

**Martha Henry Fine Art**

**ISSA IBRAHIM**

***THE HOSPITAL ALWAYS WINS***

**Art Exhibition and Book Launch**



**Exhibition dates: May 28-June 18, 2016**

**Opening Reception and Book Signing: Thursday, June 2, 2016 from 6-9 pm**

**Film Screenings of *Patient's Rites*, Saturday, June 11, 2016 at 5 pm and**

***That Which is Possible*, Saturday, June 18, 2016 at 5 pm**

**Location: Local Project Art Space, 11-27 44<sup>th</sup> Road, Long Island City, NY 11101**

Come celebrate the release of Issa Ibrahim's *The Hospital Always Wins: A Memoir*, published by Chicago Review Press, at his solo art exhibition curated by Martha Henry and hosted by Local Project Art Space in L.I.C., Queens, NY. In his harrowing memoir Issa Ibrahim unflinchingly chronicles the onset of his mental illness culminating in a family tragedy that led to his commitment to a mental hospital for almost twenty years. The book recounts Ibrahim's healing from his mental illness and eventual self-acceptance through the power of making art. The exhibition features several autobiographical series of paintings Ibrahim made during his institutionalization including "Body and Soul", "Creedmoor Paintings" and "The Superati", or "Superheroes".

Ibrahim was born into an artistic bohemian family who encouraged his self-expression and allowed him to attend art school as a teen and young adult. When he was committed to Creedmoor Psychiatric Center in Queens, NY, it was natural for Ibrahim to turn to art to survive the long days on his ward. Eventually, he was allowed to have a studio at The Living Museum on the grounds of Creedmoor where he flourished in an unusual art program that embraced creative freedom and expression. The artist experimented with imprinting his body onto large unstretched canvases in very personal works he called "Body and Soul", not unlike David Hammons body prints. Other series spoke directly to the nightmare of his Creedmoor existence. Using expressionistic brushwork and a somber palette, Ibrahim's emotional self-portraits exposed his anguish, while unflattering portraits of Creedmoor staff critiqued the mental healthcare system and were often confiscated by them. More accessible, perhaps, are "The Superati" series of narrative paintings wherein the artist/protagonist Ibrahim has cast himself as Superman. Using bright cheery colors and the graphic style of American comic books, Ibrahim superimposed his personal life stories onto Old Master compositions, such as *The Birth of Wonder Woman* after Botticelli, thus realizing multi-layered and complex autobiographical stories as well as social and political commentaries. Ibrahim paints self-portraits and super hero alter-egos with equal

parts whimsy and warning that he disclosed are “a parallel narrative of life as a psych patient, a flawed Superman, learning to navigate the many identities I had to assume in the system in order to survive various barriers to freedom.”



As Ibrahim’s healing took root, he began to work on getting released. His journey to freedom in his words was “against impossible odds with a system stacked against me.” Using the sale of his paintings, Ibrahim was able to raise money for legal representation and ultimately secured his release. His struggle and search for meaning in his life and for answers to an unspeakable tragedy resonate through Ibrahim’s art, music and writing. Reflecting on his life of societal and personal damnation, Issa Ibrahim hopes his remarkable story of resilience and survival can make a difference and create a compassionate understanding of our relationship to the gift and curse of mental illness, drug abuse, art, and the art of living.

Issa Ibrahim was born in Queens, NY in 1965. He attended the School of Art and Design, School of Visual Arts and The Art Students League in Manhattan. He has exhibited in many gallery and non-profit spaces in the greater New York area as well as group shows at Hofstra University and the Queens Art Museum. His art has also been featured in the HBO documentary, *The Living Museum* by Academy Award winning director, Jessica Yu. *The Hospital Always Wins* was the subject of an hour long NPR audio story and won the 2014 Edward R. Murrow Award for Best News Documentary and the 2014 Third Coast/Richard H. Driehaus Foundation Director’s Choice Award. Ibrahim is also an accomplished musician and film maker of musical documentaries.

The artist and author will be present to sign copies of his book at the opening reception on Thursday, June 2 from 6 to 9 pm. In addition, there will be screenings of two films: *Patient’s Rites* directed by Issa Ibrahim on Saturday, June 11 at 5 pm and *That Which is Possible* featuring Ibrahim on Saturday, June 18 at 5 pm.

Local Project is open Tuesday through Saturday from 2 to 6 pm  
Directions to Local Project, 11-27 44<sup>th</sup> Rd. LIC, NY 11101: Take the E, G, M, or 7 trains to Court Square Station.

**For more information, please contact:**

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