

(In all transcripts I have edited out ums, likes, ahhs and stutters from both the interviewer and interviewee unless it was deemed they added to the context of the response.)

Amy: Okay, so first of all I wasn't 100% sure were to start so I did the classic left to right. And I was a bit self-conscious to begin with, I think, because I was the only person there and I had my notepad, as well, and so it was a bit sort of, yeah, a few

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people sort of looked at me funny because I have my notepad. Yeah so it was a bit, and I didn't really know what to expect because until I started hearing about your research I never really heard about graphic medicine, comics, anything like that I never really, obviously I've seen them, now I realise I have seen them but I never thought about it before so I was a bit nervous to be honest to look around because I didn't really know what to expect.

I have written here "will I understand it?" that was my main thought when I started it was am I gonna understand these, am I gonna, yeah, am I gonna get it I guess. Is it gonna, will I know what it is that's going on and then as I started looking at them, I think, I think I sort of relaxed a bit to be honest, you know, and ah, yeah but that was my feelings.

Alex: Was there any particular works that stood out to you?

Amy: Well, Wild Child did stick out to me. I think, I writ, cause it made me, I felt, I felt really uncomfortable with it and I think cause it, it so like, so I wrote down that the black of everything was really black and it felt really dark. And at first, when I first started looking at it, I thought, and I read the section before where it talked about, ya know the vastness, but then also talking about, you know agoraphobia and everything like that and I was thinking "okay this person is sort of", you know I could feel this sense of entrapment, I am getting that from it, and it felt quite confused as well. And I thought it was powerful but I did feel a bit uncomfortable with it. And I thought it was weird about that the figure that didn't have any eyes. I found that quite uncomfortable. But then when I looked at it and I thought when there is that last bit where there was, I assumed it was sign language, and I was like "oh okay, is she deaf? Is this parent deaf? Are they trapped since they can't communicate?" so then I was a bit confused. I thought alright, okay, maybe that's what it is. They're not actually trapped in the sense that their agoraphobic or something like that, they are trapped in a disability and when that, there was the one image of the nurse person or friendly face talking to the girl and everything seemed to change, everything got really light, so I kinda, it ended well. It was a bit of a roller coaster but. Yeah so I liked that one.

And then, Two Windows Same Reality, I really liked that. That gave me this sense of vastness. That's what I kept getting from that. Like the vastness of the universe. And, weird, for me I found it really weird cause this strange existence between the fact that we know all of this vastness is out there but it is almost too much for your brain to contemplate so you sort of live within these two worlds. So I could really see that in these two windows. So I liked that one a lot.

I didn't like Tied Up. I didn't like Tied Up *atoll*. It made me feeling really uncomfortable and it really, yeah, I found that really weird and I couldn't work out...she looked like if she was a housewife to me, so then I went into the whole

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thoughts of gender but I really didn't like that one. Not rudely to the artist but, you know, the reaction.

And then I think around the corner where it was the Journey to Wellness I think I felt more comfortable in those because I recognized those types of comics cause I've seen them on Instagram and things like that, you know these sort of more bright colours, health and wellbeing type things, so I sort of felt a bit more like those one around the last side I could, I could recognize them a bit better. Yeah.

Alex: I am interested in how you are using the terms like comfortable and uncomfortable. I am wondering if you could elaborate more on what you mean by that?

Amy: Okay, I think with Tied Up, it automatically made me feel, I think it made me quite, I don't think upset is the right word but I felt quite, I had a reaction to that. I thought "Oh I don't want see that. I don't want to see that *atoll*." You know, I don't like that and I don't understand, I didn't really understand what I was meant to get out of it. But I did feel quite frustrated about it. You know, just sort of, I don't know, I just sort of, I didn't like the image. I just think I didn't like that. And then I think with the others that I said I felt a bit uncomfortable it was because the subject matter was darker. And the images themselves were darker and it felt. I could feel the sense of entrapment from them, so I guess they worked in that sense, you know, like I think with the first one, Wild Child, with the cages always being present. I felt that. And I think, yeah, I think for me this sense of entrapment is quite a personal thing. for me as soon as I sense any sense of restriction or entrapment it automatically I get quite defensive about it so I maybe that's why I felt like "nope don't want to see that, don't want to see that" or "I don't like those sorts of things" so I think that I had quite strong reactions to those pieces which I hadn't expected to have really because I didn't really know what I would be looking at but I did have automatically went in my head and I didn't like looking at those one. But yeah.

Alex: Do you remember any that were on the wall between the Two Windows and Wild Child?

Amy: I (flipping through notes)...do i?... Hmm I have put Inner Voices and I have just put "unnerving". I don't know why I put that. I haven't put anything else. (Laugh) let me think...cause there was the one which looked like the big rose. That was there I think wasn't it? and then there was the one that was words, there was lots of words on it. I don't really understand it. And I was like, yeah I don't think, I don't really, I liked the words they seemed to, they felt nice to read but I didn't really understand it I don't think. And I wasn't sure about, I wasn't really sure what I was, what they were sort of saying, but I didn't sort of engage with them I don't think. But yeah.

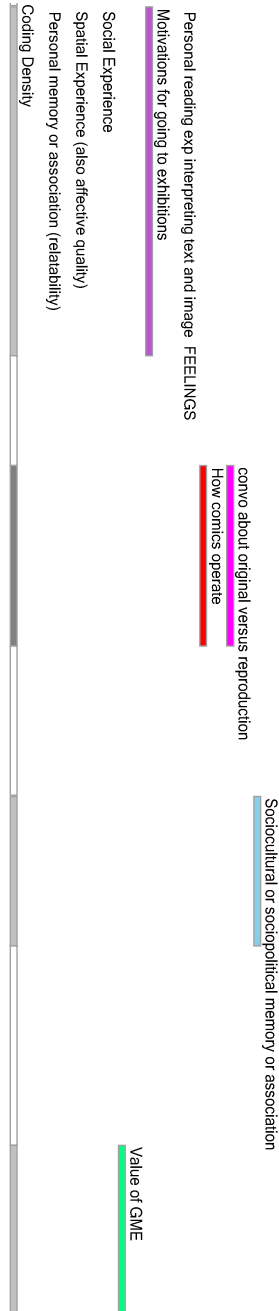
Alex: Why were you interested in viewing the exhibition?

Amy: I think because I hadn't ever heard about graphic medicine comics or comics, I've never thought about comics in a way that they can be, I don't think I realised how many I look at either. Or how often I see them. And I went to a talk by a lady who is also putting on the exhibit and I thought I wanted to support that and, but I also thought well maybe I'll, if I could see them in real life I could understand it a bit more you know and I can, so they were what I was expecting *atol*. Honestly, I was a bit naïve now but I think I thought it would be a bit more like the anxiety one around the back around that side. I thought they would be a bit more like that, so its, I'm suffering from this maybe its this and maybe this is the cure type thing. I think I was expecting it to be that, so I think I just wanted to gain a bit more information or just to understand what it is that they are or what they can be I think. Yeah.

Alex: And then was there anything additional, other than what you have already shared, that came to your mind when viewing the exhibition? Anything that it made you think of no matter how random.

Amy: I think I was interested in the ones that were photos of sketchbooks to show the process that its going through. I found that really interesting, because I think, I am not a really, I am not an artistic person in the sense that I don't draw and things like that, so seeing the construction of the drawings I think is really interesting. And also understanding how you can get a message across quite powerfully through the comic. And think maybe that was why the first one, when I suddenly had a realisation that "oh she's deaf" I think I actually said it out loud. You know, I think that I actually went "oh my goodness. Oh okay" like this and then I was like (!!! Looking around) cause it is actually quite loud in the atrium isn't it, but I think that was quite interesting, that actually you can get across something, there wasn't even a single word on that one *atoll*, and I had gone through a really weird thought process to get there, ya know, at first I was thinking oh is it like the detention camps on the border, it this, you know cause at the moment I see cages I think, I think cages on the border type thing, so I think I was thinking whats this and thinking oh no remember their agoraphobic so maybe this person is agoraphobic and this is all a representation of their mental health issue and suddenly I was like "oh". Okay maybe they are deaf and then at the end I was like "are they??". I am not sure now but it was like a journey through a section of a relatively small amount of drawings. So yeah I think that was interesting to me.

But I have seen quite a few more recently that I have been a bit more aware of just on Instagram and things. Theres been a lot about consent and things like that, consent or mental health, I follow quite a lot of different accounts sort of use them a lot in that. And I think actually it is quite a, it's a very powerful way of taking someone through a conversation about mental health or about any type of condition actually. I've never thought much about it before but yeah.



Alex: As you said you went alone, and so one of the questions I was going to ask was did you have any conversations and then you said you verbalised...

Amy: Yeah, just with myself (laughter).

Alex: Was that the only time you verbalised anything during it?

Amy: Yeah it was. I was quite a strange experience, I think, because I was the only one there and looking at it and because of the way it is set out, apart from that wall (hand motion), it does sort of take you in away from what's going on as well. So yeah it was quite a surreal experience in the sense that it was like I was transported for a little bit into this other little portal type thing. But yeah no I only really talked to myself. And I think I, yeah, I don't think I said anything else apart from the deaf one and, oh! I think I did say "oh I don't like that" when I (laugh), that was with Tied Up I think. "oh I don't like that" so yeah. So that was more of a comfort thing I think.

Alex: Did you do any drawing as a part of your sketches [meant notes]?

Amy: No. No, I didn't. I am not. I have never done it. I have never sort of or done any drawings or anything like that so no it's all out of my comfort zone, so yeah.

Alex: So one of the topics of the exhibition is spatial anxieties which you have already commented on, as far as you have read some of the pieces through that, but was there any experience that brought that topic to you in the exhibition?

Amy: Whilst I was watching it? No, I guess the only thing that might have been a slight sort of spatial anxiety because I was the only one there and I could see that a couple of people were watching me watching the pictures you know as they walked passed. "what is she doing" you know type of a thing. But, no, I don't think, the only ones that did sort of make me feel, I guess that sort of spatial anxiety is the ones that sort of had that affect on me where automatically took me to a place where I felt that same sense of entrapment. It's the helplessness I think and I think that's what I got from some of those. That helplessness about your own environment yeah, so I think I did feel slight... I did feel uncomfortable in those sections at times cause, and I think as well when you are standing there you feel, you are quite vulnerable because it is an open space in the end of the day. And you know you are in the university atrium you know, so there is no dark corners that if you wanted to hide, ya know, so I think I felt a bit, maybe a bit exposed while I was watching them, or looking at them. Yeah.

But then I think it is always a slightly weird thing when you do view art even in a bigger gallery, you know, it is all a bit slightly awkward as you all, you know if you've got more people all standing there watching something so. Yeah. (laugh) not my most comfortable environment.

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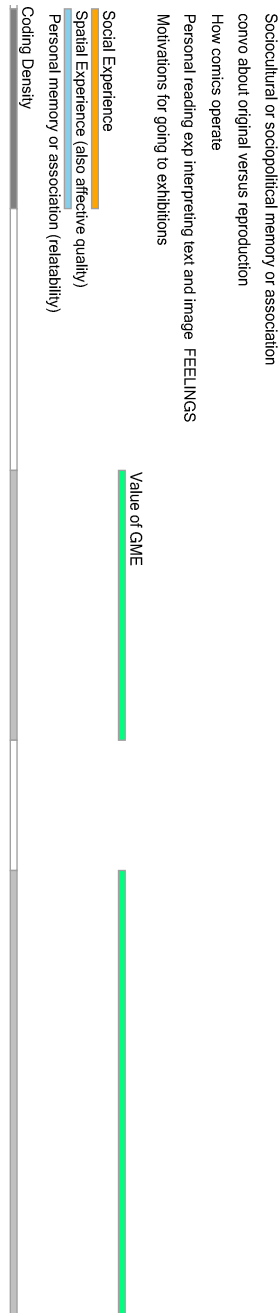
Plus I think I tend to have quite strong reactions to things. You know and I think those reaction can be...they can always be quite personal you know, like if something really gets to me than its really gonna get to me, so I always think I, yeah, I am almost prone to think "oh god don't cry in front of this thing" you know, like I always have that so I always think it is a bit funny when you view these things out in the open.

Alex: And what was your experience or impression of the comics medium being in exhibition?

Amy: I thought it was good. I am not, I still don't know that I class some of the things I saw in the comic genre. I think, cause I am so use to seeing it in that, yeah sorta boxes of stories, in that sense. I think for me I'm still like ahh okay is this, does this count as a comic, cause I don't really know what the definitions of it are. So for me a lot of it felt more like a series of paintings until I went sort of around the corner to the, where I could see comic strips as I would see them or as I would always think of them to be. But, I think they were brave pictures to put up and the artists as well. I think there are some, there's some big stuff on the walls there, you know, there is some really big feelings, I think and too many powerful feelings as well. I think it is not what I had expected to see. I think. I think I thought it would be more like, I don't know quite what the right word is, but like more sanitized, ya know a bit like "this is an NHS helpful booklet," you know what I mean, I think that makes me sound a bit silly but you know so I think I thought it would be more like that and I think it was way more interesting not being like that because then I was having reactions to the comics, you know I was reacting to them personally and I hadn't expected that *atoll*. Yeah.

Alex: Interesting, well I just have one more question for you and that is what was your overall impression of the exhibition?

Amy: I think my overall impression was that it was a powerful exhibition. In the sense that there were, a lot of the paintings were so deep and I think you can take from them so much and so much of what you are feeling can be seen in those comics, so I think that was amazing. But also it definitely made me think about, right, what really is a comic. You know, what is a graphic comic, what am I, what is going on here, but this is a whole section of something I had never even heard of before I heard about your project and so, yeah, it definitely sparked an interest which I think is a great, a good thing for an exhibition to do. But I think it was power...it was way more powerful than I thought it would be and I think that some of the pictures have stayed with me you know and esspecia...yeah some of them, and I think the blackness of that first one is really stayed with me. how they have managed to get so much across with two colours you know. I think that was really clever. So yeah I think it was good. I think it is really good and I think I would have liked to have seen



more. I think I would like to go to a bigger exhibition and see more types and spend more time in that environment. Which for me is quite a good thing.

Alex: And a follow up to your comment do you remember if there were any works that you went “no this isn’t a comic”?

Amy: I don’t know. Maybe the rose bit because I didn’t understand what it was showing me. maybe that’s why I could see... I think with the others oh yeah I could follow this, I can follow this, but with that I didn’t follow it, but maybe I wasn’t meant to, but I didn’t really engage in that one. Yeah. I think.

Alex: Alright, was there anything in your notes that my questions haven’t got at?

Amy: I don’t think so...

Alex: or anything else you would like to add?

Amy: I don’t think so. I think that is everything. Yeah I forgot to download the app to do the interactive so I have downloaded that now. I was going to go back this morning but I didn’t have time and a part of me I had to be honest was a bit scared of the app cause I thought what are they going to do? Cause I went to a museum a while ago and they had this interactive thing and then the painting started talking to me and it was a bit much for me (laugh). “oh god!” so I wasn’t sure what they were going to do and because I was on my own I thought I can’t go back, and I have a really loud yelp as well, so I haven’t done the app I have to confess. And haven’t done the app and partly that was because I was slightly scared. But yeah I will. Just find someone to go with me. But yeah.

[End]

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