

Transcription of New Ways Forward conversation with Sarah

Paintings / Poems which we refer to throughout : Sarah Is My Name : Use It / Teapot, Flowers & Cup / The Church Under A Patterned Hill

Andy: Sarah, shall we say a little bit about how Artists First started for you, because you've had a long journey with Artists First! So, who first got you interested in art? It was Dad wasn't it. Dad was an artist wasn't he, Mike. I remember seeing a picture of you as a little girl at the Bush Training Centre with Alan Marshall* and then you moved over to the Portway Centre. Dad was just becoming an artist, working in the Smelting Works at Avonmouth and then he took the big jump to become an artist full time and you always drew with him. You've got a brother and a sister - Mike Junior and Ann, and they drew as well. Did you all draw together as children?

Sarah nods her head

Andy: The recording can't hear you nodding your head, but that's OK. *laughs* When you started at the Portway, that's when you first met Jane isn't it. Jane started up the Art Club but then Dad would come in once a week and help Jane. So you were there right at the very start and working with Dad even before anybody else.

I've got a picture here that you did Sarah that's done in Indian ink and I think - tea, which is something that Dad used to do - with wax crayons too . It's dried leaves on stalks inside what looks like a big cup with a teapot by the side and another cup in front and you've signed it on the bottom Sarah. That has got to be 30 - maybe even 40 years old. That was in the Portway Centre when I came as a Student Nurse.

Amelie: I would never have guessed it was done 30 or 40 years ago - that's amazing !

Andy : Teapot, flowers and cup it's called. Beautiful isn't it !

Amelie : I love those colours. It's absolutely stunning.

Andy: So all things that Dad taught you.

Amelie: How has it felt to make your own art and your paintings, Sarah ?

Andy: I'm going to say something Sarah because I think it's important for people who'll listen to this. I think there are a lot of people in Artists First who maybe wouldn't have been artists if it wasn't for Artists First, but that's not true for you. I think you would've always made art Sarah. You make art at home now and you've always done it since you were little. So I don't think you needed Artists First in the same way as other people needed it because you had Dad and family. Has it been good for you to be part of the group?

Sarah nods

Andy: We've done a lot together, been to lots of different places together, lots of different cities. We've been to London, Birmingham, Manchester. But I'm guessing that St Ives is probably one of your favourite places. Would I be right?

Sarah nods

Andy: Who did you used to go to St Ives with?

*Sarah signs a 'J' *

Andy: Yep, with Jane. You used to go with Dad and Jane and you used to have painting weekends down in St Ives at Jane's cottage in Fish Street. Drawing mackerel, painting mackerel is something that you and Dad have done lots - and eating Mackerel aswell!

Amelie: Maybe drawing the sea and the houses ?

Andy: And you went to school with Alan Marshall who would come down aswell as Kathy Stewart. We have got a lovely picture of you, Dad and Kathy in the alleyway of Jane's house with some mackerel that you've caught from a fishing trip. You did a lovely, very simple drawing of Dad in his French beret. He used to wear an artists beret and he had a ponytail. I've got a whole selection of Christmas cards which he did for Jane that she kept that are beautiful little sketches. You used to have fires on Porthmeor beach at night didn't you - and a few shandies in the pub !

Sarah laughs

Andy: I'm just going to grab another picture out of Sarah's portfolio with extraordinary colours. It's called *The Church Under A Patterned Hill*. It's acrylic and ink on paper. This I know is the island at St Ives and this is the tiny little church which is taken from the top of the island. These are some of the houses on the harbour.

Amelie: Really bright colours.

Andy: Do you remember doing the life drawing Sarah with the naked men ? And what did you do ... we had a lovely model called Frank and he was completely naked but you drew underpants on him didn't you. You thought it was a bit too much!

Everyone laughs!

Andy: This is another St Ives one. This is up on Bar Noon which is at the top of St Ives. You can look down on the water and churchyard. It's pastel acrylic. Because of Dad, you did lots of experimenting didn't you with lots of different things.

Amelie: I think it's brilliant when you find a beautiful place which has so much you can draw and inspire you. They're beautiful - those paintings.

Amelie: Has Artists First made a difference to the way you think about yourself?

Andy: Sarah, I'm going to share something now with Amelie and our listeners about two things that happened. One of them happened in a pub called The Plume Of Feathers in Hotwells which no longer exists. They refused to serve you even though you were a grown woman over the age of 18. They actually asked you to leave the pub and everyone got very cross and complained about it. After that, you wrote a poem called *Sarah Is My Name : Use It* . That became part of The Portway Opera that Sarah was involved in. You've done quite a few self portraits. It's very important - your name 'Sarah' and your signed name (which is just the length of your hair) . Those are really important things to you : your identity as Sarah, not as a woman with downs syndrome or any of the other horrible names that you've been called over the years, but Sarah. Sarah McGreevy - proud Irish roots.

Amelie : *Sarah Is My Name : Use It* - that sends out a really strong message.

Amelie: We've come to the final question. How do you feel about the future building on from your time here at Artists First?

Sarah does a thumbs up sign

Amelie: Thumbs Up!? That's a good sign.

Andy: Sarah, we're going to carry on working together aren't we? You're going to come and work in this studio - Studio 3 at Estate Of The Arts. You're going to develop your art and continue your art aren't you.

Amelie: Thanks so much Sarah.

*Alan Marshall - a Founder member of Artists First.