

Painting is a fundamental part of my artistic practice. I usually start a series of new works through drawing and collages; from these initial drawings, I go on to create small painted studies on paper or canvas board in acrylic paint and ink. These become important in helping with composition and act as a guide to the palette I choose once I start to work on larger canvases. The images here are from a series called "Inner Battles". The paintings and collages focus on personal mental health issues manifested through recent and past events, such as physical and psychological abuse, infertility, grief, and family estrangement. Even though the work represents a period of great sadness and mental upheaval, the abstract representation of inner feelings and the choice of quirky and often amusing imagery is deliberate. These decisions act as a juxtaposition of optimism against darker emotions and feelings. These contrasts set up a dialogue with the viewer, who will initially react to the paintings in one way, but on closer inspection, could encourage another type of reaction. I have struggled for many years with low self-esteem, night-time panic attacks, and mild depression. I often cope with these by being creative. Like many, the period during lockdown was a time of self-reflection where I questioned and thought deeply as to why I have suffered and continue to suffer with mental health issues. I decided, therefore, to create more autobiographical pieces of art; as a way to work myself through these questions, a type of self-help therapy.