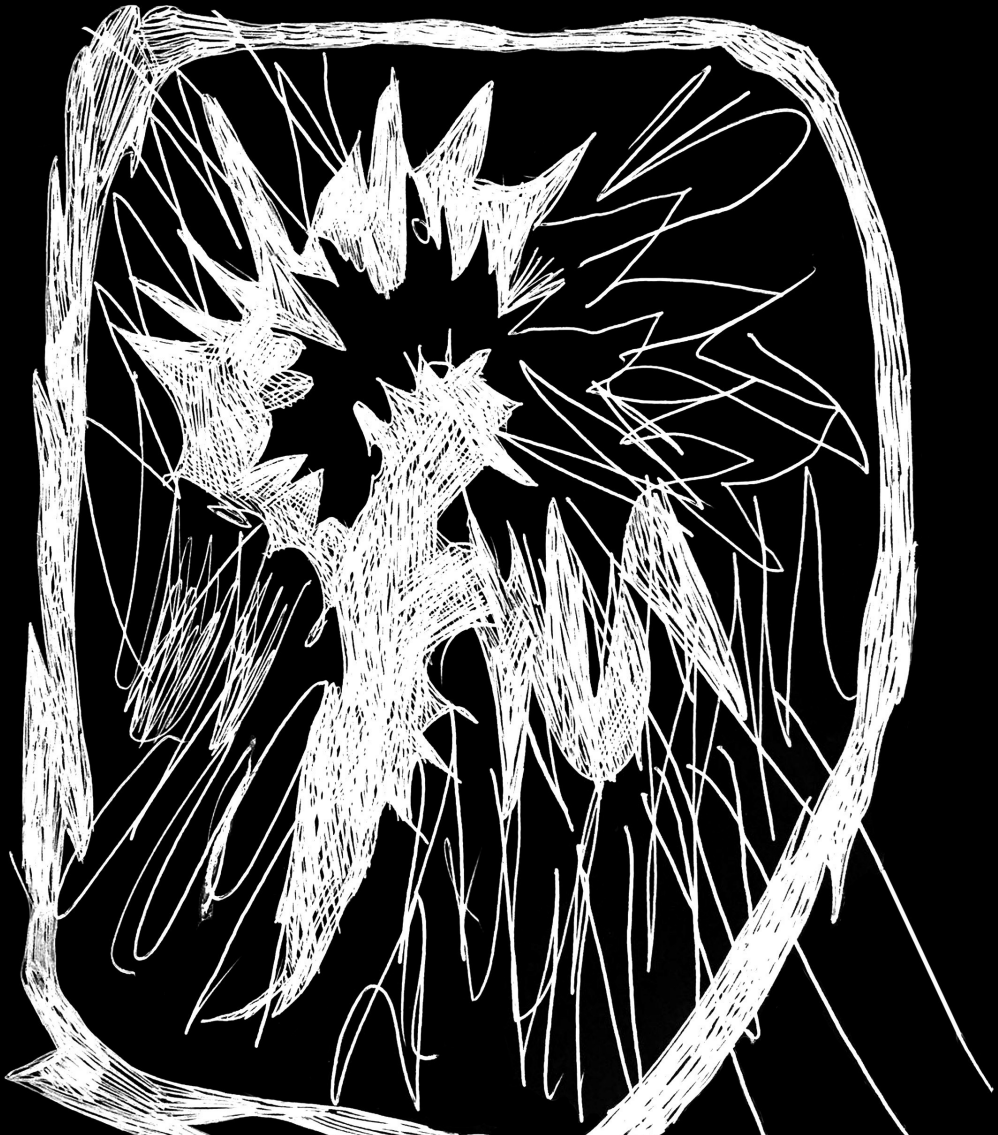


GET

THE DARK OUT



Lisa Selby & Dudley

## GET THE DARK OUT

*CW: drink, drugs, prison, violence, death.*

**Dudley:** Mostly I remember as a kid feeling like scum. That's what I was called at school when people found out my dad was a dealer. And when he was sent to prison. I've been demoralised, humiliated and groomed by people with much more power than me throughout my childhood and after having my home taken, I've had nothing stable because I was dependent on someone who relied on illegal labour to survive.

**Lisa:** I was called 'disease,' because I was scruffier than everyone else, dirtier. I'd never invite friends back to my council flat, their houses weren't like mine. But I was proud of my dad, he was raising me and doing his best. My mother had issues with drink and drugs, and issues with motherhood, she wasn't around. The year of my birth she had a breakdown and was put in a psychiatric ward. I told school friends that she was dead. It was easier that way.

I thought I'd be the same as her, due to my drinking. But her issues ran deeper than drink and drugs. I worked hard on my mental health, now I'm four years sober and ready to be a mother. At 44, I'm finding it hard to conceive, having just gone through IVF twice. I'm mourning my mother and her legacy in me. This is brutal. Loss of motherhood from both ends is grinding me down.

**Dudley:** Sometimes I can't begin to explain. I live in a different reality to most people. PTSD or as I prefer to call it, a war. At the same time, I wanna be open because other people being candid helped so much.

During the residency, whilst exploring threads of sobriety trauma recovery, my dad relapsed and died. Now he lives with his ancestors. The addict alcoholic ones. Next to those who died in custody. And those who died homeless.

**Lisa:** I'm having discussions around breaking down the ideals of the capitalist model - building a nuclear family. If mothering is about care and helping someone to develop, then we can have many mothers, parents, people. Conversations with queer friends have been valuable, as they have been prominent in building these new models. This is about universal care.

Family is time, family is community.



*Drawing of Helen by Tony, her best friend  
RIP Helen & Tony*

Lisa Selby  
@bluebaglife (Instagram)  
CW: death, detox, drugs

When I thought I'd stopped making art due to a series of traumatic events, I started to document everything around me. This became my practice, I just hadn't thought of it as 'art' yet. During this residency I began painting again for the first time in 25 years. I used to paint all the time, but I began to fear it, the 'not being good enough' had taken over. I didn't think painting could be a part of a documentation process. I was wrong.

Helen, my mother, hid from the world in her basement flat. Heroin, booze and acid took her to another place. I took photos of drug paraphernalia in her house, her medication bottle turned crack pipe, heroin needles and spoons in her hostess trolley, that seemed ok. I took photos of her on her deathbed. I recorded her funeral. I wrote about her death and that seemed ok. Putting the photos of her 'out there/out here' didn't seem ok, it was her end, and our end, not everyone else's end. Painting gives her death some distance, and some focus too. I focused on the arm that I was pushed towards. I focused on painting the door to the room my partner was detoxing off heroin in. This door I could see, unlike the prison door he detoxed behind.



*Drawing of Helen making a roly,  
by her daughter Lisa*

**Painting.** Detoxing off heroin is predictably dramatic. Vomit, hallucinations, all of that. The drama is boring and lonely for me. I sit on the stairs and look longingly at the slightly ajar door. You can do it this time! I pop in a toilet roll, a drink and meds. It's like caring for a moody teenager, who I cook for and clean after without much thanks, just a grunt or two because he can't manage anything else. I know Elliot will appreciate it when he's well again.



*Photo of Elliot's Methadone bottle on bed, taken by his partner Lisa*

Stepping over his dirty pile of clothes on the floor, I lay back on the detox bed. I shouldn't be in here (he's gone to the chemist), but I can't help it. I want to understand, to be in his mindset, in his place. I climb into the bed with him most mornings, with his legs shaking, he can't stop moving around as the drugs make their way out. On the bedside table, toilet roll with a few sheets left, pissy dregs of weak orange squash at the bottom of a stolen pint glass and half a pill. The drawer is crammed full of empty pill packets, anti-diarrhoea and anti-psychotic meds, cold relief capsules, empty lighters, old plastic bottles and scrunched up tissues.

I WISH TO APPEAL AGAINST THIS DECISION ON THE GROUNDS THAT DUE TO MY DRUG ADDICTION AND MENTAL STATE AND ILLNESS THAT WITHOUT SOME FORM OF FURTHER TREATMENT AND REHABILITATION I WOULD FIND THE LIKELIHOOD OF FULL TIME EMPLOYMENT IMPOSSIBLE.

*Helen's appeal for Incapacity Benefit*

**Painting.** My mother Helen died in her living room in Greenwich, London, surrounded by people off their heads, her skin yellow from toxins rising to the surface. I missed her final breaths as I was in Burger King at the motorway services, on my way to her. A young voice called me 'Lisa, Helen just died, I'm so sorry!' She was crying. I didn't know this person. She seemed to love my mother. I collapsed on my knees in the queue, phone in one hand, quarter pounder with cheese in the other. Parents moved their children out of the way in disgust. I was a hungover mess and with some guy I'd met at a NYE d&b night two days earlier. We sat at the table and he told me that I needed to eat so I didn't faint.

Elliot had been segregated in prison for being on spice and acting out. I was drinking heavily. He'd promised he wouldn't touch drugs again. I missed him, but was trying to move on. I took a bite of the burger and chewed on my immediate grief. A mother was fussing over her child. I always wanted Helen to stop it all, to fuss over me, to take me shopping or something. I wanted her to be a mother, whatever that was.

'Smack my bitch up' and 'Charlie says' by The Prodigy was blasting out onto the street. Coppers stood outside as her partner, from behind the front door, threatened to stab them with a screwdriver if they came anywhere near Helen. 'Johnny One Leg' was nodding out hard, balancing on his crutch in the middle of the room. I was forcefully pushed in Helen's direction. They wanted to see the final mother and daughter moment. "Go on, hold your mother's hand!" her boyfriend shouted. I wanted to be alone with her. I held her bruised, limp hand for the first time since I was born. The foil was out "Can everyone either leave or go and do drugs next door!" I shouted.

Helen found it painful to be alone with me, to look me in the eye, to hold my hand. I felt sad for how her life ended, in dirt and chaos. She'd seen her best friends die from drug-related illnesses over the years, the friends she had left medicated her with heroin. Breast Cancer lumps were spreading fast and she wasn't attending appointments. After my experiences with Elliot's heroin addiction, I told her, a few months before her death, that it wasn't her fault, not raising me and I handed her The Tibetan Book of the Dead. I pulled back her lilac cardigan sleeve. Puncture wounds that were always kept covered. Helen pointed at her arm "I wasn't any good at getting a vein" she told Elliot on the first and only time they'd met. "I always missed." Helen missed a lot. And I'd always miss her. I covered her arms and waited for her to be taken away.



**Two neighbouring doors**, they used to be the important ones around here. People used to come and go from these houses, reminding me of my mother's house, chaotic, attracting all sorts at all hours. Some would whistle up to windows from the back. Others would stand around waiting, leaning on the brick wall, or scuffling about. I kept my head down, to not cause threat or discomfort. The contents of their bins spilled out onto the pavement, the usual rubbish but with orange lids and squashed disposable spoons. If you know, you know, it doesn't need to be an obvious needle. Police were often outside.

 clover	 flag	 pattern	 pub
 house	 drink	 ketimere	 police
 prison	 castle	 sword	 magic
 nettle	 camomile	 cleavers	 mint
 rubbish	 town	 dandy lion	 football
 Jesus	 shillelagh	 grinder	 money

 hoodie	 meeting	 big book	 trauma
 ID	 bank card	 deed poll	 prescription
 apple	 agnus castus	 marshmallows	 melon
 kettle	 toothbrush	 towel	 hot water bottle
 chocolate	 slippery elm	 grass	 trainers
 bills	 universal credit	 prayer	 meditation

 vitamins	 sun	 sponsor	 home group
 pizza	 school	 teacher	 punishment
 test	 ASBO	 PE kit	 toast
 music	 uniform	 pen and blood	 tea
 pen	 post box	 letter	 moon
 rain	 time	 Hospital	 Christmas

Dudley

@chekhovs\_gunge (Instagram)

CW: relapse, death

This residency has been a chance to gather stock. Integrating. When we first met, being an abolitionist was a sign of madness. The attitude was that these issues had no chance of becoming mainstream. Since then, we have both been burned out by activism, and the impossible has happened. There were so many things we intended to do that didn't happen because we were exhausted. This has been a chance to do some of those things and have a rest. A chance to integrate where abolition is today and what's next.

It's been a chance for us to look at the past and the memories of the galvanising moments that brought us to abolition. How it and addiction has affected the people we've loved.

## DIAMONDS

Two weeks ago, my Dad relapsed and died. I've been sulking and I haven't wanted to talk about it. I can't be fucked to explain and dislike the pity in peoples eyes when I try. My life seems to be in a different reality to most people, a war. On the other hand, I want to be open because others being candid about these things helped me so much.

So this is for the child carers and child criminals who grew up in poverty. Those ones that made it out but haven't found an island yet. This is also for the ones that didn't make it, like my dad who lives with the addict and alcoholic ancestors. And the ones who died in custody or homeless.

I've lost three dads now to addiction in various ways. My granddad, my step dad, my biological dad. I feel ok about it. I've let it break my heart. I know things not many people know. I used to see myself as always on the back foot. But it doesn't make sense to put myself at the center of this. It's just happening all around me.

I've learned transmutation. That's my gift. For everything I went through. I know how to turn shit into gold. I'm a diamond. What does it feel like to be this strong? I'll tell you. It's like watching everything else around you crumble to dust. The people I loved. The places I lived. Everything I owned.

My family is continually criminalised, humiliated and punished. Groomed into low paid controlling suffocating jobs and work conditions, with no opportunity or break socially or spiritually. Doing work that society relies on but condemns. Watching your kids with a constant cold sore and cough. Even if you get out, the people who worked for your happiness don't.

I wish becoming a diamond was not such an individual process. My life wasn't an individual process. It was made up of people who despite being very floored, taught me to blag, fight and dance. People who gave me care, and of neighbours, dealers and slumlords who worked for my freedom. And of siblings who are less able to hide their class, and weren't welcome where I was.





*Lisa Selby & Dudley, Artcore*

---

*Nottingham-based artists Lisa Selby and Dudley were selected for one of three Collaborative Project Bursaries in partnership with New Midland Group, aimed at pairs looking to work collaboratively to develop and deliver a project together.*

*Lisa and Dudley were in residence at Artcore in Derby from August – October, working together on a new series of work with a focus on changing public perceptions around addiction and incarceration, helping to connect people who are affected by these issues. The artists chose to use this period to care for themselves through practice, to then help others to process, reflect and make – making trauma count in society.*

*This residency has been supported by the New Midland Group Development Programme. New Midland Group is a consortium of three artist-led organisations located in Nottingham: Backlit, One Thoresby Street and Primary.*



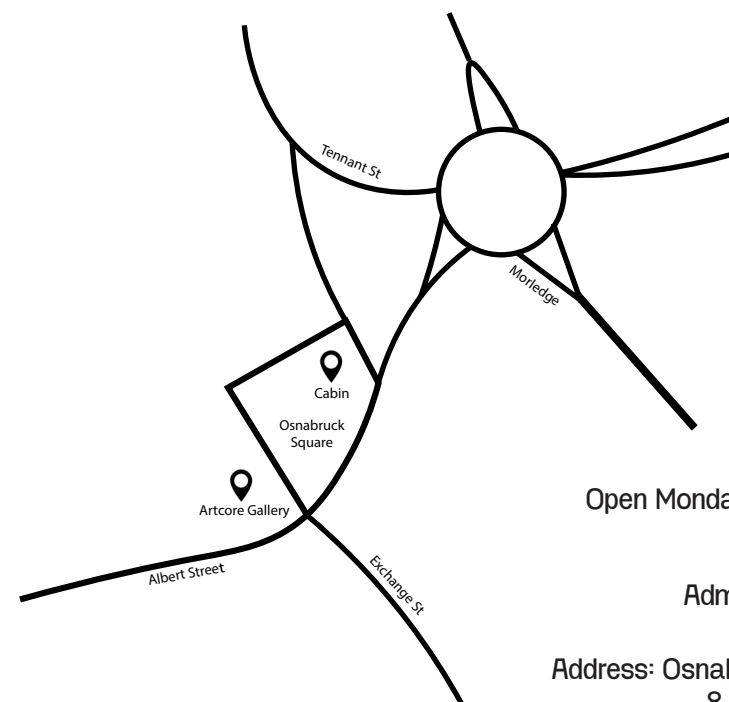
*Painting and cover image by Dudley*

## ABOUT ARTCORE

Artcore is an international centre for contemporary art and creativity based in Derby, UK, and is home to Artcore Gallery, studios and work spaces as well as a shop and cafe. A vibrant hub for commissioning, production, presentation and debate, we offer opportunities for diverse audiences to engage directly with creative practices through participation and discussion.

Here at Artcore Gallery we believe that contemporary art and creativity are central to the development of people and places. We have an extensive exhibition and residency programme which helps support early, mid-career and established artists to create work which deals with pressing social, political and environmental issues.

[www.artcoregallery.org.uk](http://www.artcoregallery.org.uk)



### Visit Us

Open Monday - Saturday  
11am - 5pm.

Admission: FREE

Address: Osnabrick Square  
8 Albert Street  
Derby  
DE1 2DS

Tel: 01332366623

Email: [admin@artcoreuk.com](mailto:admin@artcoreuk.com)



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



