

BEYOND ADDICTION REFRAMING RECOVERY

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Location:

Arnold and Sheila Aronson Galleries, Parsons School of Design, The New School
66 Fifth Ave. @ 13th St., New York City

Dates: April 6-20, 2019

Gallery hours: Open daily 12:00–6:00 p.m. and Thurs. until 8:00 p.m.

Tues. April 9: Opening reception (5:30 - 6:30 p.m.) and Panel discussion (6:30 - 8:00 p.m.)
Art, Media, Research, and Advocacy: What Shapes Public Opinion and Drug Policy?
Part of the Open Society Foundations' Dialogues on Drug Policy series at The New School

Exhibition Curators: Graham MacIndoe & Susan Stellin

Graham is a photographer and assistant professor at Parsons and Susan is a reporter and adjunct professor in the Journalism + Design department at The New School who recently completed a master's in public health at Columbia University. They have collaborated on projects combining interviews and photography, including exhibitions, talks, and a memoir documenting Graham's addiction, incarceration, and recovery.

Contributing Artists: Nina Berman, Allan Clear, John Donadeo, Yannick Fornacciari, Tony Fohse, Paul Gorman, John Linder, Luceo, Graham MacIndoe, Josh Meltzer, Jackie Neale, Neil Sneddon, and Susan Stellin.

Student Projects, supervised by Graham MacIndoe and Julia Gorton, assistant professor of communications at Parsons: Sara Akiki, Carly Bayroff, Scottt Palframan, Ellie Plass, Josie Stevenson, and Lucy Xin.

Exhibition website: www.reframingrecovery.org

Exhibition Overview

There are about 23 million people in the United States who have successfully resolved a problem with drugs or alcohol, but we rarely see or hear their stories compared to depictions of addiction in media, art, music, and film. Although not everyone identifies as being “in recovery” and many people can’t publicly acknowledge their past because of stigma or the consequences of admitting illegal drug use, a growing movement is working to offer examples of success and hope to those still struggling with addiction.

The goal of this exhibit is not just to show that recovery is possible, but also to highlight some of the ways people have rebuilt their lives: reconnecting with their families, finding rewarding work, developing meaningful relationships with partners, peers, and others who offer support. We also wanted to feature some of the treatment providers and harm reduction services that many people rely on, often at times when they feel isolated and overwhelmed. Recovery is rarely a solo journey and it usually involves setbacks and hurdles, but the more we talk about it, share ideas, and embrace different paths, the more people will find their way.



"I'm grateful for what I have now. Having a stable job and a stable place to live definitely plays a huge part in it for me. And the fact that I have a relationship with my mother and my father now, that helps. So mainly it's people in my life. I don't want to lose what I've got."

Thanks to: Luke Hayman and Elyanna Blaser-Gould at Pentagram Design, Hashem Eaddy, The National, Open Society Foundations Global Drug Policy Program, and everyone who worked with the artists and shared their stories.

Artist Statements

Allan Clear

Lower East Side Needle Exchange, 1990-1995

By the end of the 1980s, New York City was a global epicenter of HIV and injection drug use, with half of the injectors in the city living with HIV. After a small syringe exchange program opened by the city in 1988 closed 18 months later, activists from AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power (ACT-UP) started programs in community settings. In the U.S., the dominant ideology to address drug use was a punitive, racially biased criminal justice system. Syringe exchange programs ushered in a novel approach called harm reduction, which recognizes that people who use drugs are capable of making autonomous decisions and treats them as human beings with needs, desires, ambitions, loves, and family.

These pictures catalog activities, characters, events, demonstrations, meals, and art that were part of the Lower East Side Needle Exchange between 1990 and 1995. As New York State strives to eliminate HIV, people who use drugs are often forgotten heroes of the epidemic. They came to the syringe exchange programs, used the services, felt protected, and reduced HIV transmission among injectors to about 2%—shifting New York City from an epicenter of pain to a global model for hope.

Allan Clear has been involved in the harm reduction movement since the early 1990s. He was the executive director of the Lower East Side Harm Reduction Center, one of the first syringe exchange programs in New York State, and of the Harm Reduction Coalition.



Graham MacIndoe

Thank You for Sharing, 2017-2019

A few years ago, I started posting occasional thoughts on Facebook and Instagram about my experience with addiction, reflecting on what I'd been through and where I am now. Running is a big part of my recovery so sometimes I'd write about something I'd been mulling over while I ran—often a meditative time for me. These posts would address things like my mum seeing an exhibition of self-portraits taken during my addiction, a friend's death from an overdose, or reliving my incarceration. Stumbling across an old letter or photograph would bring back a memory I wanted to share, or I'd take a new photo to accompany whatever I wrote.

Being open about my past has been incredibly cathartic, but what really moved me were the responses I got from people who would reveal their own stories of addiction and recovery. Some were traumatic or tough to read, but many were full of gratitude at overcoming immense hurdles to get their life on track. I hope exhibiting some of the posts from this series opens the door to more conversations about a topic that affects so many people's lives.

Graham MacIndoe is a photographer and assistant professor of photography at Parsons. His work has been published and exhibited widely, including solo exhibitions at the Contemporary Arts Center in Cincinnati in 2018 and the Scottish National Portrait Gallery in 2017. Graham has spoken about his photography and depictions of addiction at MoMA, Aperture, TEDxStanford, and other venues.

www.grahammacindoe.com



This is me and my mum outside my exhibition at the Scottish National Portrait Gallery. It was really tough for her and my dad to come and look at the images that showed exactly what happened to me when I was an addict and so far away from them. I wasn't sure they'd want to come or even look at the pictures and read the text, but they did and stayed for my talk which I think meant a lot to them – it certainly did to me. I finally feel a huge weight lift from all our shoulders. Thanks to everyone who came. I was incredibly humbled and grateful. xxx

Neil Sneddon

Developing Recovery, 2017

Being in recovery and working with clients in recovery for the past 17 years, I have always enjoyed helping the people I support. Recovery isn't simply about quitting drugs or alcohol—it is about healing and breathing again. It's about looking at life and the simple things that make up a life with all of its ups and downs.

For this series, I gave 40 black and white disposable cameras to 40 people, some in very early recovery, some in long-term recovery, and some living through a bereavement following a loved one's death. The rationale for using film was simply a quote from the photographer Yousuf Karsh: "Character, like photography, develops in darkness."

I asked them to take pictures of their recovery and provide brief statements about the photos I chose. The images and narratives from *Developing Recovery* were first exhibited in Dundee, Scotland in 2017, which some of the participants were able to view. I am grateful to everyone who contributed to this project, although it is a sad fact that some of them are no longer with us.

Neil Sneddon is a senior manager in substance misuse and a registered social worker practicing in Dundee, Scotland. He is an obsessive amateur photographer who has taken up film photography and darkroom work over the past couple of years. He lives in Tayport, Scotland with his wife, daughter, and springer spaniel.

<https://www.facebook.com/Possibilityday/>



Nina Berman

An autobiography of Miss Wish, 1990-2017

This work looks at the relationship between trauma and addiction, the pain of memory, the challenge of recovery, the search for security and self-love, and the role of art and friendship in the healing process.

In 1990, I was photographing street kids in London and met a girl named Cathy Wish who was living on the run from a life of sexual abuse and violence. She smoked crack to help keep the flashbacks away. Soon after, she fled England for New York City and started a new life as Kimberly Stevens. I remained her friend, advocate, and the keeper of her archives, which included her diaries, documents, drawings, and fragments of her life.

I photographed Kim to keep her memory close, never intending to make the pictures public. But Kim wanted to tell her story and a few years ago, we started working on a book together. During this time, Kim found a safe place to live and experienced her first days of sobriety: 30 days, 60 days, 90 days, then 111 days. She hasn't given up. This work is a testament to her efforts, our friendship, and the transformative power of collaborative documentary.

Nina Berman is a documentary photographer, filmmaker, author of three books, member of NOOR images, and an associate professor at Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism where she directs the photography program.

www.ninaberman.com



Paul Gorman

Rip and Run, 2017-2019

Paul uses writing and spoken word as an open letter to his past as an active drug user and his present as a person in recovery. This multimedia presentation includes photographs of the neighborhoods Paul frequented in Philadelphia and nearby suburbs when he was addicted to drugs. These images are paired with audio of three of his spoken word pieces: *The Avenue*, *Stringer*, and *Savage, Savior*.

They address memories of a time when his life was consumed by getting and using drugs but also reflect on where he is now and how far he's come from those days. Paul is an advocate for harm reduction practices and helps with the distribution of clean needles and naloxone. He hopes that through his words, pictures, and experiences he can help someone else.

Paul Gorman is a writer who lives and works in Philadelphia. Some of his writing is currently displayed as part of an exhibit dealing with the opioid epidemic and harm reduction at Ursinus College's Berman Museum of Art in Collegeville, PA.

<https://www.instagram.com/midatlanticaccent/>



Luceo

Harm Reductionists, 2014

In 2017, fatal overdoses in the United States eclipsed deaths caused by firearms and car accidents, combined. The toll this number represents is difficult to describe, though the people impacted by it are not: they are from all walks of life. The ubiquitous nature of this epidemic is one of its most defining characteristics—and one of the most compelling reasons to care.

Photography often depicts the superlative, particularly in representations of people who use drugs. This imagery typically shows people and places outside of the normal social sphere. As viewers, we tend to disassociate our experiences from things we consider dangerous or taboo, so the effect is to stigmatize and “other” individuals who in fact are not that different from us.

The aim of this work is simple: to destigmatize people impacted by the overdose crisis by inviting them to share their experiences and views. These images pair portraits of people who have personal connections to the harm reduction movement with their handwritten responses to prompts. Undertaken in partnership with the Harm Reduction Coalition, this series has been shown in the U.S. and at the United Nations to advocate for greater access to syringes, treatment, health services, and the overdose-reversal drug naloxone.

Founded in 2007, Luceo is a creative agency specializing in story-based advocacy and strategic media production. Luceo’s work on topics related to the opioid crisis has been used to drive public health campaigns, change laws, and inform audiences about harm reduction and its role in combatting overdoses and communicable diseases while addressing the health of people who use drugs.

www.luceoimages.com



Tony Fohse

Live Through This, 2010-2011

I met Stephanie in 2010, on a street corner in Ottawa where I was making portraits of the people who congregated there. She asked if I would photograph her and when I gave her the picture a few days later we had an intense conversation. Over the next few weeks I kept bumping into her and one day blurted out, “Is there something I can do to help you?”

She asked me to help her get into rehab. I knew nothing about that but told her I’d try to make it happen. I asked her if I could photograph the process, explaining that I’d help her no matter what. She said, “Let’s do it.” And so what started as two people who wanted something from each other—she wanted help quitting drugs and I wanted to take pictures—threw us together in ways that neither of us could have imagined.

Today, Stephanie is healthy and living in her hometown in Nova Scotia. She recently wrote me saying, “I realize now how important life and my family and my son are to me and I’m on my journey of being clean and it’s been the happiest time of my life.”

Tony Fohse is an Ottawa-based photographer. His photographs have been featured in publications such as *The New York Times*, the *British Journal of Photography*, and *American Photography*. His work is held in Belgium’s National Photo Collection, Canada’s Art Collection of Global Affairs, and The Ottawa Art Gallery Collection, among others. In 2010, he received the Karsh Award for Photography.

www.tonyfoto.com



Graham MacIndoe and Susan Stellin

Re-Entry & Recovery, 2018-2019

After Graham was released from prison in 2011, where he'd landed because of drug possession convictions, he faced the twin challenges of re-entry and recovery. An intense, four-month rehabilitation program he signed up for in prison helped him develop some of the coping skills he needed to remain drug-free. But even after he'd been in recovery for years and was back on his feet, we were struck by how many people suggested that his stability was precarious—or an exception to heroin addiction's inevitable end.

Motivated to show that other people we knew had also succeeded, we started interviewing and photographing people Graham used to use drugs with, and later others we met. For this exhibition, we decided to focus on people who had some involvement with the criminal justice system, which makes it tougher to find a job, get housing, reconnect with family, and lead a fulfilling life. As a society, there is a lot we could do to make that process easier for them, and one place to start is by asking them what they need.

Graham is a photographer and assistant professor at Parsons and Susan is a reporter and adjunct professor in the Journalism + Design department at The New School who earned a master's in public health in 2019. They have collaborated on various projects combining interviews and photography, including exhibitions, talks, and a memoir documenting Graham's addiction, incarceration, and recovery.

www.grahammacindoe.com www.susanstellin.com

Kim is a peer support worker in upstate New York who leads groups for people with drug problems, including one for women at a local jail. When a counselor offered her the job, Kim thought her criminal record would be a problem. "She was telling me about the program and I was defeating myself, saying this is not gonna happen. I have like 48 misdemeanors and 4 felonies."

To overcome her own addiction to heroin and crack, Kim says she had to address the abuse and trauma in her life, through support groups and individual counseling. One counselor taught her a lesson she uses in her work now: not telling someone what they should do, but

"I tell them, 'Don't let because I'm on the other side of this table fool you. This is who I am — this is part of my life. But I'm rewriting my story. That's not who I am today.'"



Kim hasn't used drugs since 2013 and says learning about mental health and self-destructive behaviors has been key to changing her life. "You turn to certain things so you don't have to feel or deal with life on life's terms. Drugs is just 10% of our problems. The other 90%, we have to figure that out."

Yannick Fornacciari

Heroin Days, 2018-2019

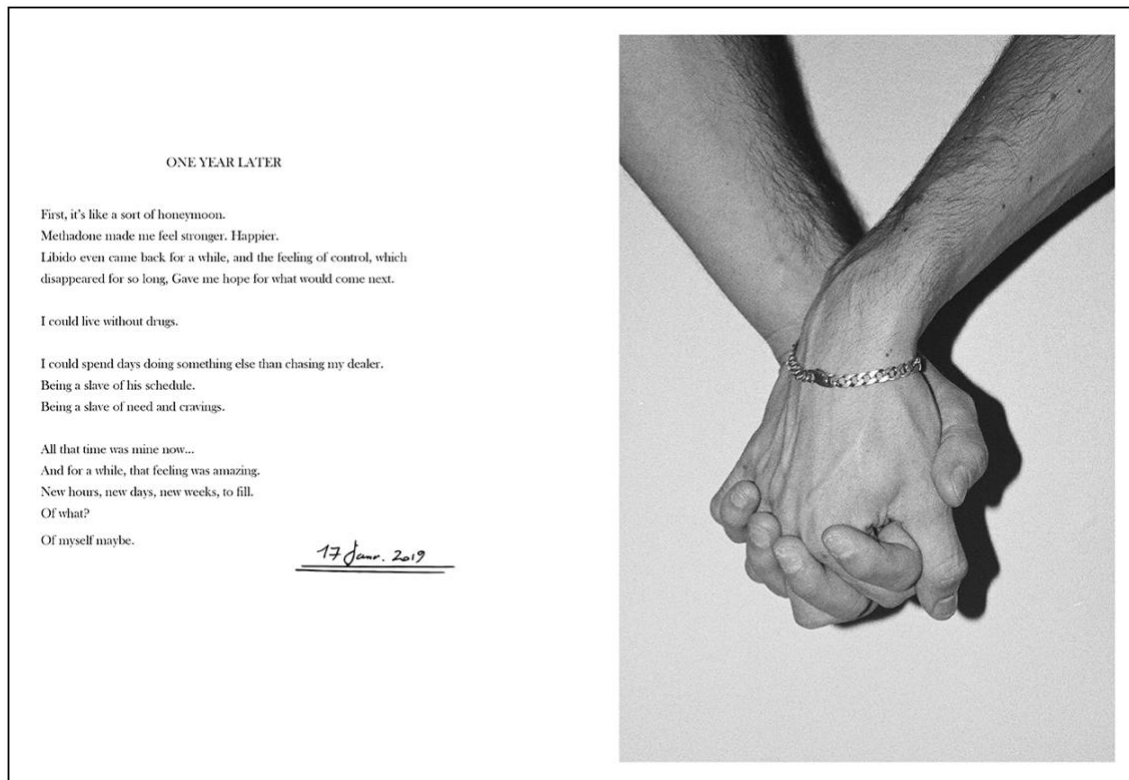
One year ago, I swallowed my first dose of methadone and started treatment for my addiction to heroin, a drug I had been addicted to for three years. *Heroin Days* is an autobiographical project mixing text and photography, a sort of visual diary about my experience with addiction. Even though this project is not just about recovery, the recovery process is at the heart of what I wanted to show.

For this exhibition, Graham asked me to write a new text about sobriety and juxtapose it with an older text. I decided to match each one with the two most important photos of *Heroin Days*. The first one is a self-portrait and it was shot just before I started rehab. For the second one, I chose a photo of my boyfriend, holding my hand.

After the United States, Canada ranks as the country with the second highest rate of opioids painkiller consumption in the world. With *Heroin Days*, I want to talk about addiction in a straightforward manner and show my reality beyond these statistics.

Yannick Fornacciari is a self-taught photographer from France who now lives in Montréal. Working as a psychologist exposed him to subjects he has incorporated into his photography. He has collaborated on projects with the feminist activism group FEMEN and the trans community in his project EXPOSED. His photos has been published in Vice, DRECK Magazine, Metal, Capricious and Têtu.

www.yannickfornacciari.com



Jackie Neale

Common Ground Tacony, 2018

This is a project about the Tacony neighborhood of North Philadelphia, combining oral histories and cyanotype portrait banners of community members. The cyanotype is an alternative photography process that relies on light sensitive chemistry to make sun prints in Prussian blue. I use fabric to create life-size portraits that are an ethereal representation of each person's body along with symbolic objects from their lives. This technique offers anonymity if someone needs to speak without fear of persecution.

Richard, depicted here, is recovering from addiction and lives a modest life across from Tacony's Keystone Park. He tends to his recovery as he tends to a flower garden he took over after its caretaker died, leading him into a daily practice of communing with nature. In his interview, he describes growing up with a verbally abusive, alcoholic father in an angry family, a history that contributed to his drug use and addiction, mainly to methamphetamine.

Richard says that service in the community is part of his practice in recovery: working with nonprofits to help people struggling with drugs or abuse get off the streets and into programs and safe houses, and revitalizing an abandoned garden he calls his sanctuary.

Jackie Neale is a documentary photographic artist, author and educator who travels internationally creating community-based storytelling artworks. She was a Mural Arts Philadelphia Tacony Artist In Residence in 2018 and her recent work, *Crossing Over: Immigration Stories*, will be exhibited at the 2019 Venice Biennale.

www.jackiephoto.com



John Donadeo

Family Ties, 2018-2019

My photographs are from an ongoing series of images that depict my close family and friends in Florida. With this project, I'm hoping to explore not only the complexities of addiction and the socioeconomic and familial factors that contribute to it, but also look at the lives of those who have managed to embrace recovery.

Reconnecting with my uncle, who still struggles with alcohol, has been challenging but it was something I needed to do. He introduced me to cousins and nephews I had never known, as well as friends and neighbors in Florida who I now consider my extended family. I myself suffered from addiction for many years, so coming from a similar past it seemed natural that we have become so close. My emotions had been suppressed for so long that in early recovery daily functions seemed foreign to me. After relapsing several times, I asked three of my best friends for help. Without them, I might not be here today.

The bond that I shared with my friends is what I wanted to capture by photographing this part of my family. Although their circumstances often haven't been easy, they are there for each other through thick and thin—and for those on the road to recovery, that process has made them stronger.

John Donadeo is a visual artist based in New York City, currently finishing his BFA at Parsons. Much of the work he produces revolves around human interactions, capturing stories that define who we are as individuals.



John Linder

Art Therapy, 2018-2019

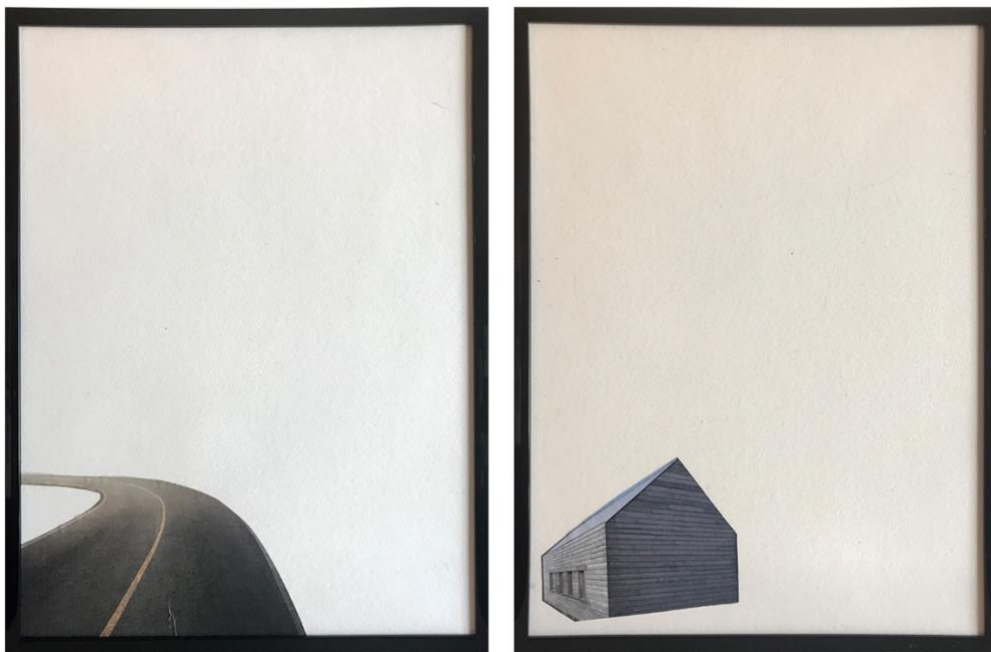
Art has been part of my life since I was old enough to hold a paint brush, painting and weaving with my grandmother in rural Washington state. These pieces reference her influence as well as my experience with addiction and early recovery—a process that has involved rediscovering memories that disappeared while I was using, numbing my emotions away. Through recovery, I have begun to weave a new tapestry for my life made up of remnants of my old self along with experience I have gained.

The diptych is composed of the *Road Home* and *Milk Shed*, and evokes my family's 1,600-acre cattle ranch. The road home is a physical representation of the trip from town and the turn before the ranch comes into view, as well as a symbolic road back to myself. *Milk Shed* just felt right, and when I placed the two pieces together, a flood of memories came back—like what the barn's wood felt like and how my grandma's oil paints smelled. It was as if that part of myself snapped back into place.

The “*shower*” represents the excitement that came from cruising for hot guys at bathhouses while I was high. Through recovery, the memories of these moments are simultaneously nostalgic yet put into perspective.

John H. Linder Jr. is a nonprofit fundraiser in New York City who began recovery in November 2018, using art therapy as a way to heal. He would like to thank Kelly Miller at The Center Recovery Program for helping him walk this path.

@mundanemoments75



Josh Meltzer

Dopesick—Agents of Change, 2017

In 2016, Beth Macy, my friend and former colleague at *The Roanoke Times*, asked if I would like to collaborate on a book she was writing about the opioid epidemic. Although it would include heart-wrenching stories of how addiction has affected many families in western Virginia, it would also highlight heroes like Dr. Art Van Zee, who raised the alarm about rising rates of addiction in the 1990s, and his colleague, Sister Beth Davies, an activist nun who stood up to Purdue Pharma executives—just as she had done with coal companies decades before.

Unlike most of my work, which is documentary narrative storytelling, for this project I wanted to slow down the image making process and chose to use 1950s-era large format cameras. Each image was made to honor people who are making important gains against the crisis. I spent two 10-day trips crisscrossing the central Appalachian mountains, traveling from distressed small communities and once-idyllic farm towns to wealthy suburbs.

The families and first responders on the front lines of the opioid epidemic are depicted in Macy's book, *Dopesick: Dealers, Doctors, and the Drug Company that Addicted America*, published in 2018 by Little, Brown and Company.

Josh Meltzer teaches photojournalism and non-fiction visual storytelling at Rochester Institute of Technology. Josh's work has received awards from Pictures of the Year International, the National Press Photographers Association and Photophilanthropy, among other groups. Several of these recognitions were for projects produced with Beth Macy, an award-winning journalist who has written two previous books, *Factory Man* and *Truevine*.

www.joshmeltzer.com

www.authorbethmacy.com



Prof. Robert Pack and Dr. Steve Loyd:

In 2017, Pack and Loyd led a coalition to open Overmountain Recovery, a collaboration of a university, a regional hospital and the state's mental health agency offering methadone and other treatments in Gray, Tenn.

Student Projects

Lucy Xin and Josie Stevenson

Responding to Recovery

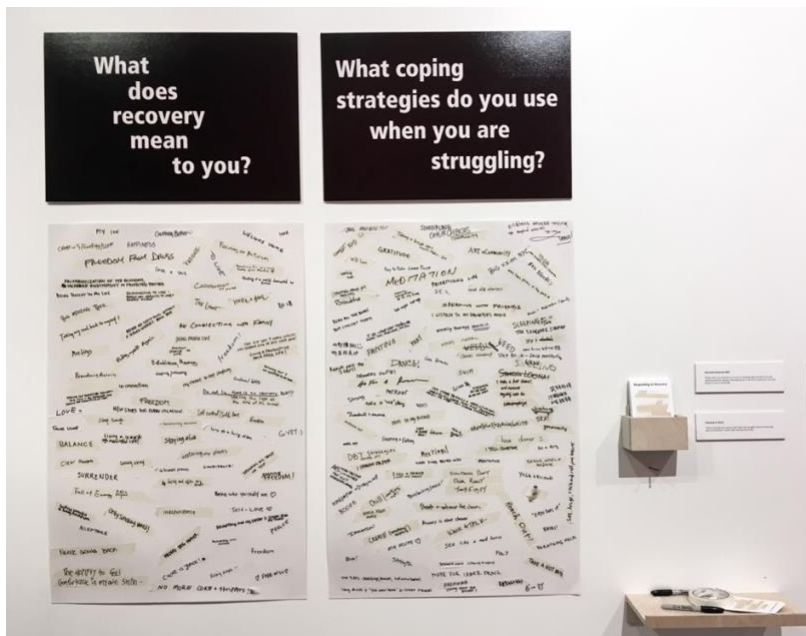
The urgency of the opioid crisis was impressed upon me after reading Beth Macy's book *Dopesick* and seeing Graham MacIndoe's work about his addiction and recovery. Recognizing the power that lies in sharing and receiving stories, Josie and I collaborated on the idea of soliciting personal narratives from viewers in response to open-ended prompts. Our research led us to online forums where we found posts by people seeking or navigating recovery that were unflinching in their honesty, despair, love, and encouragement. For this installation, we chose masking tape because it is a material that symbolizes repair and connection, which are both important for recovery.

I liked the idea of reframing and discussing addiction and recovery based on lived experience, and decided to create postcards visitors can fill in with responses they find moving or anything they've learned from this exhibition. Writing down these phrases is another act of reframing, this time from the visitors' perspective. They can also be mailed to someone else, extending the experience into the community.

Lucy Xin is a New York-based designer studying at Parsons School of Design. She graduated from Columbia University in 2011 with a BA in Art History and Earth Sciences and is interested in exploring how design functions as a curatorial practice within history and culture.

www.lucyxin.com

Josie Stevenson is a New Jersey-based artist and designer represented by Uprise Art. She graduated from Parsons in 2014 with a BFA in Illustration and has exhibited her work in group shows domestically and abroad.



Carly Bayroff and Scottt Palframan

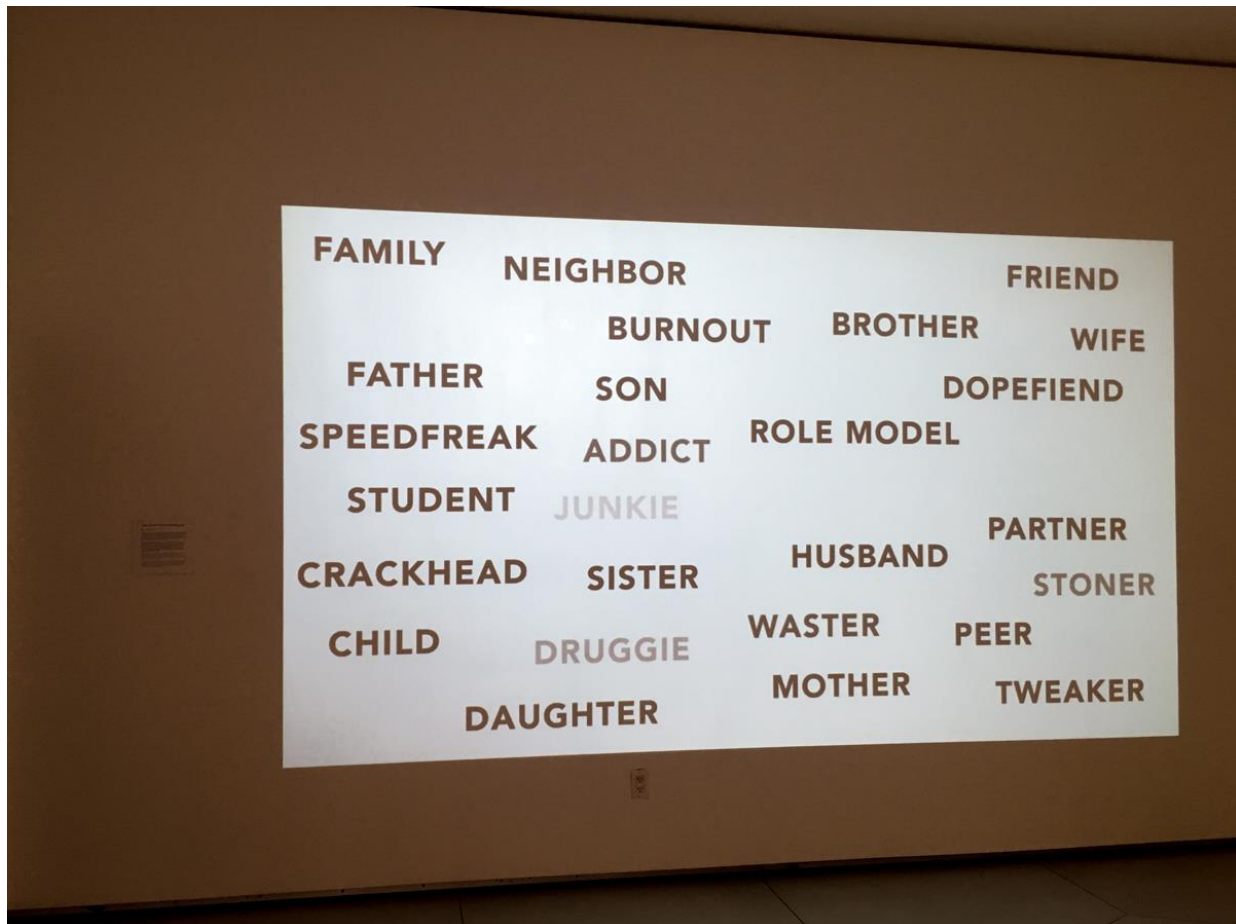
Not Just a Label

This projection shows derogatory labels associated with people who use drugs contrasted with other identities like mother, son, friend, loved one, and daughter. For every negative label, two positive identities appear. Once all of the words are projected, the negative ones disappear one by one until all that is projected are the positive identities bigger and bolder than before.

The purpose of this juxtaposition is to show that no one should be defined by pejorative labels associated with drugs. We also wanted to portray the impact that stigmatizing language has on the family and friends of people struggling with addiction. By reminding viewers of these other identities, we hope to foster empathy and compassion instead of isolation and shame.

Carly Bayroff is a second semester student in the AAS Graphic Design Program at Parsons. She is from Scotch Plains, New Jersey and previously attended Union College in Schenectady, New York, where she studied English and Fine Arts.

Scottt Palframan is in the second semester of the AAS Graphic Design program at Parsons. She was born and raised in Canada where she completed her Bachelor of Commerce in British Columbia, studying entrepreneurship and marketing.



Ellie Plass

Harm Reduction at The New School

The purpose of this project is to address student substance use, addiction, and rehabilitation based on insight from those who have direct experience with this issue. Using quotes from interviews with Student Health Services leader Tamara Oyola-Santiago and Peer Health Advocate Rupert McCranor, I wanted to demonstrate their dedication to helping students open up about addiction and substance use, and also highlight harm reduction services offered at The New School.

Ellie Plass is a junior at Eugene Lang College pursuing a major in Journalism + Design and a minor in Creative Coding at Parsons.

Sara Akiki

Recovery in Perspective

While discussing the subject of recovery, I became aware of how people have different perceptions of what recovery actually is. I decided to portray this subjectivity and variation by actually “framing” recovery via stenciling. Stenciling, to me, is a way of framing a subject and putting it in focus—producing an image with intentional blank spaces, to then transform that image into what we want to see.

This work represents how recovery cannot be standardized but becomes a self-portrait in a way. There are various ways to recover, represented by the RE in my design.

Sara Akiki is a graphic design student at Parsons. Born in Beirut, she earned a BS in Marketing from the American University of Beirut and has worked in marketing and visual communications.

