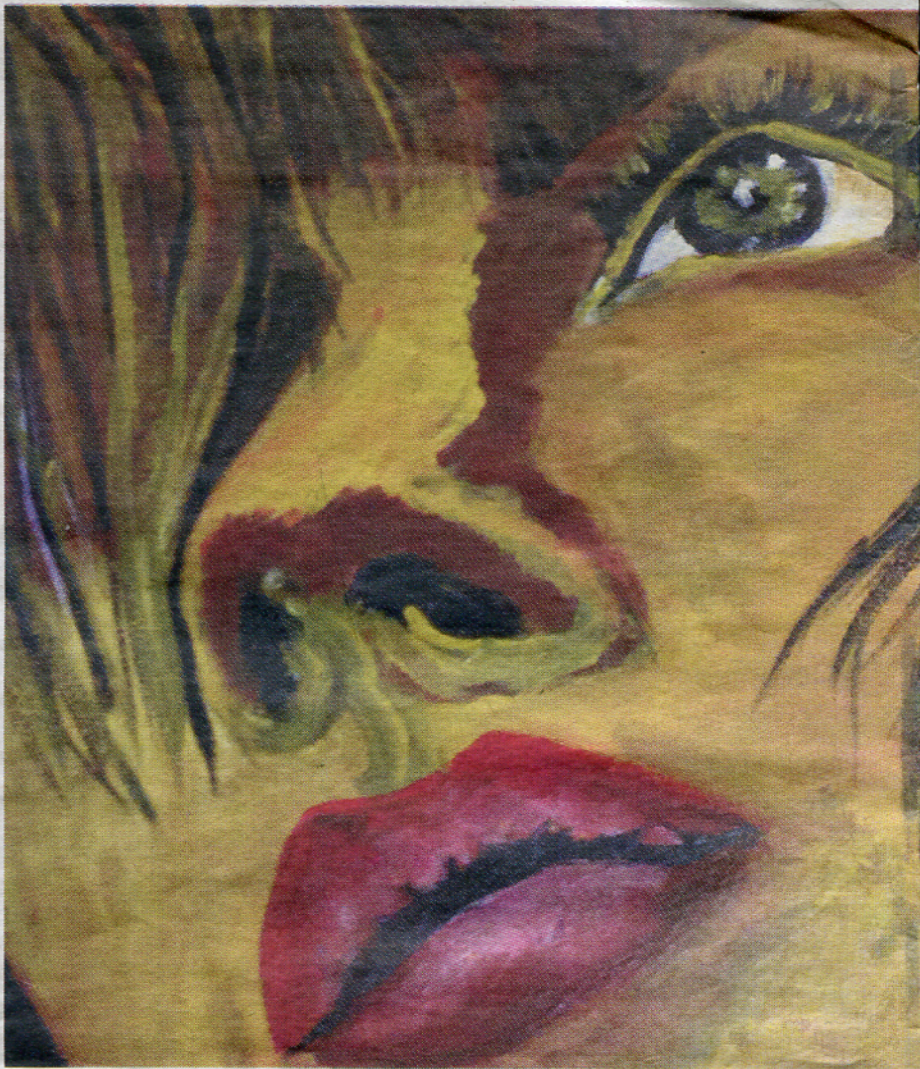


A show with a difference, with pseudonyms or first names used to conceal the identity of some of the artists involved, can be seen at Ben Uri Gallery and Museum this week.

A clue as to why is in the title, *Thirty-Six Pounds and Ninety-Five Pence*, which refers to the weekly voucher allowance for all asylum seekers. And any paid work could lead to detention or deportation.

"When I paint my pictures I forget my torture," says one artist who attends the New Art Studio (NAS), "a creative therapeutic community" which is based at the Islington Arts Factory, Holloway. It's a one-day-a-week, "tiny" project run by art therapists Tania Kaczynski and Jon Martyn, with asylum seekers and refugees from across the world including Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Congo, Russia and more. Many have suffered political violence and war and lost family, friends, their culture and home.

Celebrating London Creativity & Wellbeing Week and supported by



Clockwise from left: *Don't look at me* by Anon from Iran; *Universal Exile* by Paul from the Democratic Republic of Congo; *Falling Down* by Sayed from Afghanistan; and *Identity* by Paul from Democratic Republic of Congo



DISPLACEMENT ACTIVITY

John Evans reports on a new exhibition at Ben Uri Gallery showcasing the

work of asylum seekers caught in the crossfire

the Maurice Marks Charitable Trust, the new Ben Uri exhibition presents 50 or so works from NAS.

"The paintings in this exhibition reflect the resilience and sensitivity of the migrant's story: one of loss and hope," Ben Uri note. Take Sayed, for

example, who at 17 fled Afghanistan on foot, crossing borders and sleeping outside in extreme conditions and in fear for his life. His formal education ended when he left Kabul. Now, having gained refugee status, he works six days a week in a fast-food outlet

and on his only day off attends NAS, where he produces strong works evocative of his childhood and his journey.

He says art has given him a new perspective and identity. NAS co-founder Tania Kaczynski says the studio continues to grow and has

added life-drawing classes, has a volunteer English language teacher and an art therapy student on placement from Hertfordshire University.

Tania acknowledges the importance of the link with Ben Uri, "the oldest gallery representing work from refugees

and immigrants". "Despite our constant funding shortfalls," she adds "...as we face the largest displacement of people since the Second World War, the need for the studio is ever more pressing. Our clients/students/artists were people like you and me,

whose only crime was to be caught in the cross-fire of war or to have taken part in activities we can't help but take for granted, like joining a women's group in Iran or being gay in Turkey." And "they live in the shadows like ghosts in our machine".

To help the project go to the Just Giving link in the "Support us" section at www.newartstudio.org.uk ● Thirty-six Pounds Ninety-Five Pence is at Ben Uri Gallery & Museum, 108a Boundary Road, NW8 0RH until June 18. Free entry, 020 7604 3991