

Self & Survival

Jesse Jones

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About the artist

Self & Survival is my debut solo art exhibition. I created this collection of works over the last year and a half, exploring themes including disease and wellness as they have impacted my life.

I was diagnosed with bipolar disorder almost a decade ago after long struggling with my mental health. Just as I was finally feeling that I was in something like a good place with treatment, I was hit by a serious physical illness. I spent almost a year in hospital, at times near death, but the severity of the situation didn't hit me until I was continuing my recovery at home. The pieces on display in *Self & Survival* reflect how I have felt about my body and soul over these tumultuous years. Several paintings also celebrate my relationship with my beautiful partner, who has stood by me through more than anyone should have to in one relationship and who has been my inspiration to keep living.

Despite the sometimes-horrific challenges I have faced and the continuing difficulty of managing disabilities, I love my life now, and I'm lucky to be surrounded by wonderful loved ones. Thank you for celebrating this journey with me.

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Jesse Jones is an emerging artist and a member of the Brisbane Outsider Artists studio. He works primarily in ink and acrylic. His influences include postimpressionist and surrealist painters and contemporary illustrators. Jesse lives with bipolar disorder as well as chronic physical illnesses. Despite having prosopagnosia (face-blindness), he enjoys creating pop art-style portraits and expressing himself through self-portraiture. His work often aims to challenge ideas about gender and self as well as portray experiences of physical and mental illness. Jesse divides his time between home and various hospitals. He began painting as creative therapy during an inpatient psychiatric admission.



This self-portrait is part of a duo that began life in my visual diary, along with *relax–this won't hurt*. It depicts my declining physical and mental state during a long hospital admission featuring a coma. It was the most horrific period in my life, leaving me scarred physically and otherwise. Creating this piece was cathartic, and it now reminds me of how far I've come in my recovery.

this is going to hurt
61 x 67 cm
\$400



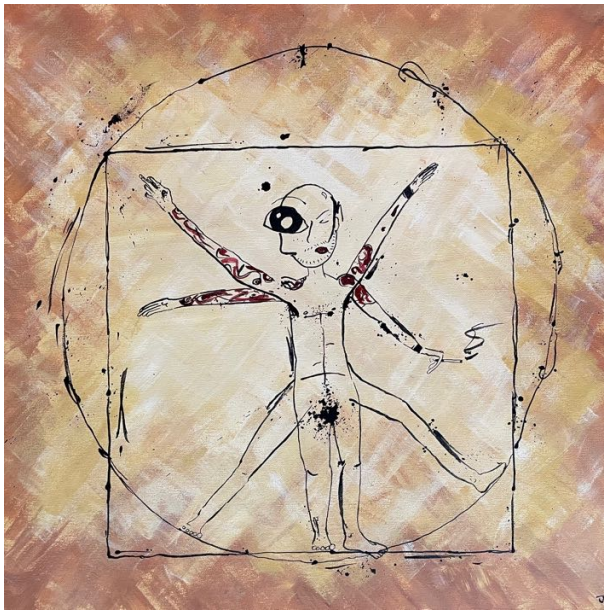
This impressionist-flavoured painting is a view from a hospital bed—my only view for nine months a few years ago. Another piece created to process my memories of intensive care, this depicts the sterility, the warping of time, the interminable boredom of that room. I always insisted on being able to see a clock, which was often my only distraction. Looking at this now transports me back to the narrow bed with the cramped pastel view and makes me feel damned lucky to have returned from 'grave'.

grave
51 x 62 cm
\$350



noise
61 x 61 cm
\$400

This is one of several self-portraits sharing a theme of mental anguish. At times in my life, my brain has been totally full of noise, stopping me from being able to communicate or think. I have felt that my head might simply open and spew static or lava. Good fortune and stubbornness have allowed me to get better.



valium man
61 x 61 cm
\$300

This satirical painting is a self-deprecating riff on da Vinci's *Vitruvian Man*. Ideal proportions? I can't even reach the circle.



goddess II
51 x 76 cm
\$350

This figure is one that I have returned to several times in my art practice. The goddess is inspired by my gorgeous partner of many years, who has supported me through the good and the terrible in my life. This piece celebrates her femininity and grace while playing with ideas of gender identity and expression.



censorship
61 x 61 cm
\$300

I created this piece as a semi-good-natured jab at a studio where I was not allowed to work on a nude (try to guess which one was controversial). The acrylic and ink painting is cheeky and bright to command attention.



quadriparous
51 x 61 cm
\$350

An occasional supporting character in my life, the subject of this painting is around my age and makes me wonder how things might have turned out for me in another universe. Like most of my portraits, this one has a strong gonzo influence. The title is from a Latin-derived term meaning 'no sleep'.



sane
51 x 61 cm
\$350

Another in a series of self-portraits, this piece depicts the state that I often feel I'm in, following recovery from my severe illness and now living with chronic conditions: held together with poor stitches and a never-ending barrage of pills. But you can't argue with results.



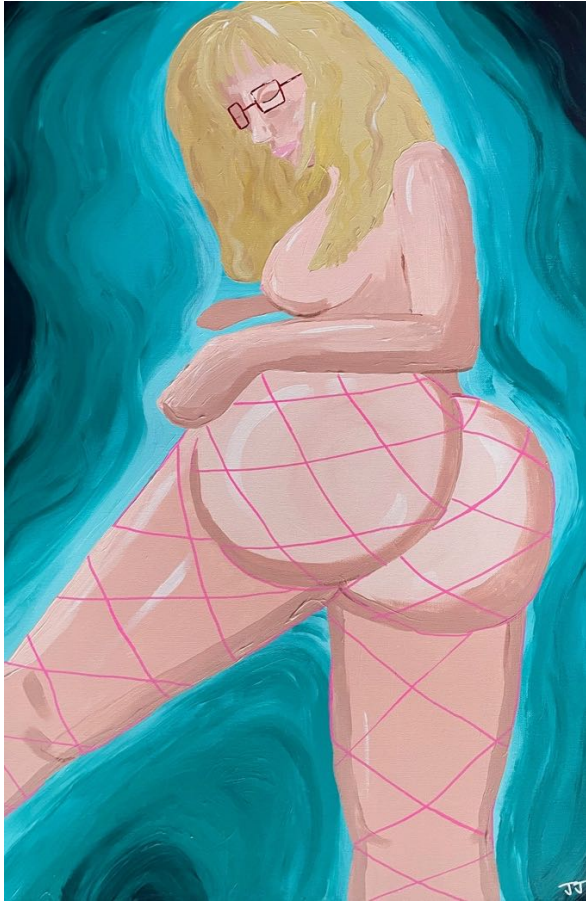
este maldito hombre
46 x 91 cm
\$350

If it wasn't for bad luck, he wouldn't have no luck at all. This one is not a self-portrait, but there but for the grace, etc. I painted this piece when I lost feelings for a lover. We remain friends, but then he hasn't seen this portrait.



heart
31 x 41 cm
\$300

This stylised heart may be damaged, but it's being held together with gold. As in the Japanese art of kintsugi, the repair remains visible, and the damage becomes a reminder of the beauty in the changed object. This piece represents physical and emotional recovery.

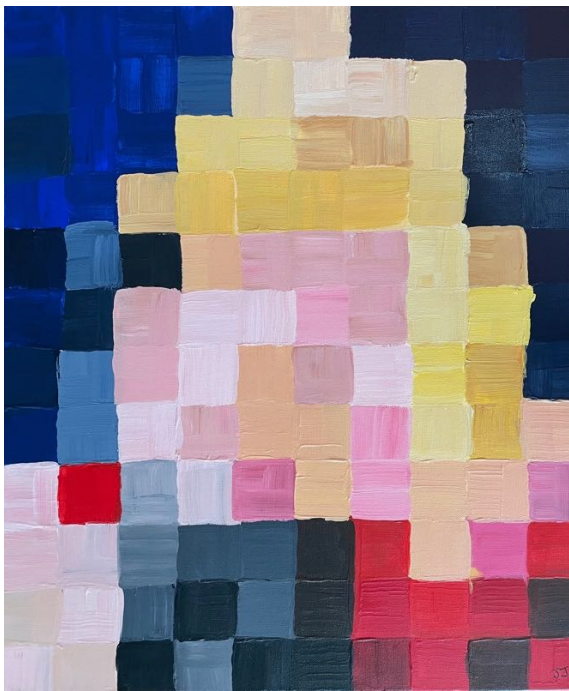


aphrodite reclining in selfie II

61 x 92 cm

\$450

This is a second version of a portrait of my partner. It was previously a watercolour and before that a messaged selfie. This is one of my favourite images of her because it captures her feminine elegance and confidence, as well as the obvious. It is less stylised than my usual work and took several painstaking weeks to complete.



embrace

51 x 61 cm

\$400

This abstract painting is a pixellated representation of a photo of me and my partner in a loving embrace. It's also a statement on the use of technology in art: every step was done manually and freehand, without computer aid, from assigning the colour of each square to applying the paint in gloriously imperfect lines. If you don't see the figures, try squinting from a step back.