THE VACUUM CLEANER
MENTAL

Created and performed by the vacuum cleaner
Produced by Artsadmin

Mary Osborn
Artists’ Producer
mary@artsadmin.co.uk

t +44 (0)20 7247 5102
f +44 (0)20 7247 5103

artsadmin.co.uk
thevacuumcleaner.co.uk
Mental is an autobiographical one-man performance staged in a bedroom for an intimate audience. Spanning 13 years of the artist’s adult life, the story follows the turbulent experience of mental illness, suicide, social isolation, stigma, police and corporate surveillance and the dynamics of power present in such contexts. Using the Data Protection Act, the vacuum cleaner has reclaimed all of the information that the State holds on him. Psychiatric records, police intelligence files and social services reports are woven together with personal stories and photographs that counter the ‘official’ version of events, creating a performance that is challenging and highly informative, at times tragic and at others profoundly funny and touching.

Mental has been acclaimed by audiences as a unique story and form, bringing together timely themes of undercover police and acute mental distress, told from a person that has lived through and survived such difficult challenges.

At a time when people with mental illness enter a historical ‘civil rights’ moment, publicly tackling stigma, discrimination and demanding equal rights, Mental plays a significant role in presenting personal and lived experience of acute mental illness, suicide and surviving the mental health care system with the UK. Equally, stories of past police undercover deployment are breaking every month. Mental presents the experiences of an individual that has been targeted by secret police, and explores the psychological effects of past and current undercover operations.

Originally developed with Tania El Khoury, with dramaturgy and direction support from Kim Noble.
FURTHER INFORMATION

DOCUMENTATION
A filming of Mental at In Between Time is available upon request.

QUOTES
“One of the most powerful portraits of creativity and depression I’ve ever seen... a heart-rending journey.”
– RealTime Arts

“One of the standout shows in the festival to me – told with honesty, humour and bucket loads of courage.”
– Joon Lynn Goh, Producer of Artistic Programmes, In Between Time

“Have been completely blasted apart by the vacuum cleaner’s ‘Mental’... Am shaking. Am full of hope. Overwhelmed… a really remarkable piece.”
– Tanuja Amarasuriya, Executive Producer, Theatre Bristol (via Twitter)

PREVIOUS TOUR DATES
February 2018  Kaaitheater, Brussels, Belgium
August 2017  Mladi Levi, Ljubljana, Slovenia
May 2016  Frascati, Amsterdam, the Netherlands
May 2016  Vooruit, Gent, Belgium

THE VACUUM CLEANER
the vacuum cleaner is an art and activism collective of one. He employs various creative legal and illegal tactics to mock, brandalise and disrupt concentrations of power. Through site-specific performance, street-based intervention and film, the vacuum cleaner empowers his audience to address socio-political issues including consumerism and mental health discrimination. From one-man shows to largescale participatory actions, his approach is variously subtle and extreme, but always candid, provocative and playful.

the vacuum cleaner’s work has been exhibited throughout the UK, including commissions from Tate Modern, ICA, Barbican, Nottingham Contemporary, Arnolfini, Centre for Contemporary Art Glasgow, and the Liverpool Biennial as well as for BBC4, Channel 4 and Arte. He regularly present work internationally both on the streets and in art spaces.

TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS
– 1 day get-in
– Travelling company of 2 on the road
– Mental can be staged in a bedroom, which is the ideal location, or small studio or similar space. Within a bedroom, audience capacity is between 12 to 22 (depending on the size of the room) and 25-40 for a small studio depending on space size.

ACCESS
For a detailed access rider, please email mary@artsadmin.co.uk.