



Airing Pain Shorts: Interview with Jason Wilsher-Mills

First broadcast 02/05/2025

[Click here for the episode](#)

Transcript begins

Christine Johnston: Welcome to Pain Concern's Airing Pain Shorts. As a companion to our longer Airing Pain podcast, this occasional series will bring you up to date information with what's going on in the world of pain. I'm Christine Johnston.

Jason Wilsher-Mills is an artist from West Yorkshire who creates work about disability and childhood trauma. Jason has lived with pain, chronic polyneuropathy, since he was a child. I spoke to Jason about his current exhibition at the Wellcome Collection called "Jason and the Adventure of 254".

Jason Wilsher-Mills: I really like that title because it's, it's like Indiana Jones and the, you know, whatever. Um, and the "254" relates to the 1st of August 1980 at 2:54pm when Sebastian Coe was racing against Steve Ovett and at that exact time I was being diagnosed with the condition that subsequently led to me, you know, becoming ill and disabled. And how is this for a bit of you know, planets aligning - that the jersey, that the... Sebastian Coe wore was 254. That was happening whilst I was being diagnosed and he's telling mum and dad at the end of the bed, "Well, he's not gonna, you know, he's not gonna to make it to 16." "Oh, Blimey..!" you know. "This is not very fair." So I just tried to... I mean, you know, spoiler alert, you know, I'm 55. So obviously I was OK. But at the time I was really trying to cram in, you know? Reflectively I was sort of trying to cram in as much as I could.



Johnston: And how old were you then? And I also wonder if you can tell me, you mentioned art coming into your life. So did that happen when you were in hospital?

Wilsher-Mills: Um, when I was 11, I moved – because of the disability – I moved from the area and um, I went to a hospital school, so I was basically receiving 1-to-1 tuition. And it was like the- I was introduced to books and art and paint. So because I couldn't move, they taught me to paint with my mouth. Which was... kind of huge really!

Johnston: I wonder if I could ask, you know, how are the relationship between art and pain for you?

Wilsher-Mills: Yeah, it's, it's a good one is that. I mean, all I can say is that they- for me they go hand in hand, so... But I've always said I'm self medicating art, that's what I do to... I mean, I'm in pain now I feel pain constantly. But it's kind of, um, I've kind of managed to shut it off and it is... It is sort of, um, present always. And it, when I'm working, because this arm's not too good, it hurts even more. So, because I've- all the ligaments are very damaged along with the muscles. So it really hurts to, to, kind of sometimes to make art. But I've kind of come out myself and it's, it's kind of... I'm able to sort of work through it and disengage from it even though I know it's there. It's like, um, seeing something out the corner of your eye and knowing that that thing is there.

Johnston: And what would you, kind of, like people to take from it? When they go.

Wilsher-Mills: When I was putting the exhibition together, it came, the idea came together really quickly. I was asked what I wanted, and I said, "I want kids to be really inspired and go, wow!" And I also want adults to kind of tune into, you know, what it's like to be a child again. And that sort of sense of wonder and creativity.



Johnston: And people can still go and see your exhibition, can't they? How long is it on 'til?

Wilsher-Mills: I think it's the 15th of January that it's on, so there's not long, but then it's going to tour. It's going to tour around the UK. I'm not sure where it's going, but it's, um... It's got a tour of two years. Stuff to be announced as well. There's a... something very, very, very exciting with, fingers crossed, with a City of Culture project. So that, that's going to be really cool. And of doing a book as well, hopefully, all being well, about endangered animals. So, um yeah, *[laughs]* I like to keep busy!

Johnston: It's been really, really nice talking to you and yeah, well, definitely lots of diverse and exciting things for us to watch out for next year!

Wilsher-Mills: Thank you.

End

Transcribed by Alisa Anokhina

Edited by Lynn McNeil

© 2025 Pain Concern. All Rights Reserved.

Registered Charity no. SC023559.

Company limited by guarantee no. SC546994.

Pain Concern, 62-66 Newcraighall Road, Edinburgh EH15 3HS