



Rachel Thomas, *A Well-Protected Social Participant (I)*, 2016

Photo-lithographs, paper, 12 x 24. Personal collection of the artist; photograph Rachel Thomas.



Rachel Thomas, *A Well-Protected Social Participant (II)*, 2016

Photo-lithographs, paper, 12 x 24. Personal collection of the artist; photograph Rachel Thomas.



Rachel Thomas, *A Well-Protected Social Participant (III)*, 2016

Photo-lithographs, paper, 12 x 24. Personal collection of the artist; photograph Rachel Thomas.

Artist Statement

As an MFA graduate and an artist-researcher, I have been particularly fascinated by the way in which visual art can serve a multiplicity of purposes. During my sojourn, I have discovered that art can access the language of empathy where words fail, particularly with regard to the stigma of mental illness. In a similar vein, I have discovered that the findings concluded from research-creation provide a catalyst for catharsis in addition to emboldening the viability of social transformation.

During my research, I became interested in how definitions and labels pertaining to mental illness permeated into a broader social context. I discovered that when an individual has been marked with a particular diagnosis, two distinct identities are formed as a means of protection from stigma. Using David Hume's theory of Personal Identity, I concluded that each of these identities served a specific purpose for the individual and, while they fluctuated depending on the situation, stayed isolated from one another. The two identities consisted of a fortuitous public and socially acceptable façade, and a private, vulnerability indulged form beneath.

The first iteration of this exploration was synthesized in the form of photographic and sculptural works. It was then followed by monochromatic photo-lithographs, which further created a sense of human ambiguity and visually underlined the notion of protective armour.