



ARMOUR

arthur+martha 2017

ARMOUR

Poems, embroideries and other texts made in self-defence

Armour is a project that uses words and stitches to explore the ways we protect ourselves. It is a collaboration with veterans of armed conflict and with people who have lived experience of homelessness. We asked people to describe their personal "armour", physical and mental. Artworks inspired by gambesons, the quilted jackets worn under suits of armour, were made out of rust dyed fabric and embroidered with poems, and other writings.

We would like to thank the many people who participated for their bravery and honesty. We'd also like to thank our guest poet Johnny Woodhams and singer songwriter Matt Hill, The Quiet Loner, for leading some workshops, our wonderful team of volunteers, including Melanie Miller, Marc and Jessie. And finally, we are grateful to the Booth Centre, Imperial War Museum-North, The Royal Armouries Leeds, and Tom Harrison House for hosting workshops.

Lois Blackburn & Philip Davenport
arthur+martha
2017

"When I was homeless, I used to put my head in a box. I was sleeping on a park bench, with cardboard to keep the draught from below and a box to keep the wind off my head. A box, a lovely form of protection, it works very well."

Georgina *Michaels*

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THEM
OUT

This body of armour that
is the weight and size
of my heart
is the shield and protection
to my soul and eyes
when touched I breathe sweet air

Elliot Hallisey

I wrote your name in the sky, in tears
(this is something I don't normally do).
But the wind blew it away.
A soldier, me, taught to be emotion-free
I wrote your name in the sand
of experience
the crap life brings.
Don't never want to experience what I have
but the waves wash it away.
With my background I attack
with my family I block, it's defence.
Gentle will always overpower strength:
I wrote your name in my heart
and here it forever will stay.

Anonymous

.....

KNOWLEDGE

.....

Comes to them in darker times

Bright sharp shining, forcefully cold
Makes me the hero strong and bold
Fields of crimson and green
Battlefields full of the dead and dying
Wives and lovers left bereft and crying.

A sword, my weapon and my friend
A piece of sharpened metal for me to defend
Cold hard steel in my command
Makes me powerful and grand
Becomes my lover in my hand.

Ian Dawes

Regime

Rage that's used in order to control
relations, intimate partners
to achieve a golden dream a chiselled cold
fear that stings fear
where one isn't aware
it looks like metal but it's not.

Gavin Farquharson

When I was fighting didn't think that was dangerous
When a knuckle duster knocked out my tooth
Didn't think that was dangerous
And when I was driving 130mph,
Didn't think that was dangerous.
When I hold a knife, that's the closest I come.
That's closest:
"If I'm not careful with this
In my hand
It is dangerous."

Anonymous

NEVER AGAIN
WILL I LET BULLIES
PULL ME DOWN
PULLED UP WALL
AND MY ARMOUR

Danny Collins

fish and chips I like to order
I don't like the word chaos
it brings disorder
danger comes in all sorts
car, bus, tram
suicidal thoughts.

Peter Twigg

THE NIGHT
UPSET ALONE
SUICIDE

Saf Hussain

Being in the street
Looking over my shoulder
Paranoia
The night
Dark
Shaking
Scared to fall asleep
Got to stay awake
Thieves
People trying to hurt
Vulnerable
Suicide
Anxiety
Asking for money
Don't know who
Hunger
Weight loss
Alone.

Saf Hussain

LOOKIN

OVER

MY

SHOULDER

Saf Hussain

Old history bullshitting
Keeps warm, keeps you safe balaclavas
Built to fit jock straps
Slaves and wenches football shin pads
Emblem big cars big ego
Heavy and restricting boxing gloves
Gladiators gangsters
Battle stories bravado and lies

Stephen B

BOG OFF AND GET KNOTTED
IT'S COLD, IT'S HEAVY
IT'S RUSTING, THE RAIN
OIL PRINTS ON MY CHEST

Phil Barraclough

safety in numbers
numbers of possibilities
possibilities in abundance
abundance of nothing
nothing to declare
declare bankruptcy
bankruptcy court
court the dangers
danger in darkness
darkness to light
light the touch paper

Lawrence McGill

My family protect
Me
My ex
A big Irish man
Nobody messes with
My nephew.

Stay inside
Walk away
A bit of karate.
Always go to me dad
Uncle
down the road.

When you're on your own
Got to watch your back.

Ann Marie Abberley

LINKING MY DEFENCES
TO PROTECT ME FROM HARM
WORKS LIKE A CHARM

Lawrence McGill

safety in numbers link on link
link with friends hard and light
light from the chains and shields
shields protection and noisy
noisy shouts and clanging screams
screams of people pain and grief
grief of friends as fallen flow
flow of rivers of missing foe
foe that's banished to wide open spaces
spaces spaces it's what we fought for
for spaces to share with friends
friends friends linked linked together hand
hands safe safe

Peter S

LINKING
LAND

FOLLOWING
HAND

LINKING
LINE

FOLLOWING
MINE

Peter Twigg

Observe yourself when the mind is viciously dismantled
As the plummeting connections descend from fields above
Defences fail and life falls into a dark disarray
Observe yourself when the mind is viciously dismantled
Wondering why others are reluctant to be impressed
Pain remembers when they land you with truth
Observe yourself when the mind is viciously dismantled
As the plummeting connections descend from fields above

Anonymous

3 nights awake, powder fuelled
3 nights watchful: looking seeing staring
3 what when why
3 days dead sleep, dreamless pitch darkness
3 times unlucky, wives' tears tell tales.

Stewart Totten

I DON'T LIKE
THE WORD **CHAOS**
IT BRINGS
DISORDER

Peter Twigg

Riot

The street is open the men are divided
Bricks, stones, batons, all provided
I feel scared with all this drama
Need to find some mental armour

The theme for today is violence
Boundaries will be set
This will be a day
One will never forget.

Horses run and blue lights flash
As hordes of rioters begin to dash
Blood spilled on this street
One I remember was so neat.

Glassed ground, my frown
Upside down, all safe around
With my peers, riot sounds
Like music to my ears.

Terry Casey

SAFE IN THE HOUSE
NOT SAFE IN THE STREET
CAGED IN THE BOXROOM

Peggy Prestley

I've got my memory corner
 In my house
 I've got him beside me
Since all that's happened
 I'm back to hearing my voices again
 I'm back home to the Mental Health Act again
Stitching is very therapeutic
 I've holded it on my shoulder
 I've holded it on my shoulder for so long.
I'm his guardian angel.

Peggy Prestley

THIS MORTAL ARMOUR THAT I WEAR
FIRST UNCOMFORTABLE RESERVED
SMILE QUILTED, THIS MORTAL
ARMOUR THAT I WEAR
MY TONGUE LICKS AND FEELS...
COLD AND SMOOTH

Gavin Farquharson

Behind brittle barriers

Behind brittle barriers you can't feel safe
Behind brittle barriers you can't feel the bass
Barriers block the way, push obstacles away
Behind brittle barriers.

Cradle me in your arms and keep me safe
Don't let me loose, or lose my faith

Behind brittle barriers, behind brittle barriers
People behind brittle barriers

Clashing through conflict (Behind brittle barriers)
Sisters and mothers (Behind brittle barriers)
Encased in emotions (Behind brittle barriers)
Fathers and brothers (Behind brittle barriers)

Behind brittle barriers, behind brittle barriers
People behind brittle barriers

Soul, child, adult (Behind brittle barriers)
Don't lose your faith (Behind brittle barriers)
Barriers block the way
Push obstacles away
People behind brittle barriers

Behind brittle barriers, behind brittle barriers
People behind brittle barriers.

(Song lyric, written by group)

Cocooned personal self-protection
False fearless weak
Same feelings indestructible
Front control psychology
Godliness immense, indestructible

Lee Wright

I'm in a tree with the branches cradling me, rocking in
a breeze leaves touching me, cool safe, from the
outside world like my cradle when I was young the
breeze like mother's gentle voice, my canopy
encompassing me keeping me safe, comforting,
relaxed, like being on a boat in the sky, free, safe,
gently rocking me to sleep, peaceful, leaves from the
sun the branches rough, yet gentle, I can smell the
scents of the forest coming up from the forest floor,
cool, refreshing, loving, protecting home.

Peter S

Armour

It stinks of toxic masculinity
Let's dump all the weapons in the sea
And have your friends around for tea.

Jack Silverstone

Things we do for the better can leave us the worse for wear

The rain thumps my umbrella
I'm dropping my guard, I can't believe it went so well.
There's no place like... home?
And knock on the door to tell
The one who I love:
"Make sure you close the blinds
And continue my journey in the rain."

Gavin Farquharson

When you are in a peaceful vicinity
try and work out Infinity
It brings you to immortality
that is my mentality.

Anonymous

ANGELS
WITH DELIGHT
TAKE
FLIGHT

Peter Twigg

AFTERWORD

Philip Davenport & Lois Blackburn

This body of armour that
is the weight and size
of my heart...
(Elliot Hallisey)

Armour is an art and poetry project that explores the many ways we protect ourselves. It is a collaboration with artist Lois Blackburn, poet Philip Davenport and veterans from the Armed Services and people who have lived experience of homelessness.

Many people we met were veterans who have also experienced homelessness. We asked people to describe their personal "armour", physical and mental. And to imagine what might happen if it was taken off. That spark of imagining is what gave life to these poems. Out of much heart-searching, during the art and poetry workshops, came many pieces of writing. Some were embroidered, or inscribed on suits of armour made of cloth. The red text in this book is the text of the embroideries.

Although we all need protection, sometimes protection becomes a problem. Armour can be extremely heavy, it limits sight, sound, touch - and emotions. In the poem Sir Galahad by Tennyson, the crucial moment comes when the famous warrior realises if he is to let in love, he must remove his armour. But to do so is fearful as well as freeing.

Defences fail and life falls into a dark disarray
Observe yourself when the mind is viciously dismantled...
(Anon)

Imagining the absence of armour was a difficult sometimes
frightening exercise. For some, it took tremendous courage to
write about it. For others, it brought relief. And for others
again, many questions.

"I wonder where it will lead me, this writing...?" (Gavin
Farquharson)

"Poetry, I've never got it before. This is the first time
I've even written a poem. Never before. I've enjoyed
it, it's been special." (Elliot Hallisey)

How can people who've experienced physical and
psychological violence live peacefully with their memories? In
our workshops we discussed how we protect our deeper
selves and how we heal.

This project was devised to allow emotional/artistic
exploration of difficult areas of personal history. The poems
come out of the experience of conflict - but our hope is that
they might help people to find some peace.

...friends friends linked linked together hand
hands safe safe.
(Peter S)

Participants

Alan Moreman
Andy Crossley
Ann Marie Abberley
Anthony
Ash Coates
Bakary
Barry
Benny
Brian
Caroline
Colin McGiffin
Danny Collins
Dave
Elliot Hallisey
Filipe Santos
Gary
Gavin Farquharson
Georgina Michaels
Ian Dawes
Jack Silverstone
Jai
James Welsh
Janine
Jono Johnson
Karlton Reid
Keith
Lawrence McGill
Lee Wright
Martin
Michael K

Michael Jackson

Niko

Paul McKay

Peggy Prestley

Peter S

Peter Smith

Peter Twigg

Phil Baraclough

PJ

Saf Hussain

Scott

Stephen B

Stewart Totton

Terry Casey

Volunteers

Marc

Jessy

Melanie Miller

PROJECT PARTNERS AND SUPPORTERS

Arts Council England, The Booth Centre Manchester, Tom Harrison House Liverpool, The Imperial War Museum-North, The Royal Armouries Leeds, Gallery of Costume Manchester, Walking with the Wounded.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

<https://arthur-martha.com>

<http://arthur-and-martha.blogspot.co.uk>

<https://twitter.com/arthurandmartha>

<https://www.facebook.com/arthur.martha.cic/>

<https://www.instagram.com/arthur.and.martha/>



IF
THE
BULLET
IS
COMING

IT'S
COMING

(Brian)