

## Art

# Dark art on the Downs

*WW is a new artists' run project space in a Victorian terraced house on Hackney Downs, showing artists using humour and darkness in contemporary art*

WW Gallery is the latest in a clutch of artist-run spaces to have emerged in central Hackney. The brainchild of Chiara Williams and Debra Wilson, it is located at 30 Queensdown Road in an unassuming Victorian terraced house overlooking Hackney Downs.

The homely domestic setting is partly a matter of chance. Debra and Chiara were originally considering warehouses and other more industrial locations for their venture, but the cost of renting proved prohibitive, so they settled in the end for Chiara's own home. The nature of the space is now what gives the gallery much of its distinctiveness. As Debra points out, when you view a work here, "you can get a feel of what it would look like on your own wall".

The interior does have the look of a gallery about it: the walls are painted white, and there is little in them but works of art (a sofa in front of a video installation being the sole exception). It is in its peripheral aspects that the setting becomes noticeable: the view from the windows, the garden, and a very friendly dog who greets visitors. Certainly the domestic site makes the space seem more accessible to the general public, which is something Debra and Chiara want to encourage.



Junction Group Therapy

Eva Lis



Chiara Williams and Debra Wilson of WW Gallery

**"If a little dreaming is dangerous, the cure for it is not to dream less but to dream more, to dream all the time"**

They would also like it to be accessible to other artists. Chiara notes that "there is always a gulf between the point of view of the artists and that

of the gallerist", and that this gulf can create tension. When artists run a space, they are not as bound by the imperatives of the market, and they can afford to select work on the basis of the extent to which it engages and excites them.

Suggesting that this approach has engendered a new set of relationships within the artistic community, she says, "One of the things that characterises the new crop of artists and artist-run spaces is that we're all trying to support each other".

Their first exhibition opened with the launch of the gallery in late September and runs through mid-October. It includes the work of eight different artists from all over Europe working in different media. Some are established figures such as Ben Sadler, who also

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has work currently showing at Tate Britain, and some have hardly shown their work at all. Most of the eight are women, but as Debra and Chiara point out, so are most career artists.

Stating that their aim is to exhibit artists "using humour and darkness in contemporary art", the show bears the enchanting title 'I Had Too Much to Dream Last Night'. Adorning the exhibition website is a quote from Marcel Proust: "If a little dreaming is dangerous, the cure for it is not to dream less but to dream more, to dream all the time". As the text goes on to explain 'it is not sleep, but dreams that are necessary for our wellbeing. Dreams allow us to go safely and quietly insane for a time each day.'

The works on display tie into this theme in different ways, through links to artistic traditions such as romanticism, surrealism and dada. The theme also alludes to Debra and Chiara's aspirations for the gallery, which is proving to be their professional dream.

Their next exhibition, beginning in late November, is based on the dark side of Christmas. For details, see [www.wilsonwilliamsgallery.com](http://www.wilsonwilliamsgallery.com).



The Poet and her Secretary

Eva Lis