

# The Watch Man: An installation by Shona Illingworth

3 December 2008



A major multi-media installation exploring trauma memory by artist Shona Illingworth will be shown as part of 'War and Medicine', this year's major temporary exhibition at Wellcome Collection.

"Shona Illingworth's careful use of visuals and sound creates an emotionally charged environment that evokes both the pain of the remembered experience and the claustrophobia of feeling trapped inside a disturbed mind." **Sandra Rehme, 'Time Out'**

Using video and sound, 'The Watch Man' explores the conflict between trauma memory and the need for a coherent 'life story' through the experience of an 80-year-old watchmaker, who as a 19-year-old experienced one of the most deeply affecting and shocking events of World War II.

The work has been made in collaboration with University of Leeds neuropsychologist Professor Martin A Conway. Professor Conway is an internationally recognised expert on trauma memory, confabulation and the role of memory in the formation of a sense of self.

**'The Watch Man':** 16 December 2008-11 January 2009

**Private view:** 16 December 2008/18.30-20.30 (contact Mike Findlay for details)

**Venue:** The Forum, Medicine Now Gallery, [Wellcome Collection](#), 183 Euston Road, London NW1 2BE

Admission free

**Gallery opening times:** Tues-Wed, Fri-Sat: 10.00-18.00; Thurs: 10.00-22.00; Sun: 11.00-18.00; Closed Mon (except Bank Holidays: 10.00-18.00)

James Peto, senior curator at Wellcome Collection explains: "With successive generations living with the after effects of traumatic experience, this work looks at the impact of conflict on an individual over time. Shona Illingworth's emotive piece allows visitors the experience of literally walking over the sound and becoming part of the world inhabited by the watch man."

'The Watch Man' includes a large circular projection screen suspended above an installed floor that has been painted red. A complex sound composition surrounds the visitor, with audio high above their heads, and resonating through a charged and reflective surface of the constructed floor beneath their feet.

Shona Illingworth comments: “Societies need to find coherent forms of representation for conflict is often at odds with people left to cope privately with the painful and fragmentary nature of trauma memory of war. 'The Watch Man' focuses on the lifetime impact of trauma memories on an individual, the intensity with which a deeply distressing and unresolved past continually insists on the present and how with old age the capacity to suppress these memories becomes weaker.”

'The Watch Man' has been supported by the Arts Council England. Hi-shine flooring has been provided by Harlequin Floors. The immersive sound of 'The Watch Man' piece has been made possible by [FeONIC](#) audio technology fitted invisibly under the floor of the exhibit.

## Notes to editors

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