

Illustrating Mental Health

Caroline Pedler

ORCID Number: 0000-0002-8209-2548

Output Type: Conference Contribution

Output Date: 2019

Output Details:

20 min Presentation & Exhibition (author accepted abstract and presentation slides attached)

Illustrating Mental Health: Illustration Research Symposium and Exhibition, November 8th - 9th 2019, University of Worcester.

Conference organised by Illustration Research & Desdemona McCannon

Recommended Citation:

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Caroline Pedler - Artist - Illustrator - Educator

Proposal - *Illustrating Mental Health Symposium* - Nov 2019

Context:

Research focus - To illustrate and publish a self authored picturebook that challenges current sales driven tropes within the Western book market.

Researching, gathering inspiration and finding focus from the global children's picturebook market.
To enter a complete picturebook to Nami Concours, South Korea - 2021.

Using my own small press An-ti-dote Press - a small press celebrating kindness and the experience of being human in illustrated book formats. Offering an imagined safe place to escape to, where a child can tackle increasingly common and acute mental health issues.

Working within an accessible, yet contemporary aesthetic with strong design.

Accreditation:

Relevant employment / activity:

- Picturebook Illustrator 1999 - present - over 60 books. Various International publishers.
- Part time Lecturer - BA Illustration & MA Pathway leader - Plymouth College of Art 2012-present.
- Founded An-it-dote Press 2012 - to publish as a subsidiary of Troika Books with Martin West and Roy Johnson in 2020.

Relevant exhibitions, competitions and lectures:

- Sketch Open, exhibition / tour, Rabley Drawing Centre, Marlborough. 2017
- Various industry lectures - Bologna Children's Book Fair, Bologna Italy 2015-19 & Shanghai, China 2018.
- World Trends in Children's Picturebook Illustration - The Illustrators Exhibition, BCBF, Bologna and world tour 2018/19
- The Chen Bochui / CICLA Original illustration for Childrens' Books exhibition, world tour and permanent collection - Baoshuan Folk Arts Museum, Shanghai 2018
- Diploma 'Best Illustrations for children's book' - Image of the Book, Russia

Proposal:

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN IDEA & EXPERIENCE

In the gap that calm abiding creates between our experience and our ideas about our experience, insight or vipassana can happen. When we're just drawing, just seeing, simply being, we move out of the thinking-mind and into the being-mind, into the sensing body, into direct experience.

Wendy Ann Greenhalgh, *Mindfulness & the Art of Drawing - A Creative Path to Awareness*. (2015). 1st ed. Lewes: Ivy Press, p.58.

In 2018 my Mother was diagnosed with stage 2 lung cancer.

This was to be the last of a catalogue of life changing events over 2 years that led me to suffering acute anxiety.

Not long after the diagnosis and a call to the samaritans I was in my studio and felt compelled to exorcise what I saw and felt.



Personal sketchbook, Pedler, July 2018.

Using my sketchbooks to share the experience that haunted me, there was a sense of peace on seeing the darkness in front of me, through aisthesis I could understand it, control it even, a “*revelation in its purest sense—a world being revealed*”. Rinko, P, *‘The Red Book’ Uncovered: Explorations into Carl Jung’s Active Imagination, Sessions 1 & 2’, Back of the Brain, (Session 2, Sept)*

This activity of translating an intangible fear into a tangible outcome was cathartic, but on a creative level helped me silence the critical commentary of my commercial picturebook practice, and momentarily released me from the unease of it. It was here that I wanted to be, with something real.



Picturebook journal, Pedler, July 2018



Over the next few months, I continued to work in my picturebook journal, where the darkness became a constant theme, reflecting events I had experienced over the past couple of years. Different to my sketchbooks, and this time exorcising personal experience into ideas for a picturebook narrative. This wasn't the first time I have used my sketchbooks in this way, but it's the most extreme, continuous and meaningful.



Different experiences illustrated in various sketchbooks



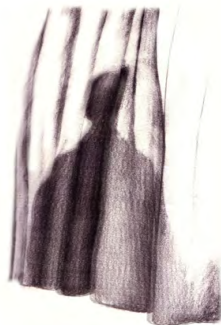
Personal sketchbooks, Pedler, 2011- 19.



...and didn't really understand



It was inevitable





Personal sketchbook 2017-18

After illustrating the stories of others for 20 years, working in my sketchbooks this way has unlocked a confidence to share personal narratives for the first time. Although there is a fear of making imagery that could be seen as self indulgent or at worst ‘banal’ (RB, Introduction, p.77), I do feel confident enough to communicate a more authentic, meaningful and layered narrative that didn’t exist before.

There are many stages to my development and search for authenticity, that include exhibitions, hypnotherapy, meditation, travel, conferences, workshops, acupuncture and many months of sustained practice in my sketchbooks. The presentation I offer will go into more depth of the steps I have taken to unlearn a 20 year commercial career, and how my own mental health and wellbeing has shaped, focused and helped me develop a picturebook that has begun to transform my practice, my career and hopefully the lives of others when published.



Logo for my small press in collaboration with publisher Troika books.



ILLUSTRATING MENTAL HEALTH

8th- 9th November 2019

UNIVERSITY OF WORCESTER
THE ART HOUSE
WORCESTER, UK

A two day event considering the social,
cultural and professional importance of
Illustration in relation to mental health.

REGISTRATION NOW OPEN

<https://www.illustrationresearch.org>

The Tenth International

illustration Research Symposium

 **intellect**
publishers of original thinking

WORCESTER ILLUSTRATION

 **University
of Worcester**

“To the extent that I managed to translate the emotions into images– that is to say, to find the images which were concealed in the emotions– I was inwardly calmed and reassured. Had I left those images hidden in the emotions, I might have been torn to pieces by them.”

CARL JUNG, from 'Memories, Dreams and Reflections'

Carl Jung kept visual diaries documenting his personal struggles with mental illness, and Jungian analysis to this day encourages patients to document their dreams using imagery. This year's IR symposium takes Jung's 'Red Book' as a key text and asks how illustration can be used to depict, explain and help understand mental illness and related issues such as wellbeing, happiness, cognition, confusion, dreams and dementia.

A key question is how can illustration represent the inner workings of the mind, through creating visual narratives that draw upon personal and collective experience of the world. A related question is how does illustration articulate complex emotional and perceptual experience, alongside and beyond spoken and written language? How can illustration – as an activity as well as its place in popular visual culture – address these issues?

We are living at a time where image culture has saturated every aspect of our lives. There has been an equivalent explosion in mental health issues for young people. What part does illustration play in exacerbating or alleviating mental health problems by contributing to popular image culture?

GPs now prescribe creative activities as part of a government drive towards 'arts for health', and this has resulted in a boom in artist led services to a diverse demographic. What ethical issues should creative practitioners be aware of when working in this field? How can illustrators lead the agenda for mental health policy making? Does contemporary image culture contribute to mental distress?



PROGRAMME

Full programme available online
<https://www.illustrationresearch.org/programme>

The link to **REGISTER** is here
https://ext-webapp-01.worc.ac.uk/cgi-bin/illustrating_mental_health/booking.pl

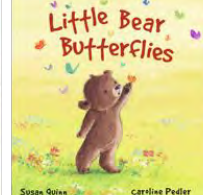
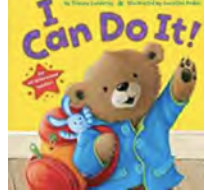
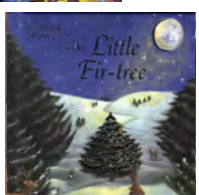
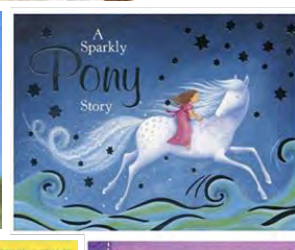
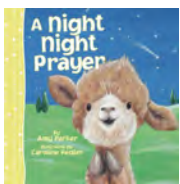
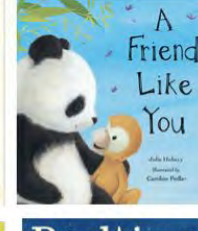
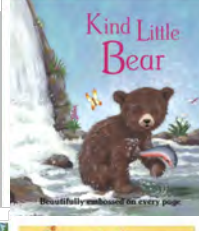
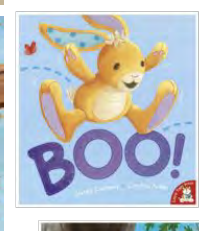
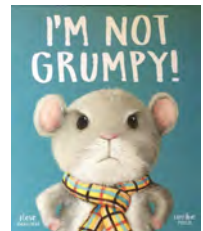
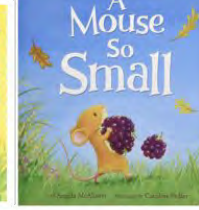
COST OF REGISTRATION

One Day £90 Two Day £120
Student Rate One Day £15 Two Day £30

hello







WHERE THE WILD THINGS ARE



STORY AND PICTURES BY MAURICE SENDAK

A Conversation with Walter Lorraine



A conversation with Walter Lorraine, Caldecott & Co. by Maurice Sendak





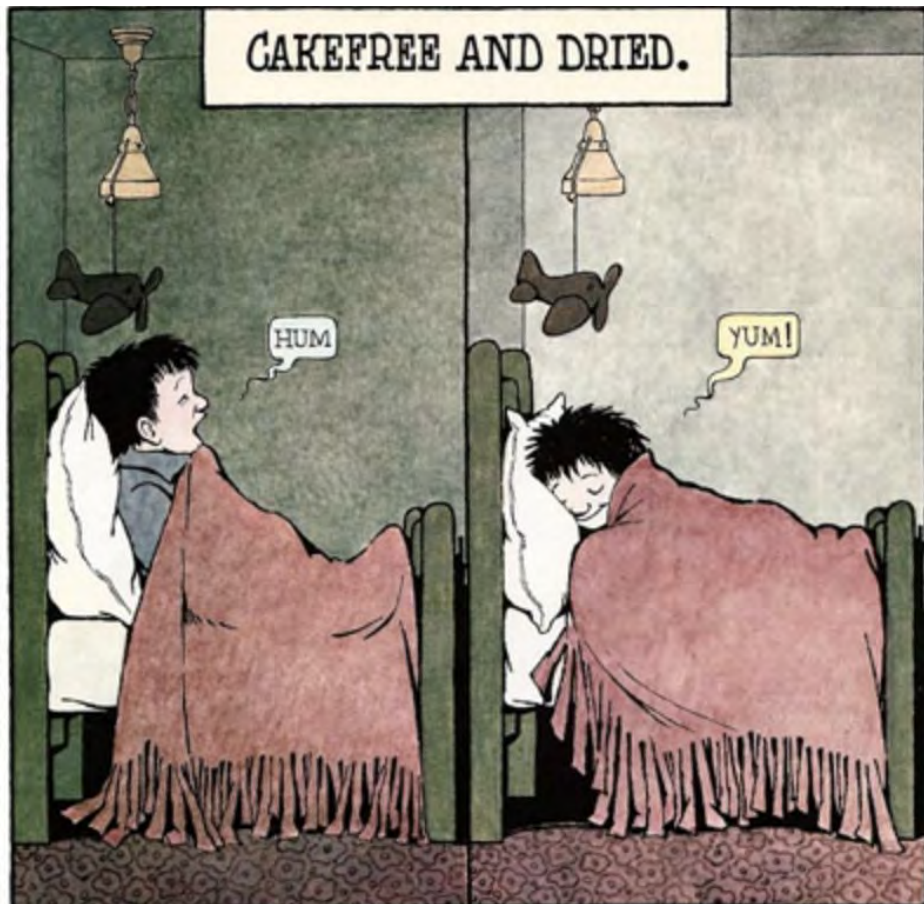
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IN THE NIGHT KITCHEN

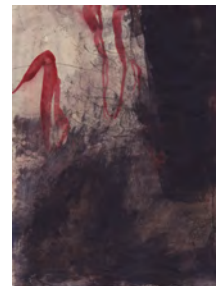
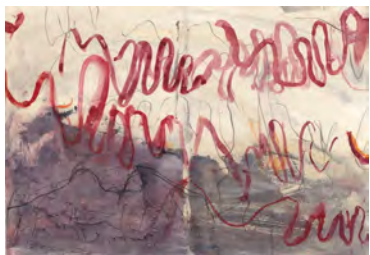
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MAURICE SENDAK

STRAIGHT INTO BED



CAKEFREE AND DRIED.





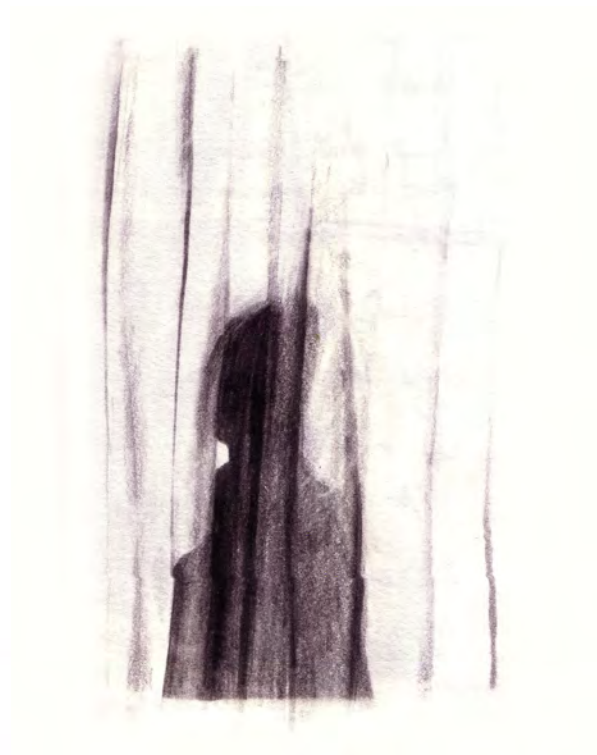




... 'All the intricate philosophy of marks, signs, and traces play out in drawing. Drawing is the place where blindness, touch, and resemblance become visible, and it is the site of the most sensitive of negotiations between the hand, eye, and the mind.'

(a letter to John Berger from James Elkins, Dec 2003, cork, Ireland, pg 106)





Confronting my shadow





Communicating with the darkness inside me ignited a feeling of contentment and peace

THE BLACK
STUFF



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A FIRST
BOOK OF
MINDFULNESS

YOUR MIND IS LIKE THE SKY

BRONWEN BALLARD
LAURA CARLIN

But if it's a big, dark raincloud thought,
it's probably best to put on your wellies.

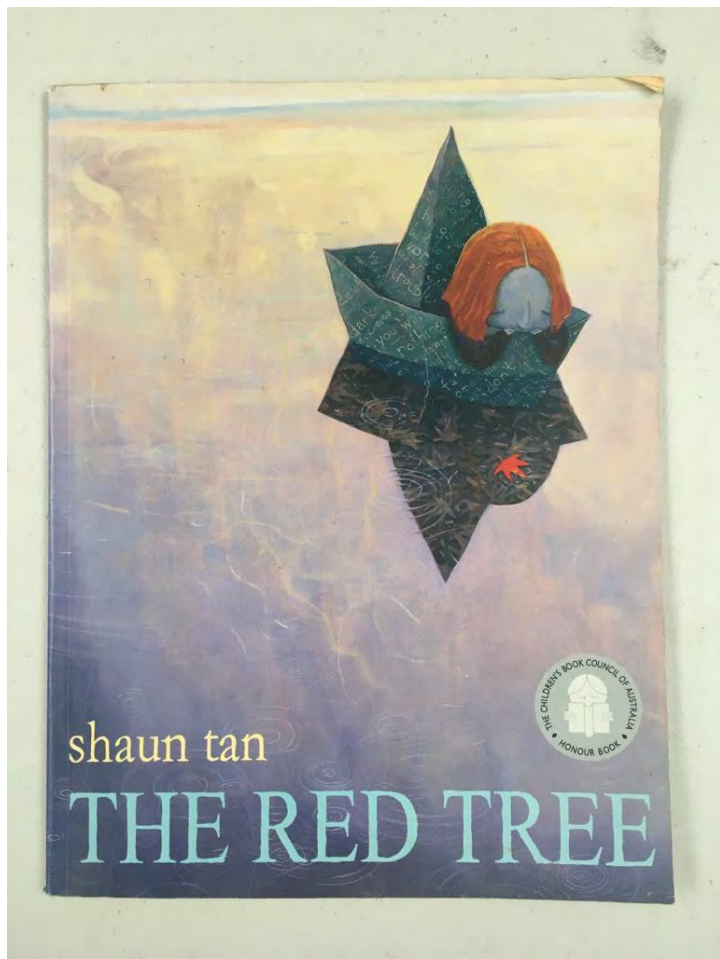


Outside, the Black Dog leaned
down towards her and BREATHED.
"Crikey, you ARE big!"
said Small. "What are you
doing here, you guffin?"
The Black Dog
SNUFFED
at her.



Levi Pinfold -
The Black Dog







Jon Klassen The Dark

Working on aesthetics and visual narrative in my sketchbooks



The Illustrators Exhibition - 2018
Bologna, Italy and world tour

SKETCH 2017



Baoshan Folk Arts Museum,
Shanghai - 2018
permanent collection and world tour



Image of the Book- Russia - 2019



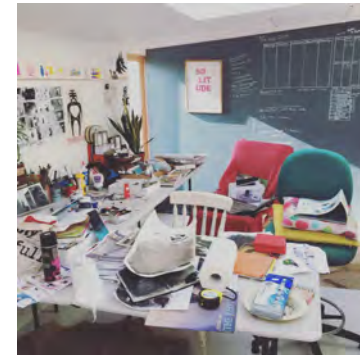
Activity as practice



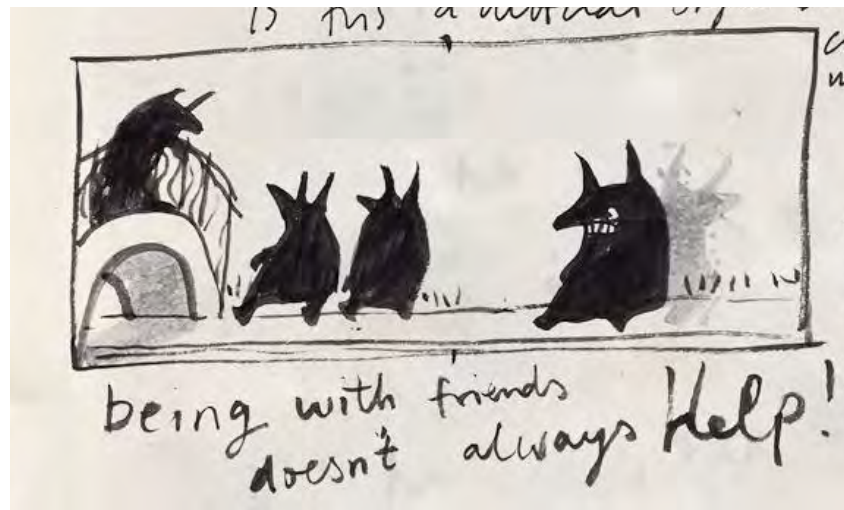
Gerswalde 2017



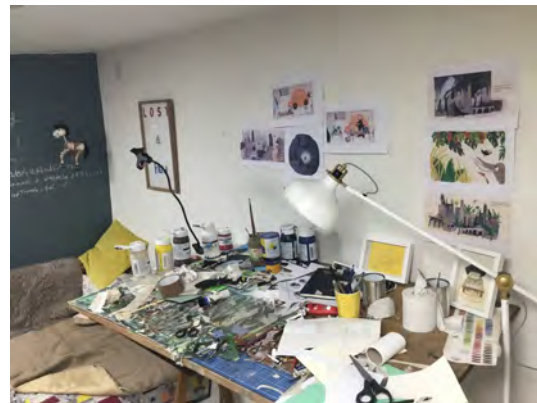
Sarmede 2019



Designed and built a studio 2018-19













The background is a dark, textured illustration of a city at night. In the center is a large, light-colored building with a prominent dome and arched windows. To the left, there are dark, jagged shapes resembling rooftops or industrial structures. In the lower right, a small, dark figure is visible, possibly a person or animal, holding a small object. The overall mood is mysterious and somber.

The Accidental Gardener







A small press celebrating the poetics of the
'everyday' and the experience of being human.

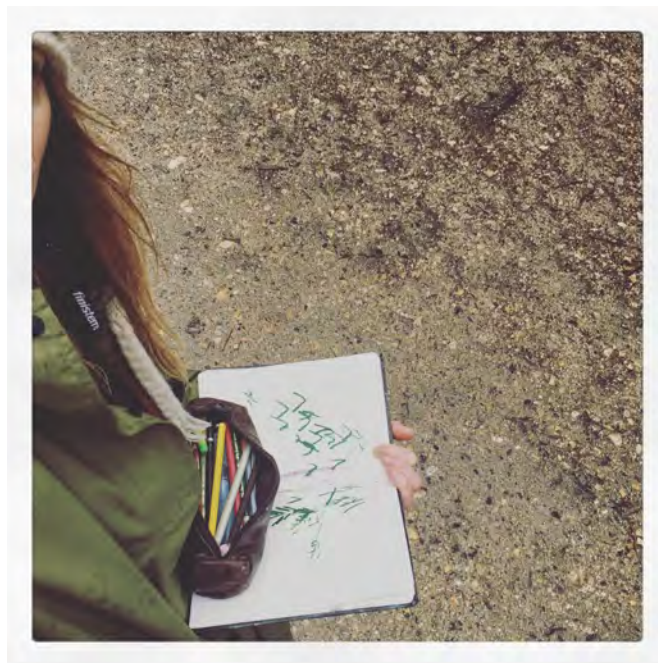


troika

'...we agreed a long time ago that this would allow your really free and creative side to flourish. Well that's how I see it. Yes we want to be commercial but we want to be led by the creativity first and the ability to try and present something different and challenging, it's the only way I feel a small indie publisher can stand out and make a mark; creative courage and conviction.'

Roy Johnson, Troika Books





Thanks for listening