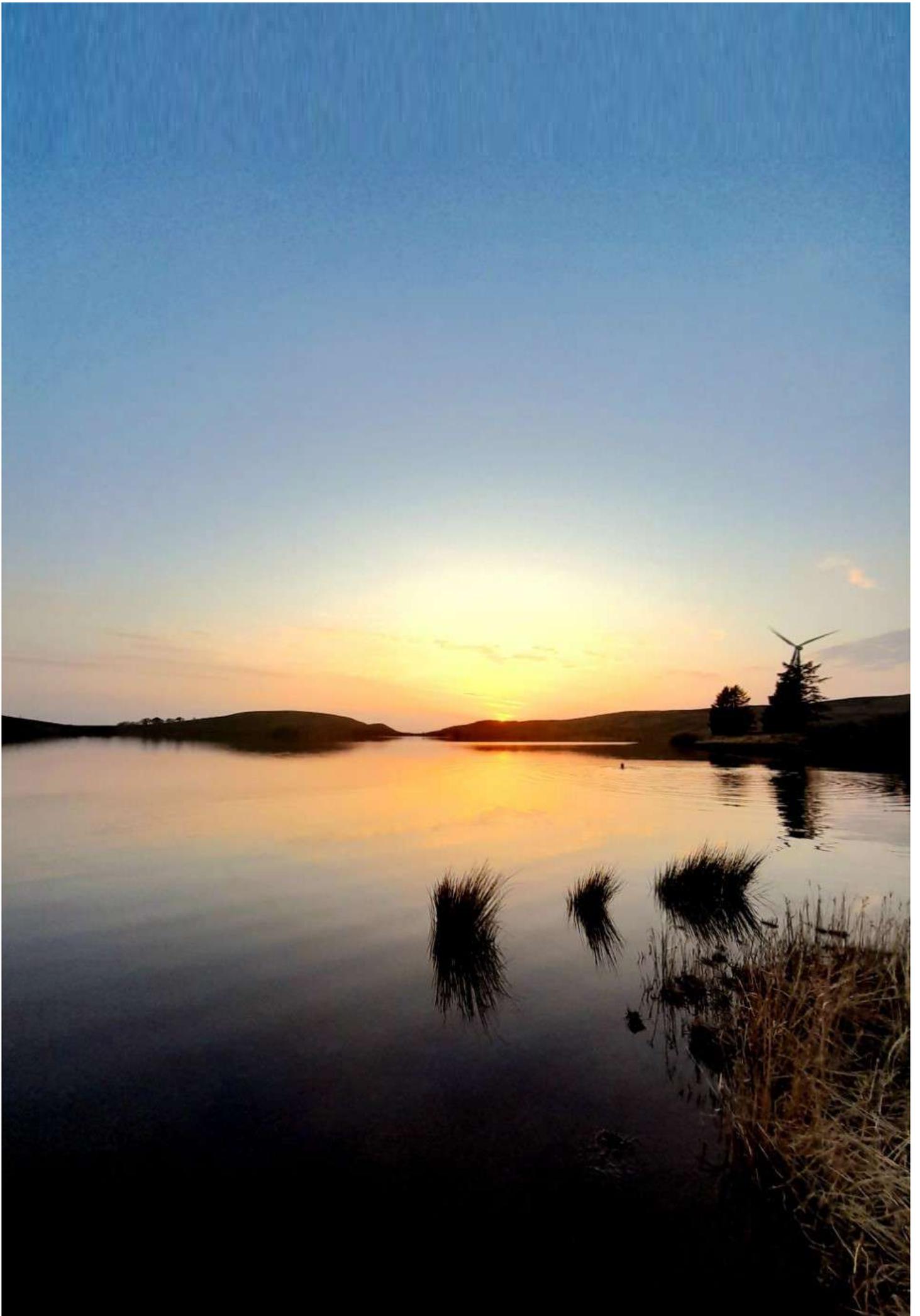
Sandra Louise Smyth

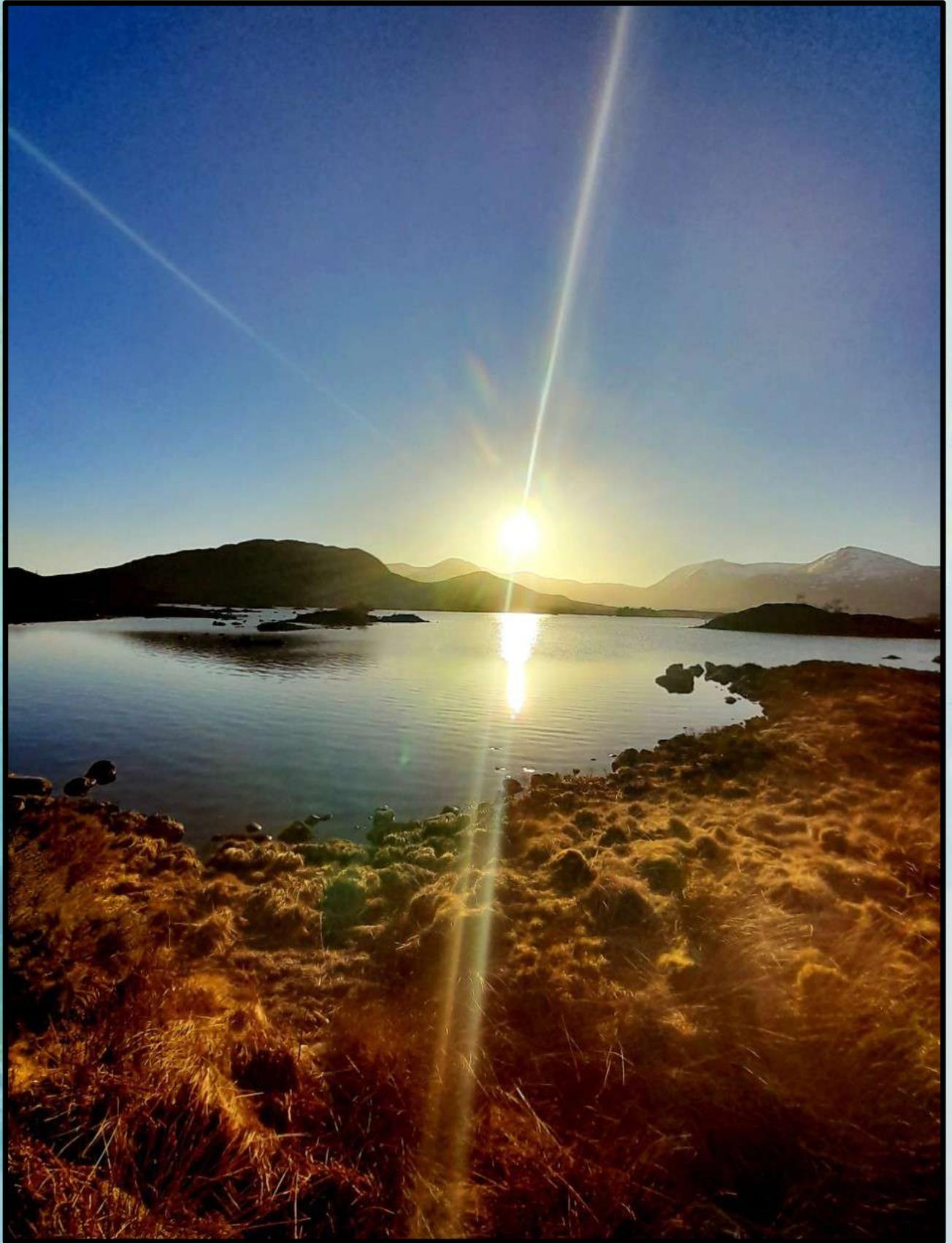
Sandra has been out enjoying the lovely spring weather, taking photos of the spring lambs and beautiful deer. She also painted a mountain scene using acrylics.











Ash

I'm currently in the middle of a (fairly) big music-based project, so what better excuse to share some previously completed popstastic portraits....enjoy!



Mike Nesmith (The Monkees).



ASH '19

Bjork.



David Bowie.



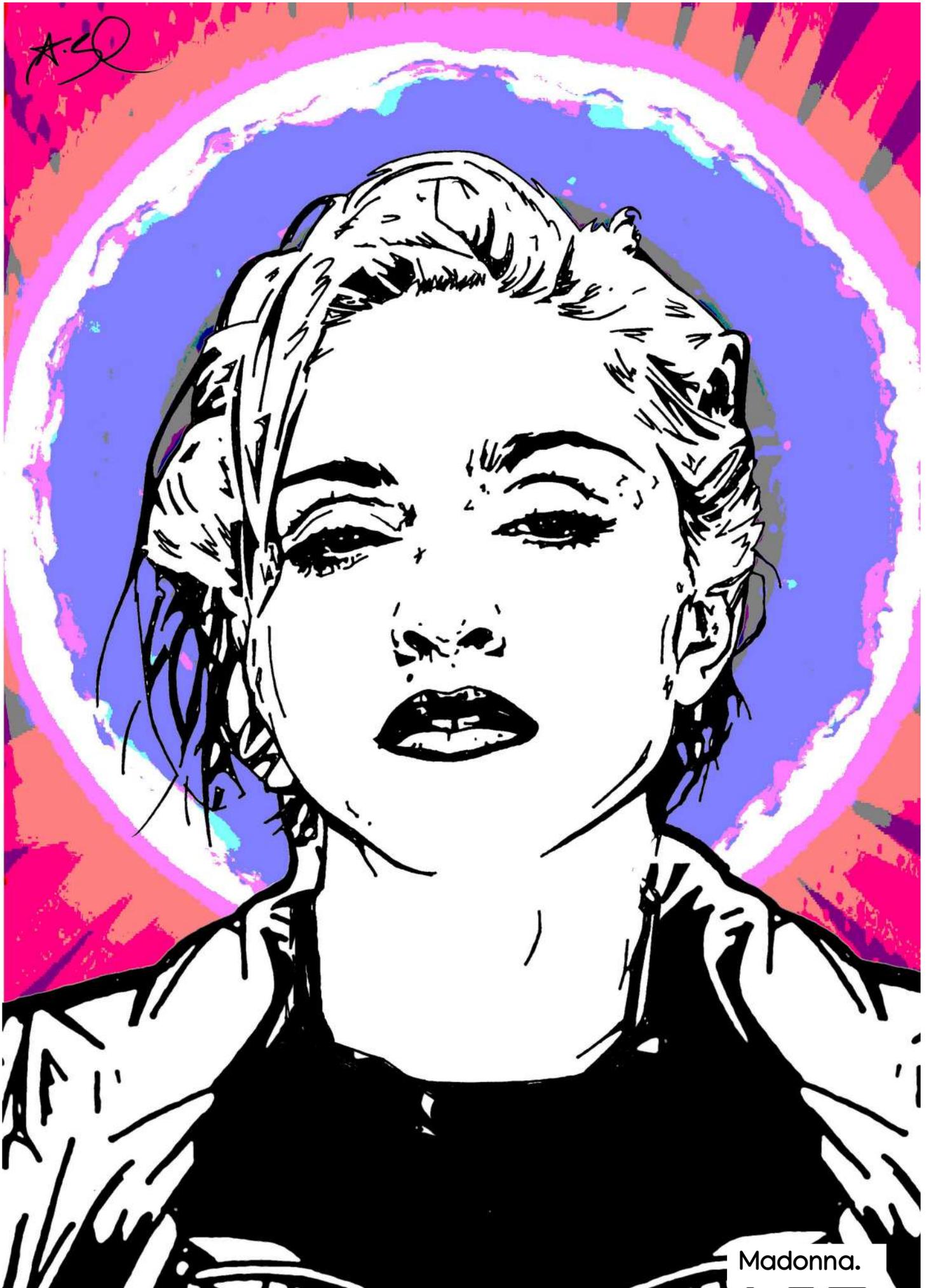
Where secrets lie in the border fires
In the humming wires
Hey man, you know
You're never coming back

Nick Cave.

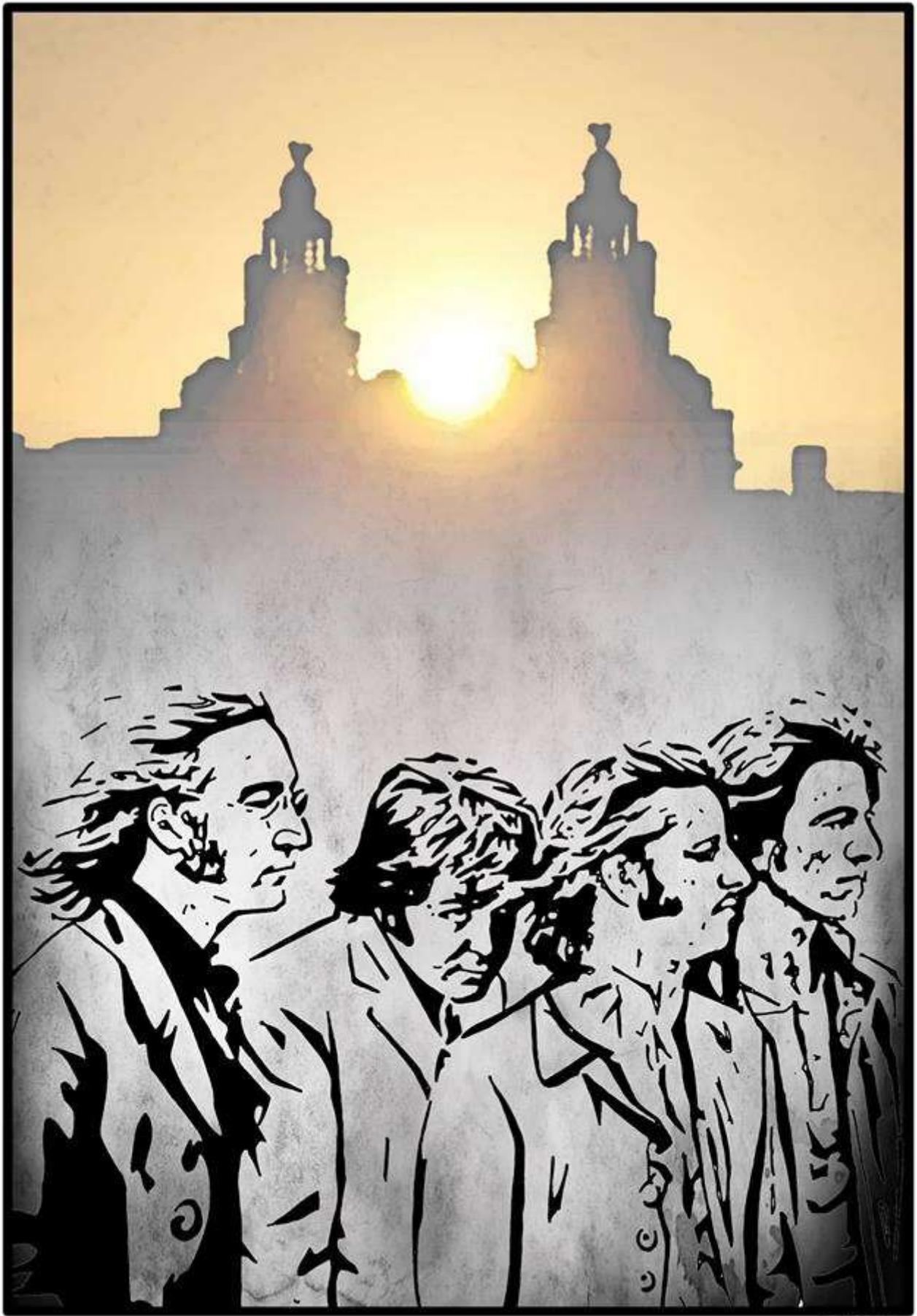
Debbie Harry.



ASH '19



Madonna.



ASH '18

The Beatles.

WHEN TIME STANDS STILL

by John Roney

*We remember the past
and think of the future,
but what is our will to
time stood still.*

*With minds of mist
and blind in bliss.*

*We hear the hiss
of avarice
die down.*

*Our pride dispelled;
that lusty look dismissed.*

Of that idle repose we dispose.

Now the heads not turning in envy any more.

Our hungry head is dead.

And now , God bless us

we hear Him say

your okay!

Entrée.

Finis



Macharioch Bay

by J. Roney

Escallonia scent mixed with many
other flowers filled the air.

The sea made the softest sound
on the beach,

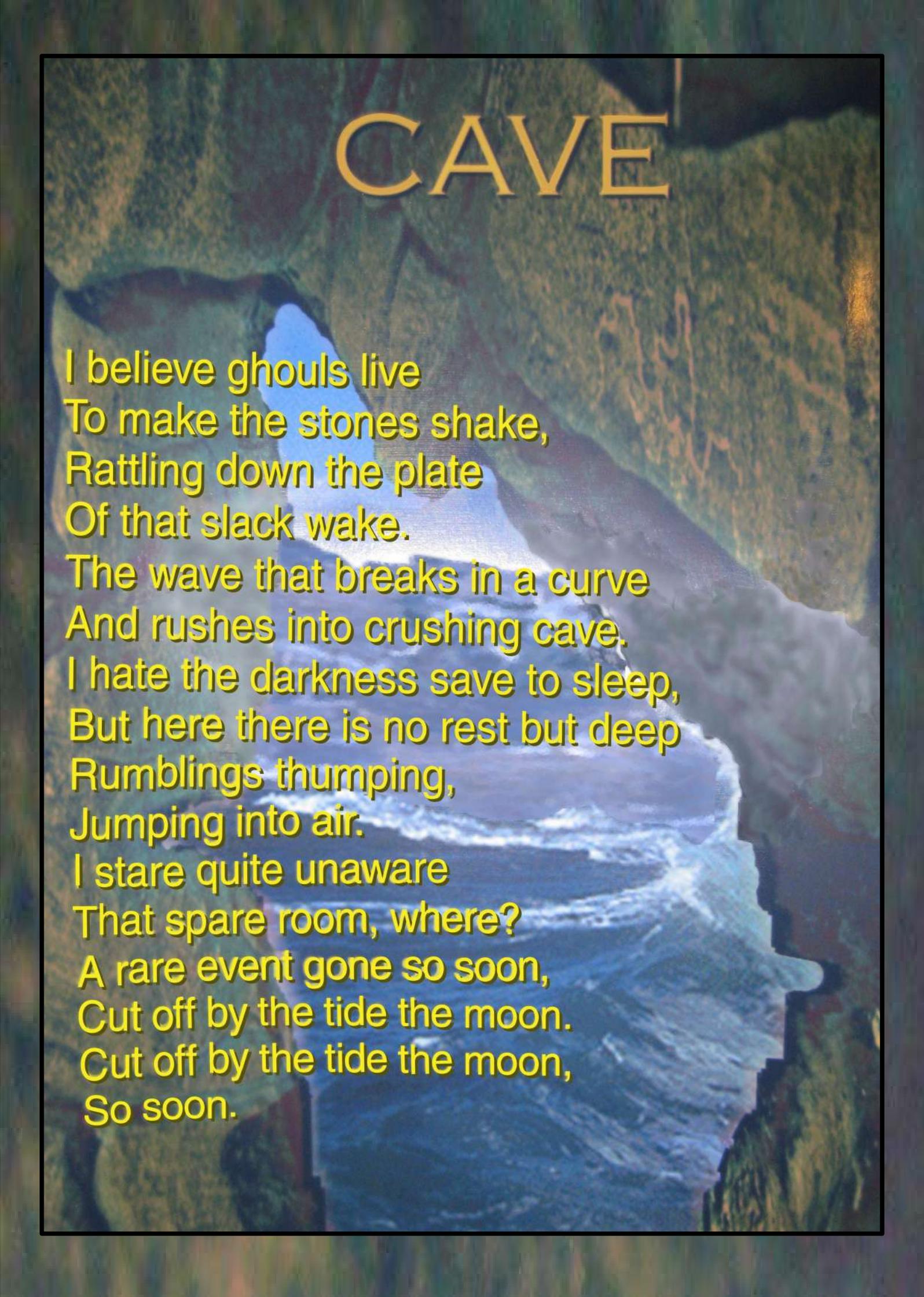
and what a wonderful beach.

All I needed now to make it all
complete

was to wander in the sea-wood
and breathe a breath in this
magic place

called we the Land and Sea.

CAVE



I believe ghouls live
To make the stones shake,
Rattling down the plate
Of that slack wake.

The wave that breaks in a curve
And rushes into crushing cave.

I hate the darkness save to sleep,
But here there is no rest but deep
Rumblings thumping,
Jumping into air.

I stare quite unaware
That spare room, where?

A rare event gone so soon,
Cut off by the tide the moon.
Cut off by the tide the moon,
So soon.

These alone here on the sand

by john roney

*These alone here on the sand
Are the marks of contraband;
A bottle here, a bottle there,
A little rum or maybe whisky;
Left behind by a smuggler's hand?
Some canned soup of a certain brand,
Or maybe a bin-liner – you understand?*

*These alone here on the sand
Are the sparkling jewels of a thousand suns,
Just the diamonds of the sea;
A cactus flower in a coral sea.
And just for you and me, it's free!
But when we see this jetsam flotsam,
Scattered here, hither and thither on our shore,
What could be far from adoring applause
In our hearts?
Some will say it's what we pay
For this progress now.
But is it fine, or divine,
To sit in such a plastic mess?*

*These alone here on the sand
Are the marks of underhand;
Shipped and slipped – not me!
So when you go down to the sea,
Have a heart – AND DON'T LITTER ME.*

The thessalonia tide

by john roney

*These alone here on the sand,
Are the marks of an abandoned soul.
These alone here on the sand,
Are the marks of soles that once trod.
Will she meet me here one day,
In a suit of selchie skin?
Yes alone here on the sand,
Now a year gone by since she did marry me.
All I found here was a dress,
Alone here on the sand,
Now the wind blows, all traces gone.
This alone here, is all I feel,
Just the tang of salty tears;
And as they fall come rolling in;
Like the sea's thessalonic sound, I drown.
Stretched alone here on the sand
They found the body of a man.
These alone here on the sand
Are my words at an end:
Take heed and never
Marry she, a siren of the sea.*

Finis

My Neurodiversity Journey Part 5

For those who have followed my journey in understanding what my diagnoses have meant to me, I find it interesting that I start writing this next part on the 15th of March.

Ahh, the Ides of March which refers to the first new moon of a given month which usually falls between the 13th 14th 15th of each month. In fact, the Ides of March once signified the new year, which meant celebrations and rejoicing.

The word Ides derives from a Latin word that means to divide.

As an unknown neurodivergent for all of my life apart from the last 7 years; I have felt divided, just like the days in a month, with the ability to **self-sabotage** at times with behaviours or thought patterns that held me back and prevented me from doing what I wanted to do.

Further confusion when also suffering from **Imposter Syndrome** too.

You will easily recall that I failed all exams at school not once but twice.

I felt I didn't deserve any success or achievements at all. I was thick and I proved it each time I sat an exam.

When will my luck run out my internal voice would scream in my head?

Given the labels I was given that started at an early age, thick, stupid, doesn't get it, wont amount to anything and a bit of a clown etc which naturally affects your own self-image, self-esteem and inner confidence I was my own worst critic. I assisted in this process.

I re-embedded society's labels with my **Internal Ableism**; which is the result of both absorbing ableist messages from an early age and not having one's identity reaffirmed by others, it often leads to negative self-perception.

Ableism exists because people are uncomfortable about disability; they see, hear or know of the deficits and are not aware of the strengths and what we can offer society with the appropriate accommodation.

Medical model V Social Model read and watch more here.

<https://www.neurodivercitysg.com/medical-model-vs-social-model.html>

Over the last 7 years I have reflected on many of the moments in my life, reviewed and reframed them through the optics of a neurodivergent and correctly labelling them. Deleting **distorted beliefs** about my self as a result of society's conditioning and my own **internal ableism**.

I have already written that I hold no ill feeling towards my schooling years in the 60's and 70's as my disabilities were not easily identified or known.

I was given every opportunity by my parents who did more than their best with additional tutors, mixing in different environments, IE Cubs, Scouts, Sunday School and sport such as golf, skiing, church badminton and football etc. All assisted in making me who I am today and certainly shaped my **values** in mixing in different **environments**.

As a teenager I had many opportunities to excel in sport. For a season approximately I trained and played football at Rangers Boys Club. Not a huge success.

I easily recall the coach saying why “if you are right footed why do you use the ball better with your left”? Shrugging my shoulders, I said “I don’t know; can’t everyone”? Little did I know or the coaches that being ambidextrous is not uncommon for Autistics, Dyslexics or Dyspraxic’s.

I was labelled difficult or too smart for my own good. A smart

They did not know what to do with me or where to play me as I was also quite comfortable in goals for two reasons. Firstly, tall for my age and also my **visuo-spatial abilities** which was unknown to me and everybody else until the results from my intensive assessments when I discovered my deficits and strengths 7 years ago.

I managed by chance to be selected for a large Badminton training camp. I didn't survive long as you can imagine. Two players who I played with at school and church badminton club went on and achieved great success. Both Linda and Alison became Scottish Internationalists and also competed in Commonwealth Games in 1982 /86.

I started with the Ides of March which in essence means in the middle - divided.

As a now known neurodivergent I look back with fondness at my divides. Ability & Dis / Ability and rejoice and celebrate my events.

I am passionate that all young children at school who may appear to be struggling and require identifications / assessments / diagnosed for disabilities are done so as a package. IE, Autism, Dyslexia, Dyspraxia, Dyscalculia, ADHD, Mears Irlen Syndrome to ensure a holistic approach for the child's educational and life skills needs are met. Don't you agree?



There will be many little gems in school who have amazing gifts and strengths that require to be accommodated and nurtured.

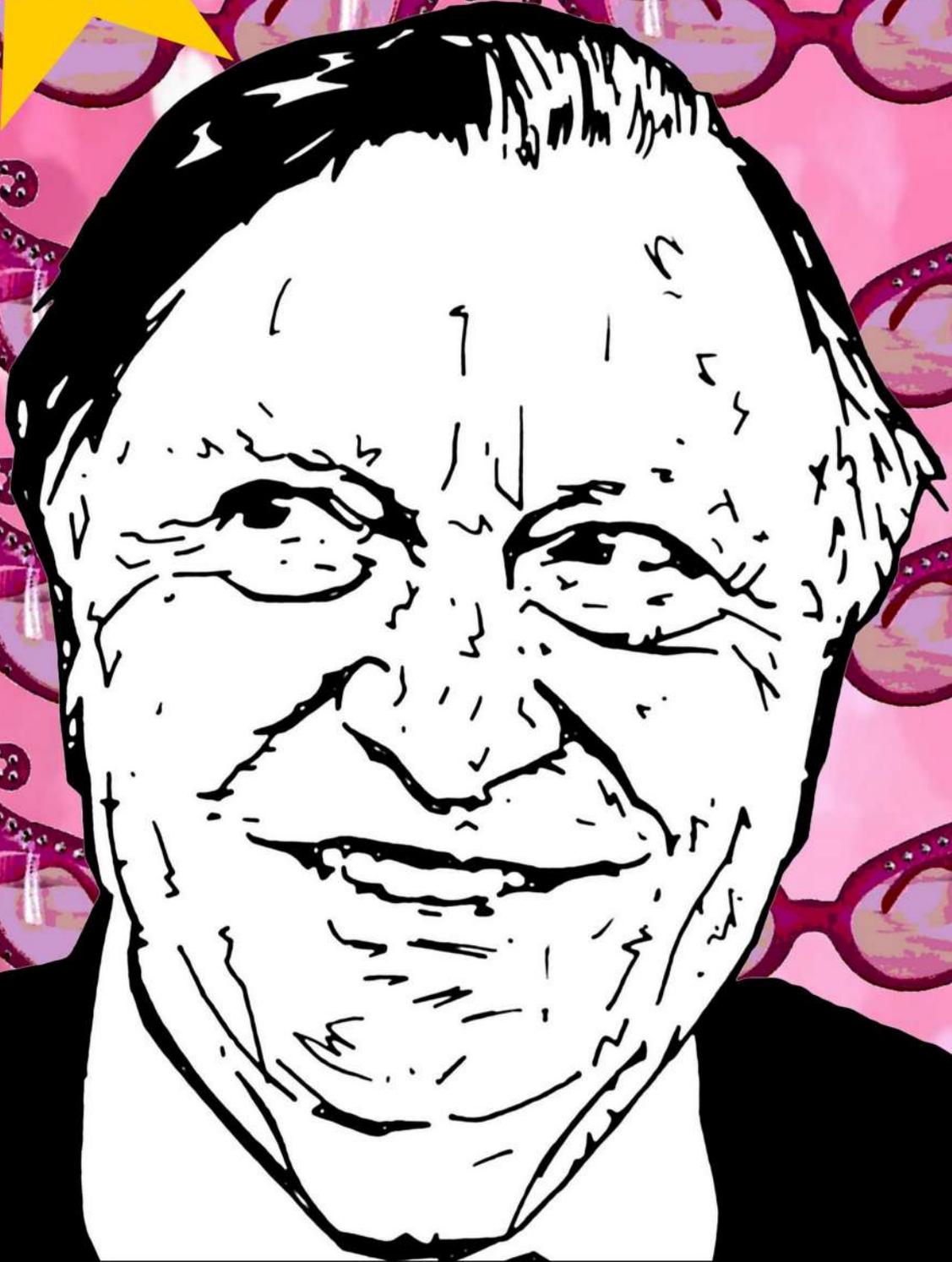
I am still haunted at the pain and frustration my mother had with me attempting homework at the kitchen table. It's our generations' responsibility to unleash their talents so they can begin to rejoice and celebrate at a young age without any division.

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

David Yeoman - Blogger & Volunteer; Scottish Autism, Contributor @ Autism Advisory Forum, Forum, Consultant at Dyslexia Scotland.



SPECTRUM SUPERSTARS!



Name: John Barry Humphries AO CBE
Born: 17 February 1934
Occupation: Actor, author, artist, comedian
and satirist.

AUTITUDE NEEDS YOU!



Well that's it for issue 15!
Hope you've enjoyed it!
Don't forget to send your contributions to
autitude@scottishautism.org