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Artist captures the suffering caused by clinical depression

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Debut artist Toby Brown is making headlines with his first exhibition to raise awareness for Mind



Portrait of Alastair Campbell by Toby Brown

To raise awareness of clinical depression, artist Toby Brown photographed famous sufferers of the condition, while they were explaining what it was like. Working from these haunting images, Toby created a series of portraits.

The final paintings will be on show at an exhibition, *Behind the Smile*, at Debut Contemporary in Notting Hill, London, from Thursday 19 May until 23 May 2016. This is also being held to support mental health charity Mind.

Having suffered himself, Toby manages to capture the sense of loneliness that mental illness creates in each portrait. The idea was born in 2011 when Toby began to start painting a series of three self-portraits showing people what was going on behind the false smiles. In 2012 he showed them at a group exhibition in Brick Lane. It was at this show that Toby was approached by a psychiatrist. They started talking about the power of art as a therapy, and how it can send a message and understanding, better sometimes than just words alone.

Mental health problems can affect the way you think, feel and behave. They affect around one in four people in Britain, and range from common mental health problems, such as depression and anxiety, to more rare problems such as schizophrenia and bipolar disorder. A mental health problem can feel just as bad, or worse, as any other physical illness – only you cannot see it.

The project, co-curated by Barry Martin, has already caught the attention of celebrities such as Carrie Grant, Georgia Taylor, Danny McNamara, Sandi Thom and others such as Mental health campaigner Jonny Benjamin who are supporting the idea of raising awareness by agreeing for Toby to paint their portraits and showing that sufferers are not alone. "It's very exciting to be part of such a wonderful project! I can't wait to see the finished piece! There's a definite link between mental health and creativity, particularly art, and I know many people with mental health issues who use it as a therapeutic tool. I'm sure this will inspire many more people to use art to help them manage their mental health," said Jonny. There is a light at the end of the tunnel. "Toby's work is brave and honest, exploring the raw and complex nature of human emotion," said Carrie Grant.



Artist Toby Brown



An unfinished portrait of Amy Winehouse by Toby Brown

For more information on the exhibition visit <http://www.debutcontemporary.com/events/toby-brown-solo-exhibition-behind-the-smile-vip-preview/#.VznxmRMrLWY>

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