

DEAN KELLAND

IMPOSTER SYNDROME

Imposter Syndrome is the culmination of British artist Dean Kelland's four-year artist's residency at HMP Grendon (2019-2023), funded by the Marie-Louise von Motesiczky Charitable Trust. The exhibition features a number of Kelland's new films, prints and sketchbooks that reimagine the psychoanalytic dialogue that has occurred between Pop Art and Prison Art since the 1960s. Referencing figures from popular culture such as Elvis Presley and David Bowie, Kelland interrogates male identity and flawed notions of masculinity.

1. *Man and Boy: Hunky Version* (2023)

*"Put a peephole in my brain, Two new Pence to have a go,
Like to be a gallery, Put you all inside my show"*

Lyrics from David Bowie's song *Andy Warhol*, *Hunky Dory* (1971).

Man and Boy: Hunky Version is a sketchbook page that has been blown up, on a colossal scale, for the exhibition. It features a photograph of Elvis in the film *Flaming Star* (1960), famously appropriated by Andy Warhol in *Double Elvis* (1963). Kelland has collaged a mask of Halloween Jack, one of David Bowie's multiple personas, that challenges the notion of a fixed identity.

2. *So the Days Float Through My Eyes* (2023)

The performance *So the Days Float Through My Eyes* was filmed in a retro-futurist setting at HMP Grendon. A group of prisoners, wearing screen printed Bowie masks, hold cue cards from the song *Changes* (1972). The lyrics ('*So I turned myself to face me*', '*Just gonna have to be a different man*', '*Time may change me, but I can't trace time*') are as relevant to Kelland's artistic practice as they are to the experiences of prisoners engaging with daily therapeutic practice.

3. Dialogue Wall Installation and Sketchbooks

Since the start of his residency, Kelland curated a 'dialogue wall' in his prison studio. Pinned up images and text provided prompts for discussion with the prisoners and therapeutic staff. The conversations were transcribed in Kelland's eight sketchbooks, directly informing the development of the work in this exhibition. In time, community members have added their own paintings, screen prints and etchings of pop culture figures to the dialogue wall; an action doubled on cell walls used as makeshift art studios.

4. *Tin Soldiers* (2023)

Tin Soldiers is an installation of collages made in collaboration with prisoners at HMP Grendon. Pages from an illustrated copy of Hans Christian Andersen's *The Steadfast Tin Soldier* (1838), are colour-washed and marked with outlines loosely representing the prison corridors and cells. Fragmented figures, presented using a 'join the dots' technique, are topped with heads of relevant men. Selected by the prisoners, the figures, dating from the 1960s to the present day, include TV and film characters, musicians, artists, actors, a footballer and a wrestler.

Figures seen in the *Tin Soldiers* series (clockwise):

George Michael, Lennie Godber, Clark Kent, Tyrone Mings, The Exotic Adrian Street, Buster Keaton, Jason Williamson, Gurney Slade, Bob Mortimer, Lester Nygaard, Jimmy Cooper, Grayson Perry, Bob Marley, Frank Sidebottom, Luke Skywalker, Eric Tucker, Cayden Cotard, Ian Curtis, Tupac Shakur, Boy George, Arnold Schwarzenegger, Elvis Presley, Jorge Molder, Halloween Jack, Joker.

5. *Dean Kelland Performing As, And With, A Painting of Elvis Presley by 'B' from C-Wing* (2023)

Dean Kelland Performing As, And With, A Painting of Elvis Presley by 'B' from C-Wing is a photograph of a performance that took place in the prison studio. Referencing the work of Pop Artist Pauline Boty, who performed to camera as the subject of her paintings, Kelland impersonates Elvis in front of a work by one of the prisoners. His orange jumpsuit and novelty glasses hint at a low-rent version of the popular icon, consciously falling short of the masculine ideal.

6. *Absolute Beginners* (2022)

“For a fleeting moment I was only existing in that space between. I looked in the mirror and saw a vulnerable boy. Once I had accepted what I saw, I blinked, and on the other side of that saw a confident man – me, but not me – the child, the man. Vulnerable, confident, man, boy. Person.”

D Wing community member, written in response to filming.

The installation *Absolute Beginners* is a carousel of moving portraits of prisoners wearing a ‘neutral mask’. The film captures group members’ immediate reactions as they see their reflection in a mirror. Neutral masks are a device used in theatre training and psychotherapy to facilitate the wearer to experience the present moment, unaffected by their past and future. Kelland presents the filmed portraits on a circular, monolithic screen reflecting the therapy circle, a central device used in group therapy at Grendon. Here the circle looks outwards, rather than in on itself, with the viewer invited to witness the prisoner confronting their reflection.

Made under the instruction and guidance of the Psychology team at HMP Grendon, filming was facilitated by psychodramatist Mike Chase. Chase uses the neutral mask as a device in psychodrama workshops with the aim of allowing prisoners to navigate complex trauma, one of many methods of radical therapy undertaken at HMP Grendon.

7. *Walk a Mile in My Shoes* (2022)

Shot on 16mm cinefilm in the corridors of HMP Grendon, *Walk a Mile in My Shoes* tracks a lone figure in an oversized, handmade Elvis mask. The figure appears lost in the prison’s long corridors yet, in momentary fragments intercut through the film, impersonates Elvis Presley’s iconic dancing. Early in Kelland’s residency he sought a popular culture figure representing the ‘ideal male’ and, with the insistence of prison group members, settled on Elvis. The figure seen in *Walk a Mile in My Shoes* repeatedly attempts, and fails, to impersonate the ideal man.

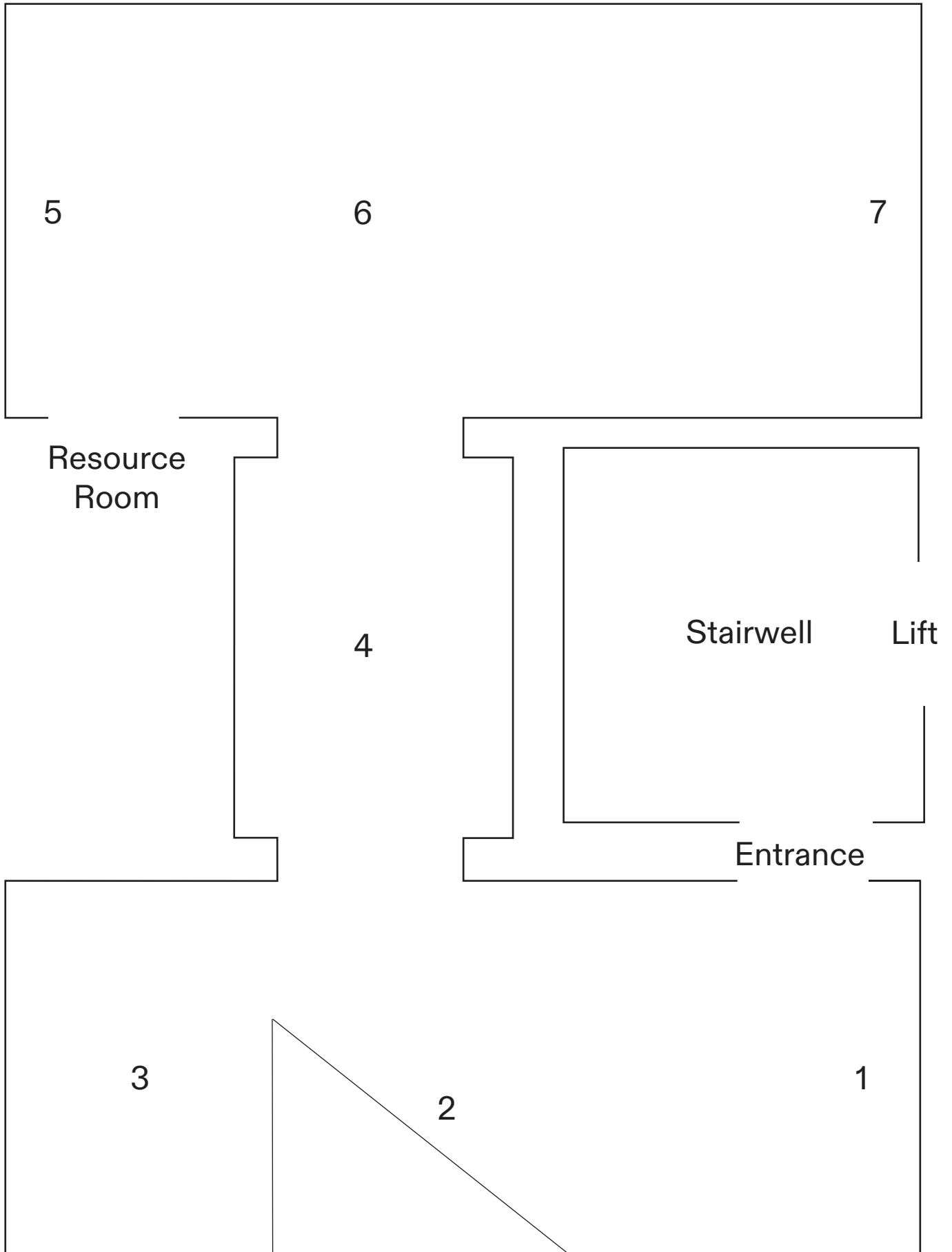
About HMP Grendon

HMP Grendon opened in 1962 as an all-male experimental psychiatric prison for the treatment of people whose mental health disorders did not qualify them for transfer to a hospital under the Mental Health Act 1959. While its management structure (the prison was incorporated into HMPS in 1984) and practices have transformed over the years, its fundamental purpose has remained the same: the rehabilitation of people who have committed serious crimes.

HMP Grendon is now the only wholly therapeutic prison in Europe and is often considered the most researched prison in the world. It is a Category B prison which offers up to 232 prisoners intensive, daily therapy undertaken on one of its five democratically governed wings (or communities). Each community makes decisions for and by themselves, within a strict code of behaviour and accountability, instilling an ethos of social responsibility. The prison operates a psychodynamic model, which comprises daily group therapy, psychodrama and art therapy, conducted by leading therapists and forensic psychologists.

Grendon's regime is intense for those who make up the prison's communities. Prisoners are only admitted to Grendon on application while serving time, and are gauged for suitability for up to six months on an assessment wing. Prisoners must admit and take responsibility for their crime as well as commit to a regime which forbids violence and drug misuse, while encouraging work and education. Statistically, those who complete at least eighteen months of therapy at Grendon are significantly less likely to reoffend on release.

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