

“Creating art made me feel I wasn’t a failure”

Ex-prisoner Danielle Hodson’s painting Swallow (far right) was one of six prize-winners at Outside In, an art competition and exhibition held at Pallant House Gallery in Chichester. As her prize, Danielle gets her own solo show at the gallery.

Danielle entered the competition while she was at Downview prison.

She says creativity kept her going when she was locked up.

“Art made me feel I wasn’t a failure. If you create a nice painting, it gives you a boost,” she explains.

Danielle found that art is a good way of expressing feelings.

“Emotions come out in your art, you can show what you miss and what you long for,” she says.

“When I painted Swallow I was inside, a victim of circumstance. My life, my image as represented in the painting is being pushed and pulled against my will and I am powerless to stop it, I just

look on,” she adds.

Danielle felt great when her painting was chosen for the Outside In show.

“When I was in prison I had truly been so low. But visiting the exhibition and seeing people looking at my painting, made me feel really good,” she says. Danielle was also a prize-winner in this year’s Koestlers, and you can see more of her work on pages 29 and 32.

Work by two other Downview women, The Smirnoff Effect by Julie Richards, and Bulakiak Nang Pagmahal (Flowers of Love) by Elda Beguinna, were also selected for the exhibition.

About her painting The Smirnoff Effect, Julie Richards says, “The message in this artwork is not to get drunk as it will lead to unhappy times.

Art is important to me as it helps me to express my feelings, which I’ve not done for years, I’ve only previously expressed my feelings when drinking. Now I’m on the Rapt (Rehabilitation of Addicted Prisoners trust) unit at Send, I can begin to lose my addiction to alcohol.

This painting is one of my best paintings that I’ve ever done. I was influenced by Van Gogh, Richard Hamilton, and Roy Lichtenstein.”

Outside In is for “outsider” artists, who have talent but may not have been to art college. Over 800 works of art were submitted by more than 500 artists for this year’s competition and 150 pieces selected for the



exhibition. Artists who took part included prisoners, homeless people, psychiatric patients, and people with learning difficulties and physical disabilities.

Outside In aims “to create a level playing field where access to the art world is possible for all who create.”

The aim is to “challenge the art world to embrace and make itself accessible to a wider range of individuals.”

The competition and exhibition are biennial, every two years, so the next one is in 2011. In future it will be a national competition, previously only artists in the south of England could enter.

The 2009 exhibition is touring in 2010 and will be at Salisbury arts centre in January and Hastings museum and art gallery in June.

www.outsidein.org.uk

▲ The Smirnoff Effect by Julie Richards

► Swallow by Danielle Hodson

◀ Bulakiak Nang Pagmahal (Flowers of Love) by Elda Beguinna

